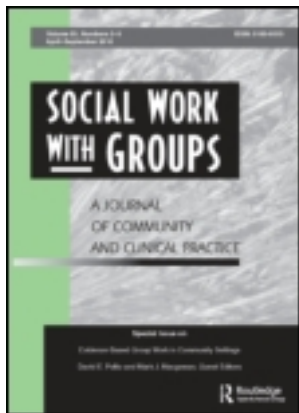


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Around the World with Social Group Work: Knowledge and Research Contributions

James A. Forte

ABSTRACT. This article uses a quantitative content analysis to assess the contribution of international group workers toward building a scientific knowledge base for practice. Using AASWG's bibliography as a sampling frame, 271 articles written between 1978 and 1992 by group workers employed outside the United States were studied. It was found that 38% were scientific knowledge building articles. Narrative descriptions of group practice dominated the literature. Four countries, Australia, Canada, Great Britain, and Israel were sites for the bulk of the publications. Each showed emphases in their group work writings reflective of cultural and social particulars.

Does communication among international social workers, "exchanges that take place between social workers from different countries" (Mohan, 1987), represent a one way transfer of innovations and knowledge from the dominant United States to other countries or a reciprocal and mutually helpful relationship among equals? In a recent debate on this issue, Midgely (1992) characterized the United States' social work establishment as imperialistic. American curricular approaches and practice methods have been exported to other countries while the U.S. has been less receptive to the import

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of "inferior" intellectual products from foreign countries. Toors (1992) differs with Midgely and argues that social workers have learned from other countries. He notes the extensive travel abroad by American social workers, the creation of international professional associations, and the sponsorship of conferences and workshops by organizations with international membership as evidence of a two way exchange of ideas.

Others have sided with Toors and noted various benefits available to social workers in the United States from a two-way international exchange. Rosenthal (1991) encourages social workers with the freedom to move to work overseas in social welfare organizations. She believes that this will increase their appreciation for cultural diversity. Chau (1990, 1991) notes that the United States is changing into a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural society. American social workers, he adds, can become more capable of culturally competent group practice by attention to views of practitioners from different cultures. Estes (1992a) contends that social work practice in an international context can lead to a more expansive conception of group work. Estes (1992b) also sees possibilities for the development of "internationalized" graduate and undergraduate curricula which prepare social workers for practice in an interdependent world.

Although Midgely (1990) regrets the one direction flow of ideas and methodologies, he too notes potential and unrealized gains of international collaboration. From the Third World, for example, Western social workers can learn about working under conditions of severe resource constraint, about responding to international migration, and about working with the extremely poor.

Over the last decade, group work has made several advances in fostering international collaboration and the verbal and written exchange of ideas and practice methodologies. Annual Symposia sponsored by the Association for the Advancement of Social Work with Groups (AASWG) have taken on an increasingly international flavor. Participants and presenters attend from many countries outside the United States. Canadian universities hosted two Symposia and one of these offered both French and English renditions of keynote speeches. Israel, Australia, and England have offered national group work conferences. *The Social Work with Groups Newsletter* includes as a regular feature correspondence from group workers around the

world. Group work leaders have organized chapters of the Association in Hong Kong, Israel, Japan, Toronto, Quebec, Ontario, and London. A group work journal focused on European group work started publication in 1990 and the summer of 1993 will witness the second international group work conference offered in Europe.

However, as with the claims of proponents of the two way transfer notion of international exchange, there has yet been no systematic examination of the contribution of group work practitioners, theoreticians, and researchers situated outside the fifty states to the advancement of group work knowledge building. Group workers in the United States have voiced their commitment to the use of research in practice and in theory development since at least the 1934 National Conference on Group Work (Hartford, 1983). The following study views the world as our knowledge source rather than just the United States. It provides the first empirical appraisal of the overall and comparative contribution of group workers around the world to the development of a scientific knowledge base.

A content analysis of the current body of group work literature was conducted to examine several questions. First, what are the general characteristics of all published contributions from group workers outside the United States? Second, what types of knowledge are foreign group workers contributing? Third, how specifically can research studies and contributions of foreign group workers be characterized? Fourth, how might groups used by international group workers be typified? Finally, do group workers from particular countries differ in the nature of their contributions to the group work literature? As possible, reference to earlier analyses of the American group work literature will be made so that descriptions of the international group work literature can be compared to descriptions of the U.S. literature.

