

*Origins of Social Group Work: Local Stories from Around the World*

Sparc Project Final Report, July 22, 2023 (Awarded in June 2021)

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*Origins of Social Group Work: Local Stories from Around the World* was an international history project that was approved for SPARC funding and endorsement by IASWG in June 2021. The *Origins* project called for local case studies -- including those drawn from personal narratives, oral history interviews, and personal documents research -- that document the experiences and accomplishments of local group workers; examine group work practice in different historical, cultural, and geopolitical contexts; and draw implications for the future development of social work with groups.

Outcomes of the *Origins* project were the publication of a Special Issue of [\*Social Work with Groups\* 46\(4\)](#) with guest editor, Lorrie Greenhouse Gardella; presentations of two sessions at the 2023 IASWG Virtual Symposium, including the Sumner Gil Memorial Plenary; and plans for future collaborations among participating authors.

From the settlement house movements in Chicago and New York City at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to the arrival of Syrian refugees in Cologne, Germany, during the 2015 Global Migration Crisis; to the enduring collectivist traditions of the Bakarwal pastoral nomads in today's Jammu and Kashmir, India; the *Origins* project revealed the threads that unify social group work through space and time: the values of democratic participation, self-determination,

and social justice; the challenges to understanding and realizing these values in changing social and cultural contexts; the possibilities for cultural safety, cultural negotiation, and reciprocal learning; and the promise of social work with groups as a means to individual and social fulfillment.

*Origins of Social Group Work: Local Stories from Around the World* was proposed and led by Lorrie Greenhouse Gardella and guided by the *Origins* advisory committee: Klaus-Martin Ellerbrock from Germany, Reineth Prinsloo from South Africa, and Stephen Monroe Tomczak from the U.S. We are grateful to the IASWG Sparc committee and to Andrew Malekoff, editor-in-chief of *Social Work with Groups*, for their steadfast interest and support. It is our hope that this project will encourage further international historical research on social group work, including publications in *Social Work with Groups* and *Groupwork* and presentations at the annual symposia of IASWG.