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Reflections and Farewell

by Elana Leigh

In 2019, when Diana Salters handed over the ITAA leadership role to me, she described the association at that time as a clean, well-repaired ship that was ready to sail. So I set sail, and having a strong, reliable vessel made the journey safer.

These 2 years have been intense, unpredictable, and rewarding both personally and professionally. I was not sure why I had agreed to become “captain,” and I didn’t have a set agenda for my term. But I was clear that I wanted the privilege of serving and giving back to this organization that has given me so much. This matches my value about the role service plays when living and working in community.

Not having a fixed agenda helped me stay present to what arose and allowed me to experience an internal sense of spaciousness. I did not feel the need to act from a sense of urgency but rather felt I had time for dialogue and shared decision making. This highlighted my deep curiosity about the process of leadership. Through therapy and supervision I came to understand that being



South African and the youngest of three siblings meant that collaborative leadership was not something I was familiar with. It has, therefore, become dear to my heart.

I asked myself questions such as:

- What sort of leadership does the ITAA require at this time?
- What sort of leader am I and what sort do I wish to be?

- When is it important to be process or task focused and where do these areas intersect?
- How do I lead collaboratively but also pay attention to when too much collaboration leads to a leaderless group and when too much active directing shuts the system down?

In thinking about these questions, I faced my own vulnerable binary positions, which required careful self-monitoring:

- Being too active versus sitting back, observing, and being trustful of the process and others
- Being too invested in process and failing to focus enough on tasks
- Being open and transparent versus containing my observations, feelings, and thoughts until (if ever) the appropriate time emerges to share them
- Allowing my desire for the democratic and collaborative process

to sometimes override the requirement for a firm boundary and decision

- Allowing my deep belief in coconstruction to interfere with times when a confrontation of another or myself was required

With these thoughts and questions in mind, the TA community faced the cancellation of the 2020 World TA Conference and the subsequent strong, excellent, ongoing collaboration with the presidents and treasurers from all the organizing associations. The requirement for us to work together brought great unity while also honoring our unique differences. Holding these two realities simultaneously is the challenge when negotiating and collaborating.

We in the TA world community have a long shared history during which differences and conflicts have taken us through the natural developmental process of splitting. Although many of these splits have been in the service of developing separate autonomous identities, this has not always been in the best interests of the community at large. When a disruption and/or split occurs that does not include repair and resolution, we have only gone through part of the cycle. This can lead to us becoming stuck in a conscious or unconscious power struggle that when not worked through leaves deep scars.

My long history within the TA world community together with my personal history creates a perfect platform for my lifelong quest for collaboration in which ownership of history is part of a reconciliation process. In my years as president, I have spent a great deal of time working with differences and splits that occur intrapsychically, interpersonally, and internationally. Reconciling, coming together, and collaboration does not

necessarily make whole that which was broken. We humans are drawn to merging as well as being separate, and how we navigate our way through the ebb and flow of both seems to be our ongoing challenge.

In my keynote speech for the recent online Transactional Analysis Association of Japan (TAAJ) conference, I spoke to some of these issues. “Joining Hands in Each Other: Con-

“Reconciling, coming together, and collaboration does not necessarily make whole that which was broken. We humans are drawn to merging as well as being separate, and how we navigate our way through the ebb and flow of both seems to be our ongoing challenge.”

necting Internal, Interpersonal, and International” was the theme of the conference, which took place during these unprecedented times of isolation and new ways of connection. The conference was about connecting and making contact. That implies joining hands and increasing contact internally, interpersonally, and internationally, which is essential to our individual and collective well-being. Exclusion and inclusion are ways of attempting to understand the sense of isolation that may be felt between us at the international level.