METHOD

Selection of Articles

For the current study, all articles included in publications identified in the latest *Bibliography on Group Work* (1992) are the knowledge body of interest. This bibliography is a comprehensive listing

of resources and focuses on group work written by group workers up to July 1992. The bibliography is available for all AASWG members and is revised regularly. Publications from this bibliography considered here included all issues of *Social Work with Groups*, all issues of *Groupwork*, all issues of *Small Group Research: An International Journal of Theory, Investigation, and Application*, all issues of the *Journal for Specialists in Group Work* (except for issues in the 1986 and 1987 volumes which were not available for review), all published proceedings of the annual Association for the Advancement of Social Work with Groups Symposia (Proceedings for Symposia 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,11, and 12), monographs from the three Australian group work conferences, and the issue of *Journal of Social Service Research* devoted to group work.

Selection of articles from these publications was conducted by the following two step process. First, authorship was considered. For publications directed to a social work audience, all articles were included regardless of the professional affiliation of the author. For publications directed to a nonsocial work audience—*Small Group Research* and the *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*—only articles with a social worker as first or second author were accepted. Since social workers and writers from other professions differ in their type of knowledge contributions (Fraser, Taylor, Jackson, & O'Jack, 1991), this selection strategy prevented an artificial distortion of the international group literature. Secondly, from the pool of articles remaining, origin of the article was considered. If the first or second author was employed (or, in a few cases, on a leave of absence) in a country other than the United States, the article was included in the sample. The collected set of articles represents the population of international group work literature currently used by social group workers.

Content analysis is an ideal research strategy for tracing the development of social work scholarship over time. The method of quantitative content analysis involves the goal of classifying a given body of content by some category to obtain data useful in answering specific research questions (Allen-Meares, 1984). Originally, a survey method was planned but the costs of postage to and from foreign countries and the time necessary for such an endeavor were too great.

Each of the articles was read, reviewed and coded by the author during August and September, 1992. Coding involved consider-

ation of manifest and latent content (Babbie, 1992). Article variables such as field of practice or life stage were often visible and explicitly stated in the text. Thus, key words or sentences were used to make classificatory assignments of this manifest content. However, for some variables—type of knowledge contribution or theoretical orientation endorsed by the author, for example—indicators were not obvious and had to be determined by a reading of an entire passage or the entire article and then an inferential judgement about the underlying or latent meaning. Classifications were entered first onto a five page data collection document and then a computer disk using the MicroCase Statistical Software System 2.1 (1990) on an IBM compatible computer.

Measures

Basic information was obtained about the professional affiliation of the author, the employing institution of the author, and the country in which the author resides. The field of practice examined in the article was coded by an adaptation of Hull and colleagues' (1991) BPD outcome study item. The client need addressed in the article was measured using Teare and Sheafor's (1991) classification scheme. Tolman's notion of theoretical orientation was found lacking but no other universally shared scheme for operationalizing this variable was found. Therefore, all descriptions presented by authors were recorded and collapsed into categories constructed by the author after the data were entered and examined.

Knowledge type was operationalized with minor modifications in accord with a typology of group work knowledge developed and used by Silverman (1966) and again by Feldman (1987). Using this typology, each group work article was assigned to one of the following eleven categories based on the primary emphasis or intention of the author(s).

1. *Descriptions*—articles which describe particular groups, programs, or services in concrete ways and often include the use of recordings.
2. *Areas of practice*—articles which discuss a specific area of practice such as work with youth gangs and do so at a higher level of abstraction than category 1.

