

# Publishing in JSGW: Content and Procedures

Janice L. DeLucia-Waack, Ph.D., Editor

(This article appeared in the the March 1997 issue of JSGW).

My goal for this editorial is to provide readers with a clear sense of what kinds of manuscripts that I would like to see published in JSGW as well as how to prepare a manuscript that has a substantial chance at being accepted for publication. I was struck by how useful Martin Ritchie's (1996) recent editorial in Counselor Education and Supervision was to me as a potential author in thinking about preparing manuscripts for that journal. I then realized that the JSGW readership might benefit from a similar discussion with the additional discussion of what kinds of manuscripts are especially desired.

## Topics

The majority of the membership of ASGW, and the readership of JSGW, are practitioners. Thus, the focus must be on providing current information related to group work theory, interventions, current issues, and research.

## Theoretical Applications

Theoretical manuscripts for JSGW can be written with several goals. One goal is the application of a theoretical framework to group work in general. Pistole's article in this issue "Attachment theory: Contributions to group work" is a good example of how a specific theory was applied to group work. The manuscript includes theoretical assumptions and implications for group work as well as suggestions about how to apply the theory to group work.

Another goal is the application of a theoretical framework to group work with a specific population. This type of manuscript might include a discussion of the theoretical assumption and implications for group work, a discussion of important issues for the specific population, and then suggestions or guidelines of how to provide group services beginning with screening and recruiting members through the termination and follow-up stage of group development. An example of this type of article is Harris' (1996) article on working with ACOA's.

Another goal for a theoretical manuscript is the application of a particular theory to a specific type of group work. The ASGW training standards (ASGW, 1995) specified that different skills are necessary for the different types of group work: task/work, psychoeducational/guidance, counseling/training, and therapy groups. The application of several theoretical orientations to group work (e.g., psychodynamic, adlerian, gestalt) have traditionally focused on counseling and therapy groups while others (e.g., cognitive-behavioral) have focused more on psychoeducational groups. Thus, it is important that application of different theoretical approaches be explored with the different types of group work. All theoretical manuscripts should include case examples and/or specific examples within the application section of how to apply the theory to group work.

## Interventions

Descriptions of group work interventions strategies are the type of manuscript most often published in JSGW because such descriptions are vital to the advancement of the field. Group workers need to learn from each other about how to implement individual group work strategies as well as holistic group programs so that the wheel doesn't have to be reinvented every time a new group is formed. There are several goals for this type of manuscript. One goal is the description of a specific technique or intervention that is useful in a variety of groups. This type of manuscript might include a description of the technique and a case example in addition to guidelines for what groups it may be useful with, when to use this technique, how to implement, and how to process in a group setting. Case examples with specific descriptions of how to utilize the theoretical application, technique, intervention and specific descriptions are vital. Furthermore, a discussion of how to process the intervention or technique is crucial to the manuscript. The effectiveness of group work interventions and strategies is greatly increased when the intervention is processed at the individual and group level (Kees & Jacobs, 1990) and thus, guidelines and suggestions for how to process activities must be included in any description of a technique or intervention. An example of this type of article is Riordan and White's (1996) article on the use of logs in group work.

Another goal is the description of group work with a specific population. This kind of manuscript might describe in detail a type of group designed for a specific population. Goals; ground rules; leadership style; recruiting, screening and preparation procedures; goals and interventions for specific sessions; guidelines for processing activities and events; and termination and follow-up procedures would be described in detail. Recent examples would be the Gordon, Winter, Feldman and Dimick (1996) article

"Group work for persons with Multiple Sclerosis" while the Appleton and Dykeman (1996) article describes a specific intervention strategy with a specific population, artwork with Native Americans.

## Current Issues

Manuscripts that discuss current issues in group work also make an important contribution to JSGW. Discussions of ethical issues related to group work that include possible considerations, solutions, and decision making processes stimulate thinking and discussion among group workers. Sklare, Thomas, Williams, and Power's (1996) article "Ethics and an experiential 'here and now' group: A blend that works" suggests possible ways to conduct training groups in an ethical way that balances training needs and student rights. Other current issues such as multiculturalism, competency and training standards, confidentiality, and dual relationships are important topics that need to be addressed in JSGW as they relate to group work.

## Training

The training of group leaders, while often discussed as a current issue, is a topic in itself. It is essential that JSGW provide cutting edge information to its readership about new and effective training methods. Manuscripts that focus on the development of group work skills, teaching of group theory and dynamics, and supervision of group leaders have an integral place in JSGW. These manuscripts should provide: a conceptual framework for the approach, interventions, or strategies; a case example or illustration; and guidelines for implementation. Several recent articles have described training methods for group leaders (Bieschke, Matthews, & Wade, 1996; Stockton & Toth, 1996; Whitman, Morgan, & Alfred, 1996) and may serve as examples.

## Research

Research is important to the development of the field of group work and to practitioners who need to know which group work strategies and interventions are effective. Research on any of the areas described above is essential to the field of group work. Research on the effectiveness of specific group leadership styles, training strategies, ethical issues, theoretical approaches to group work, group programs, therapeutic factors, and group dynamics is vital to the advancement of the field of group work. Since the field is still relatively young, surveys play an important role in ascertaining what group leaders are actually doing. How are students being trained? What kinds of group are practitioners are leading? What are the needs of the group workers in the field? What theoretical approaches are group workers utilizing and for what types of groups? Dansby's (1996) manuscript "Group work within the school system: Survey of implementation and leadership role issues" is an example of a survey

that focused on group work in the schools and assessed counselor skills and needs.