I was struck by the Japanese idea of *Uchi-Soto*, which is one of the most unique aspects of their culture and a key to understanding their society and how people behave. Uchi refers to all those who are inside a group—for example, family or culture—and Soto is that which is outside of it. The inside represents familiarity, cleanliness, and safety, and the outside represents what is unfamiliar and unsafe. I imagine that this belief

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“When a disruption and/or split occurs that does not include repair and resolution, we have only gone through part of the cycle. This can lead to us becoming stuck in a conscious or unconscious power struggle that when not worked through leaves deep scars.”

ripples through all levels of relating and communicating in Japan. Like all belief systems, it is likely deeply instilled in the script or narrative, and even if not practiced consciously, it operates unconsciously.

It brings to mind how belonging is key to being members of an international association, but what does that mean? Using the idea of Uchi-Soto, if Uchi is safe and Soto not, then safety is the first hurdle we need to transcend to cross the divides in our TA community. Safety requires a consistent flow of communication and contact so that a sense of mutual knowing evolves that then helps to create a sense of trust. Our mutual challenge is to join hands in such a way that we can think together and embrace the language and cultural divide, each of us being aware of the confrontation of our position to each other’s frames of reference while simultaneously respecting each other’s positions. For this to occur, we must each acknowledge our contributions to the current relational dynamic of Uchi-Soto that perhaps underpins our divide, each loosen our ties to our respective frames of reference, and work together to create a “third” objective and subjective reality that allows us to authentically meet. Belonging requires that

Elana Leigh can be reached at elana-leigh23@gmail.com.

we share a philosophy and value system, a common body of theory and practice, even if there are cultural differences in its application. This can evoke a feeling of being Uchi—that is, because we are all the “in group” together, we believe we can transcend our differences.

In doing this we create a paradigm shift from relating through the lens of a one-person psychology—that is, Parent to Child—to a two-person way of communicating. I think that Uchi-Soto can be true for all of us when we feel marginalized and threatened, and that if we researched our collective histories,

we would discover that humans are essentially relationally driven, desiring contact, safety, and belonging.

Whether we are collaborating and negotiating with other TA associations and organizations or among ourselves in each group, I want to end by inviting us all to find ways to cross over our histories and join to make the worldwide TA community more cohesive and truly international.

It has been a pleasure to serve you all, and I feel confident in handing the reins over to Chitra Ravi. I wish her a good term as president and will support her in any way I can. 📍

ITAA News

Annual General Membership Meeting—Join Us!

A reminder that the 2021 ITAA Annual General Membership meeting (AGM) will be held via Zoom on Saturday, 31 July at 10 am GMT/UTC. The agenda includes the following plus the celebration of the two 2021 ITAA awards:

- Welcome to members and visitors
- Honoring and remembering people who passed this year
- Adoption of the minutes of the 2020 AGM
- Adoption of accounts for 2020
- Reports from the president and members of the board of trustees (BOT)
- Farewell and thanks to those leaving the BOT
- Introduction of new BOT members
- Any other business
- Questions and answers
- Notice of 2022 AGM

- Presentation of the 2021 Muriel James Living Principles Award to Janice Dowson and the ITAA Service Award to Izumi Kadomoto

To attend the event, you must register via Eventbrite [here](#). Once you have done that, you will receive a Zoom invitation link closer to the date. To participate in the Zoom meeting, you must have a signed “Consent to Electronic Transmissions” form on file with the ITAA. (If you need to fill out the form, go [here](#).) Individuals with consent forms on file and who are ITAA members in good standing as of 30 June 2021 (the “Record Date”) are entitled to vote. If you cannot attend the 2021 AGM online or in person, please fill out the proxy form, which can be found in the members-only section of the ITAA website.

We look forward to seeing you at the AGM! 📍

An Important First Step Toward a Stronger Online Presence for the ITAA

by Alessandra Pierini and Michelle Thomé

During the lockdown, beyond geographical and cultural differences, people had a strong desire to belong, to meet and share. In response, the ITAA organized its first-ever online workshop, which was held over 16 hours on the weekend of 22 May 2021. We developed a single event that could span time zones around the world and bring together different scientific communities from five continents. This event represented both belonging beyond cultures and equality beyond application fields.