3. *Appeals for knowledge*—articles which call for the expansion and/or systemization of the knowledge base of social group work.
4. *Appeals for direction of practice*—articles which argue that group workers should change emphasis about particular programs or aspects of service.
5. *Traditional statements of principles*—articles which restate in some way the traditional conceptual and value base of group workers.
6. *Applications of social science*—articles which use and apply theories, concepts, or findings from the social sciences for the benefit of social group work.
7. *Innovations in practice theory*—articles which show a new framework to guide selectively the activities of the group worker.
8. *Research and surveys*—articles which report on the empirical testing of hypotheses or the compilation of facts in a specified area of group knowledge.
9. *Group work-casework-group therapy relationships*—articles which compare group work with more “clinical” orientations or describe group worker-caseworker collaborations.
10. *Historical*—articles which place group work in historical perspective.
11. *Social group work education*—articles which focus on education in group work.

Variables used in assessing the nature and the quality of the research contributions of international group work were drawn from two sources. From Tolman (1989), measures of the types of research comparisons, leadership experience, focus of change effort (preventive, restorative, educational) and the group format (open ended or close ended), the number of group sessions, the duration of a group session, the total contact time for the group, the meeting structure (weekly or every other week) were developed. From Fraser and his colleagues (1991), measures of the type of research design, sample type, the unit of analysis, and the principal method of data analysis were developed.

Cautions Regarding the Research Design

There are several cautions related to the analysis of existing literature relevant to this study. First, editorial policies and preferences of journal publishers may decrease the likelihood of finding certain kinds of contributions—reports of empirical findings, for example, or certain styles of article presentation—detailed presentation of research methodology and findings. Both Rose (1992) and Weinberg (1992), believe some social work journals prefer publishing practitioner-oriented articles to empirical reports. Thus, we cannot make judgements about unpublished work of international group workers, although this work may include many rejected systematic research articles.

Second, this study is limited to articles written in English and to journals and proceedings from four countries—the United States, Great Britain, Canada, and Australia. Group workers who do not have access to these vehicles for sharing their practice ideas and innovations are not represented in the study.

Third, there are questions of validity and reliability. None of the classification schemes has been validated as a measurement tool. Nevertheless, their previous use, their availability, and their face validity are arguments for their prudent use. In the area of reliability, it is not an ideal practice for the researcher to develop and apply a coding instrument alone. However, as Smith (1982) suggests when resources are limited—in the current study for example, it would have been too costly to train coders to make the necessary complex judgements—it may not be realistic to adhere to such high standards. Despite these qualifications, content analysis is a sound and respected method for profiling the international group work literature. Future inquiries may have the time and funding for more elaborate investigations.

CURRENT FINDINGS AND COMPARISONS TO EARLIER ANALYSES

General Characteristics of the International Group Work Literature

Previous research on characteristics of the international social work as it relates to any aspect of social work practice or education

is extremely limited. Raskin, Skolnik, and Wayne (1991) conducted an international survey to learn about the characteristics of field instruction in different parts of the world. They obtained information from 51 different countries in six of the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) regions. No comparable study has been found in the group work literature.

In the present study, 17 different countries outside the United States were represented by 271 published articles. As indicated in Table 1, the bulk of these articles were written by authors employed or residing in four countries. The top four article producers were respectively Canada with 124 published articles, almost half (46%) of all international publications, Great Britain with 71 or 26% of the articles, Australia with 31 or 11% of published articles and Israel with 15 or 6% of the international group work articles. Representation for the remaining 13 countries was small, ranging from six articles for Norway to one article each for other six countries.

The number of international group work articles incorporated into the specialty's knowledge base has grown steadily. For the

TABLE 1. Rank Order of International Countries by Articles Included in Group Work Bibliography Publications

Rank	Country	Number	Percentage
1	Canada	124	45.8
2	Great Britain	71	26.2
3	Australia	31	11.4
4	Israel	15	5.6
5	Norway	6	2.2
6	Hong Kong	4	1.5
	Denmark	4	1.5
7	South Africa	3	1.0
	Switzerland	3	1.0
8	France	2	.7
	Ireland	2	.7
9	Germany	1	.4
	Lebanon	1	.4
	Poland	1	.4
	Puerto Rico	1	.4
	Singapore	1	.4
	Spain	1	.4

five-year period from the first issue of *Social Work with Groups*, 1978, 23 articles were published by group workers living or working outside the fifty states. In the five year period, 1983 to 1987, there were 80 international group work articles published. In the most recent five year period, 1988 to 1992, the number of published articles more than doubled the previous five year total of 168.