Controlled studies that compare different interventions, strategies, or theoretical approaches contribute to knowledge about what is effective. Program evaluation and dissemination of the results is essential to prevent reinventing the wheel each time someone leads a group. Systemic study of groups is also useful and needed in our field. Rybak and Brown's (1997) study of group conflict over the life of a group and Duncan and Brown's (1996) study of anxiety and conceptual complexity in group counselors in training are examples of such research studies.

Furthermore, much work is needed in the area of assessment of group work. Group counselors almost always ask their members to complete some kind of evaluation of the group experience, but typically it is constructed on the spot rather than chosen from a list of reliable and valid measures for group work. While there are a variety of instruments to measure group therapeutic factors and climate, there is a need for predictive instruments that can be used to screen for appropriateness for group treatment as well as measures to evaluate the development of desired group member skills and behavior (DeLucia-Waack, 1997).

### Procedural Considerations

In this section, I will discuss common problems that cause manuscripts to be rejected and also lengthen the revision process. Most manuscripts that are published in JSGW require two revisions before they are accepted for publication. Rarely is the topic of the manuscript inappropriate for the readership of JSGW; more often, it is the format of the manuscript that is problematic. Below are suggestions for potential authors to increase the likelihood of publishing a manuscript in JSGW and to decrease the length of the revision process. The suggestions are based on the JSGW manuscript review form (copies are available upon request).

1. The introduction must convince readers that the manuscript is relevant to the field of group work and would benefit the readership. Each introduction, regardless of the type of manuscript, should include a brief review of the literature that provides a rationale for why this manuscript is important. A clear purpose statement for the manuscript should be included that clearly outlines the focus and organization of the manuscript.

2. The manuscript must be well organized and flow smoothly. The purpose of the manuscript described in the introduction should match what follows in the manuscript. Introductory and transitional sentences and paragraphs should be utilized to help the reader follow the sequence of the manuscript. An empirical manuscript should include in order: introduction, method, results, and discussion. A non-empirical manuscript should follow a logical sequence that begins with the background and literature on the topic, issue, intervention, or theory, then the body of the manuscript that describes a theoretical or conceptual framework for the model, intervention, or group.

3. Empirical manuscripts must provide sufficient information to determine if the study is methodologically sound. Hypotheses, sample and sampling methods, instruments, research design, and statistical analyses must be described in sufficient detail. Control or placebo groups should be part of the research design if the purpose of the study is to examine the effectiveness of a treatment. If the purpose of the study is to examine what makes a group effective, then measures of group climate or therapeutic factors should be included.

4. Non-empirical manuscripts must be application oriented. They must provide new information or present old information in a unique way. These manuscripts must describe a theoretical application, technique, intervention, or type of group in detail so that readers can apply the theory, technique, or intervention in their group work. Discussion of current issues must include guidelines or suggestions for how to conceptualize the issues as well as approach the issues in group work practice.

5. The Discussion and Conclusions must integrate the current manuscript with the rest of the group work literature. It must provide a summary of the content of the manuscript as well as connect it with current group work theory and research. A manuscript should not end abruptly.

The purpose of this editorial was to provide readers with a clear sense of what kinds of manuscripts are likely to be published in JSGW and to make suggestions to increase the likelihood of having a manuscript accepted in JSGW. This editorial is not meant to be the definitive statement of what will be published in JSGW. It is always a good idea to talk with the editor of a journal if you are not sure about the appropriateness of a manuscript for a particular journal. Please feel free to call me or email me if you have questions or want to talk about a potential topic or manuscript.

---

### References

- Association for Specialists in Group Work. (2000). Association for Specialists in Group Work: Professional standards for the training of group workers. Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 25, 327-342.
- Appleton, V. E., & Dykeman, C. (1996). Using art in group counseling with Native American youth. Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 21, xx-xx.
- Bieschke, K. J., Matthews, C., & Wade, J. (1996). Training group counselors: The process observer method. Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 21, 181-186.
- Dansby, V. S. (1996). Group work within the school system: Survey of implementation and leadership role issues. Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 21, xxx-xxx.
- DeLucia-Waack, J. L. (1997). Measuring the effectiveness of group work: A review and analysis of process and outcome measures. Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 22, 277-293.
- Duncan, D. M., & Brown, B. M. (1996). Anxiety and development of conceptual complexity in group counselors-in-training. Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 21, xxx-xxx.
- Gordon, P. A., Winter, R., Feldman, D., & Dimick, K. (1996). Group work for persons with multiple sclerosis. Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 21, xx-xx.
- Harris, S. A. (1996). Childhood roles and the interpersonal circle: A model for ACOA groups. Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 21, 39-49.
- Kees, N., & Jacobs, E. (1990). Conducting more effective groups: How to select and process group exercises. Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 15, 21-29.
- Pistole, M. C. (1997). Attachment theory: Contributions to group work. Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 22, 4-20.
- Riordan, R. J., & White, J. (1996). Logs as therapeutic adjuncts in group. Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 21, 94-101.
- Ritchie, M. H. (1996). How to publish in our journal. Counselor Education & Supervision, 36, 3-5.
- Rybak, C. J., & Brown, B. M. (1997). Group conflict: Communication patterns and group development. Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 22, 33-43.
- Sklare, G., Thomas, D.V., Williams, E., & Powers, K. (1996). Ethics and an experiential "here and now" group: A blend that works. Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 21, xx-xx.
- Stockton, R., & Toth, P. L. (1996). Teaching group counselors: Recommendations for maximizing pre-service instruction. Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 21, xx-xx.
- Whitman, J. S., Morgan, L. B., & Alfred, A. R. (1996). Graduate students as coleaders of groups: A trainee's experience. Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 21, 187-