Social Work with Groups has published 78 (29%) articles, the largest number of articles by authors outside the United States, closely followed by *Groupwork* which has published 76 international articles, 28% of the total set of articles. The two Canadian proceedings of AASWG Symposia were pivotal in the dissemination of international group work. Proceedings for the Toronto Symposium included 38 international articles and proceedings for the Montreal Symposium included 32 such group work contributions. The three Australian conferences and their proceedings supplied 28 articles to the international group work literature.

Several characteristics of the international group work literature are noteworthy. As expected, most authors (61%) identified themselves as social workers. This percentage may be even higher because many articles (28%) including those in several of the large conference proceedings did not include article information about the author's professional affiliation and because in England, social workers are not always formally identified by that title. The remaining authors (11%) were a mix of psychologists, probation officers, and psychotherapists. Likewise, the majority of authors worked for a social work institution. Social work programs in colleges and universities employed authors for 124 or 46% of the articles while social work agencies employed authors for 31 or 11% of the articles. For authors who specified other places of employment, hospitals, correctional organizations, residential programs, and private practice were the major work sites.

International group work articles reported on practice in varied and diverse settings. The family and child welfare field was the most represented ($n = 57$, 21%) with both corrections ($n = 32$, 12%) and mental health ($n = 31$, 11%) in second place. Medical social work ($n = 18$, 6.6%), geriatrics ($n = 17$, 6.3%), and community and neighborhood work ($n = 14$, 5%) are nearly tied in their popularity. Fields of chemical dependency ($n = 6$, 2%), public welfare and

poverty ($n = 5$, 1.9%) and physical disabilities ($n = 1$, 4%) are the remaining fields of practice identified in the international group work literature.

Types of Knowledge Contributed by International Group Workers

There has been a set of research studies examining the nature of knowledge contributions of U.S. based group workers. For those who believe that group work theory and practice will advance when knowledge building is scientific in nature—scientific as the systematic, data based examination of social and psychological phenomenon relevant to group practice (Monette, Sullivan, DeJong, 1990), there has been too little such knowledge building. Rose (1992 p. 136) diplomatically states that “there has been an extremely modest increase of research and research utilization over the past ten years.” Research evidence provided by Silverman (1966) and Feldman (1987) supports Rose’s contention. (Because both of these studies considered group work published before 1984, it is unlikely that they contained more than a few international articles so there is no issue of overlap.)

Silverman (1966), for example, conducted a content analysis of the major social work publications between 1956 and 1964 that included group work articles. Of a total of 106 articles, he classified only four articles or roughly 4% as research and survey articles. Silverman found that most articles were descriptive examples of practice, depictions of areas of practice, or traditional statements of principle.

In a later replication of Silverman’s study, Feldman (1987) found a similar pattern in an examination of 302 group work articles published in social work journals between 1975 and 1983. The percentage of articles classified as research and survey had only increased from 4% to 10%. Again, the majority of published articles were not geared to scientific knowledge building but to description and argument. Feldman (1987) viewed articles about *applications of social science, innovations in practice theory, and research and surveys* as all aimed at expanding group work’s scientific knowledge base. In his 1986 study, articles in these three categories comprised 20% of the total set of articles. This was a modest increase

over the portion of similar articles (15%) identified by Silverman (1966).

The percentages of U.S. group work research publications compare poorly to social workers in general but similarly to group workers from other professions. Social workers, in general, have a better record. Fraser, Taylor, Jackson, and O'Jack (1991), in a content analysis of over 1000 articles published in eight social work journals in the years 1985 through 1988, report that 28% of the articles were research based. But group workers with educational or counseling professions fare comparably to social group workers. In a 1987 survey of members of the Association for Specialists in Group Work, Robinson and Ward (1990), for example, found that only 8% of the respondents had published a research article between 1982 and 1987.

The present study shares Feldman's (1987) assumption that the publication of articles with a scientific orientation is essential to knowledge building. It provides data that allows for assessment of the relative contributions of international group workers to scientific knowledge building. Table 2 summarizes the categorization of 271 international group work articles by Silverman's typology. As indicated in Table 2, the largest number of articles, 106 or 39% of the total, were classified as descriptions of groups or programs. Thus, as in earlier studies the most popular type of article continues

TABLE 2. Classification of International Articles According to Silverman's Knowledge Typology

Category	Number	Percentage
1. Descriptions	106	39.1
2. Areas of Practice	17	6.3
3. Appeals for Knowledge	3	1.1
4. Appeals for Direction of Practice	15	5.5
5. Traditional Statements of Principles	6	2.2
6. Applications of Social Science	15	5.5
7. Innovations in Practice Theory	54	19.9
8. Research and Surveys	34	12.6
9. Group Work-Casework-Therapy	1	.4
10. Historical Articles	7	2.6
11. Social Group Work Education	13	4.8

to be the concrete, detailed depiction of the worker's group work experience. Unlike scientific articles, few of these articles build cumulatively on work done by other group workers or show their generalizability to social workers practicing under different circumstances. Nor do they use qualitative research methodologies to provide portraits of group life rich in context specific data that is useful in developing grounded theory.

About 38% ($n = 103$) of the articles were classified in the scientific knowledge building cluster of *innovations in practice theory, applications of social science, and research and surveys*. This exceeds the 15% reported by Silverman in 1966 and the 20% reported by Feldman in 1986. Finally, international group work articles were classified as *research and surveys* in roughly 13% of the cases, a small increase over both the 1987 and the 1966 U.S. research contribution.

Characteristics of International Group Work Research Methodology

Researchers who have previously examined the U.S. social work research literature have criticized social workers (including group workers) for using very basic research methods and data analysis procedures (Fraser, Taylor, Jackson, & O'Jack, 1991) and group workers, in particular, for failing to meet research standards of methodological rigor (Tolman, 1989). Analysis of data on international group work research articles fails to contradict these charges. Table 3 summarizes the characteristics of research from around the world as evidenced in the 34 research based articles.

Asking questions through surveys or interviews was the dominant research strategy used by international group work researchers. Not one study, however, could be characterized as an experiment. Nor did any use of the single system research design appear. Sampling was almost exclusively restricted to nonrandom approaches ($n = 33$, 97%). Not one study utilized a random sampling approach and only one examined a total population. Despite the concern of group workers with group as well as individual outcomes, 71% ($n = 24$) of the research based articles studied individual perceptions and attitudes. Only 18% of the research studies focused on group or family level measures. Finally, only 4 research studies reported any type of

follow up procedure. The remaining either did not follow up or did not comment on this issue.

As with U.S. social workers, international group workers availed themselves of only elementary data analysis procedures. Table 4 summarizes information about international researchers choices of data analysis strategies. As shown in Table 4, the majority of articles included as the principal method of data analysis either descriptive statistics ($n = 16$, 47%) or simple bivariate tests ($n = 9$, 27%). In six articles, the authors claimed to use qualitative approaches, but not one reported on the specifics involved in distilling and coding the qualitative information. Only three articles included the use of advanced data analysis procedures and of note, the two articles using

TABLE 3. Characterization of International Research Articles by Design, Sampling Strategy, Unit of Analysis, and Follow Up

Research Feature	N	%	Research Feature	N	%
<u>Research Design</u>			<u>Unit of Analysis</u>		
Survey or Interview	10	29.4	Individual	24	70.6
1 Group Pre/Post-test	8	23.5	Group	6	17.7
Quasi-Experiment	6	17.7	Organization	1	2.9
Field or Case Study	4	11.8	Other	3	8.8
Other	6	17.7			
Experiment	0	0.0	<u>Follow Up</u>		
			Yes	4	11.7
<u>Sampling Strategy</u>			No	10	29.4
Random	0	0.0	Not Specified	8	23.6
Nonrandom	33	97.1	Other/NA	12	35.3
Other/All	1	2.9			

TABLE 4. Primary Method of Data Analysis Used by International Group Work Researchers

Data Analysis Method	Number	Percentage
Descriptive Statistics	16	47.1
Simple Bivariate Tests	9	26.5
Qualitative	6	17.7
Cluster Analysis	2	5.9
Manova	1	2.9

cluster analysis procedures were by the same author. Even accepting Weinberg's (1992) argument that different research situations necessitate different data analysis procedures and that advanced statistics are not always appropriate, the current study demonstrates that international group researchers chose from an extremely narrow range of statistical procedures.

International group work research based articles appeared more careful in their specification of key variables and choice of leaders. For those studies that evaluated the effects of a group intervention, 16 or 76% used multiple measures of dependent variables and half ($n = 11$) of the research based articles included standardized or clearly operationalized measures. International group work researchers did not rely on inexperienced student workers to lead groups in their research studies. All 13 studies in which leadership attributes were specified said that the group leader or leaders had considerable experience.

Characteristics of the "Typical" International Group

Tolman (1989) developed a portrait of the typical group studied in 33 United States research outcome studies. He contended that Americans overwhelmingly used close-ended, time-limited, structured groups that met weekly for roughly 90 minutes. According to Tolman, group workers in the United States were also likely to use a cognitive-behavioral theoretical frame of reference and to offer their group services to children. Target problems were typically social skill development, behavior problems, and to a lesser extent, depression.

The portrait of the typical group reported on by international group workers has some similarities and some differences to Tolman's portrait. As in the United States, international group workers (70%) preferred close-ended groups. Like Americans, international workers preferred weekly meeting arrangements. For all the relevant research based articles, 84% reported a weekly meeting arrangement. International groups also were often time-limited with a median of 12 sessions and a mode of 10 sessions ($n = 3$). Finally, international groups were only slightly longer than American groups, averaging two hours for meeting length rather than the 90 minutes in the States.

However, the portraits differ in several key areas. International group workers seemed very diverse when contrasted to Tolman's sample in regard to their theoretical orientations. (Of note, this was the most difficult variable to code in that authors' conceptualization of "theory base" differed greatly. Also, there were no theories or models identified by many group workers). International group workers favored practice theory bases labeled as self-help ($n = 14$), group psychotherapy ($n = 10$), feminist ($n = 10$), social goals ($n = 10$), and interactional-reciprocal ($n = 9$). However, many other approaches were identified including ecological ($n = 7$), Mullender and Ward's self-directed approach ($n = 6$), the Boston model ($n = 3$) and social network ($n = 3$). Tropp's developmental model, Vinter's rehabilitative approach, task centered group work, theme centered group work, interpersonal skill training, and cognitive group work each had two adherents. More than 30 other labels for theoretical orientation to group practice were used.

International group workers did not focus primarily on service to children as did Tolman's American group workers. In fact, only 7% ($n = 20$) of the articles were about group members who were children. Adolescents were the recipients of group service mentioned in 11% ($n = 30$) of the articles. Many of the articles (36%, $n = 96$) focused on adults. The elderly were not ignored. Almost 7% ($n = 18$) of group articles addressed members at this life stage. And 9% ($n = 24$) of the articles referred to groups that had members from different life stages such as families or groups designed to encourage cross-generational relationships.

Finally, the client needs addressed by international group workers, although similar to Tolman's sample in some ways, were much more diverse and seem more reflective of social problems of other countries. While behavior problems ($n = 41$, 15%) and emotional problems including depression ($n = 23$, 8.5%) were strongly represented, international group workers focused minimally on skill development ($n = 3$, 1%). Areas of special interest for international group workers included family difficulties ($n = 36$, 13%), problems with aging ($n = 16$, 6%), health conditions ($n = 15$, 5.5%), civil rights especially as related to the reduction of sexist and racist attitudes ($n = 13$, 4.8%) and membership development, specifically aid to refugees and immigrants who are joining new communities ($n = 6$, 2%).

Knowledge and Research Contributions of Particular Countries

No previous research was found that characterizes the scholarly and empirical contributions of specific foreign countries. It is likely that cultural, economic, and political influences and problems specific to a country will influence the nature of group practice and the nature of publications about such practice. In the current study, several characteristics of the group work literature specific to the top four countries producing group work articles can be identified. In the area of knowledge type, Australia was the country most supportive of research efforts. Of 31 total articles, 32% ($n = 10$) articles were *research or surveys*. Canada, Great Britain, and Israel were all close to 10% in the portion of group work classified as research.

Countries differed in their theoretical preferences. Canadians were likely to refer to traditional and well-established models of group work practice and included interactional, ecological, and self-help as their favorites. The English preferred home-grown models with six articles using Mullender and Ward's self-directed approach to group practice. Australians and Israelis were more prone to a theoretical writing and frequently did not indicate any orientation as guiding their practice.

Most of the countries included a strong representation of articles from the field of family and child welfare. They also described other fields of particular interest. Great Britain showed a strong concern with correctional issues as indicated by the publication of 21 articles (30%) from the corrections and probation field. Canada viewed work in health, mental health, and geriatric fields as meriting many group work reports while Israel had strong coverage ($n = 4$, 27%) from workers in community and neighborhood settings. For all four countries, group work with adults represented the life stage most frequently addressed. Canada focused secondly on group services to the elderly while Great Britain's second preferred life stage was adolescence.

Finally, the four major foreign countries contributing to the group literature differed in client needs addressed. Many Canadian writers focused on family difficulties (especially domestic violence) on problems of aging, and on emotional problems. English writers were very sensitive to human and civil rights issues, especially as

these affect new immigrants, women, and people of color. Israel showed no pattern of preference regarding client needs and Israeli articles focused on mental illness, emotional difficulties (especially war related losses), and issues of group interaction and conflict. Australians also did not indicate a strong preference for working with particular client needs and wrote articles addressed to family difficulties, health conditions, emotional problems, and interpersonal problems. In the area of behavioral and conduct problems of clients, the four countries resembled each other. In each country, this was one of the client needs most frequently addressed in published group work articles.

DISCUSSION

The present study represents an empirical effort to describe the extent and nature of the contribution of international group workers to the process of building group work knowledge. It was assumed that group workers used publications in journals or proceedings recommended by the Association for the Advancement of Social Work with Groups as their major source of knowledge for practice. Consequently, 271 articles written between 1978 and 1992 by group workers employed outside the United States were identified and analyzed. As a group, international writers were writing sizably more articles categorized as *innovations in practice theory, applications of social science, and research and surveys* than US writers. However, the portion of research articles was small, as it was for American group researchers. And the percentage of narrative descriptions of group practice was high. International researchers did not report research in a way suggestive of a rigorous and sophisticated research methodology and international researchers used only a few types of data analysis. Although there is no agreed upon social work standard for research productivity, this analysis of international contributions and review of past U.S. contributions suggests that there is room for improvement.

International groups tended to be short term, close ended, weekly and scheduled for two hours. However, groups around the world differed in many other ways and typical patterns of theoretical frame of reference, client life stage, or client need did not appear.

Finally, the four major contributing countries, Australia, Canada, Great Britain, and Israel, brought emphases to their group practice which reflected the cultural and social particulars faced by group workers in each country.

In answer to the original question posed in this article, Is international social a two way transfer of innovations and practice approaches?, the current study offers a tentative yes. Valuable group work contributions are increasingly appearing in our professional literature. However, it is not clear if this knowledge is being used. Further research, for example, a citation analysis or a survey of practitioners, might examine the extent to which American social workers make use of this growing international group work literature in their own practice and scholarship.

The current content analysis might also lead to other related inquiries. For example, a quantitative content analysis may not do justice to the richness and variety found in articles from around the world. A qualitative comparison of the published work of American and foreign group workers would supplement the current study. Or, as our literature grows increasingly rich and large, group workers might use content analysis to obtain information about specific spheres of group practice by region, by field of practice, or by client characteristics. Such an approach to knowledge synthesis might aid workers in tailoring models of practice so they are sensitive to cultural, social, and ecological influences on groups and their members. Content analysis might then serve as a tool for systematically using our accumulated practice and research wisdom.

Group workers value diversity and believe that member differences can be one of the major sources of a group's strength. Thanks in part to the Association for the Advancement of Social Work with Groups, which views itself as an international professional organization, we today have a large literature of group work from fellow social workers from various countries and cultures around the world. Social group work and the Association will grow in diversity and become more responsive to current national and global social problems if we continue this effort and tomorrow foster greater and even more far reaching exchange with our international colleagues.

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