The workshop theme was “Ruptures and Recovery: Within and Between Individuals and Society.” As ITAA President Elana Leigh said at the opening, this event “speaks to the heart of being human because there are some things we can avoid, but having ruptures and making mistakes is not one of them. We humans will at some point fail each other, and it is often not the failing that is traumatic or disruptive but rather the way we embrace it or not. How effectively the rupture is repaired depends on who we are

and how we walk the talk in being respectful and open to failure.”

ITAA offered four consecutive online sessions, one each from the four fields of TA. Approximately 40 people participated live in each session, and many more have purchased access to the recordings. It was, indeed, a marathon of TA knowledge! Each presentation was 2.5 hours long, and speakers invited participants to reflect and interact with each other during the session.

After an introduction from Elana, we went into the educational session, which was conducted by Beatrijs Dijkman, MSc, PTSTA (E), on “Freedom as an Existential Position.” Next Edward Novak, MA, Certified Psychoanalyst, representing the clinical field, presented on “Embodied Therapy: Repairing Mind-Body Ruptures Created by Abuse, Neglect,



Alessandra Pierini



Michelle Thomé

Pandemics, and Other Life Trauma.” Following him, Sylvie Monin, TSTA (C), presented the counseling session entitled “From Nothingness, to Rhythm, to Breath, to Renewal.” To finish, Sabine-Inken Schmidt, PTSTA (O), presented her organizational session on “Organizations Post Pandemic: What Will Remain, What Will Change?”

The speakers’ commitment to this process was amazing as they creatively brought TA theory into our world context. For example, Beatrijs Dijkman invited the participants to build a *pantoum* (a Tibetan poem). Afterward she said, “The workshop

“The workshop committee’s goals for this first online event were to enable people from all over the world to participate in at least two of the sessions at convenient times for them, to bring together a diverse group of participants from many countries and cultures, and to present both well-known speakers in the TA world and some new faces.”

was lively and wonderful in discussing the theme of freedom with people from different contexts and cultures. It provoked insights and resulted in profound poems.”

We admire and are grateful to those presenters and participants who joined us even at challenging times for them. It is difficult to accommodate a global audience, and our hope was that the consecutive sessions would give participants from around the world at least one session at a convenient time. In addition, offering the recordings of the live sessions at a reduced rate is another way we could make the event accessible to everyone.

The recordings have been so popular that we are extending the time they will be posted on ITAA’s YouTube channel from the end of June to the end of July. It’s not too late to purchase access to the recordings by going to [the link on the ITAA home page](#) or [on the Eventbrite page](#).

Alessandra Pierini, VP Operations and Conference Committee cochair, can be reached at alessandrapierini@physis.org. Michelle Thomé, workshop coordinator and Latin America regional representative on the ITAA Board of Trustees, can be reached at michellethome@gmail.com.

After you make the purchase, you will receive an email with a link to the private section of the ITAA YouTube channel where the videos are posted.

It was a challenge to organize this workshop in just 4 months and with only a small team of volunteers. We are proud of the result we achieved. The contribution of the four speakers was valuable not only for their theoretical approaches to TA but also for their openness to exchange experiences with participants.

The workshop committee’s goals for this first online event were to enable people from all over the world to participate in at least two of the sessions at convenient times for them, to bring together a diverse group of participants from many countries and cultures, and to present both well-known speakers in the TA world and some new faces. Using ITAA’s TAlent program structure, we offered discounted ticket rates based on where participants live, and we extended these rates to non-ITAA members as well in an effort to make it affordable for everyone.

Given that TA and ITAA members are spread around the world and wanting to reach as many people as possible, we worked hard to secure volunteer interpreters because all of the sessions were in English. In the end, we had simultaneous interpretation in 10 languages (Italian, Dutch, German, Portuguese, Spanish, Russian, Croatian, Serbian, Persian, and Bosnian), something we are very proud of. We thank all of the volunteer interpreters who made it possible.

As ITAA’s first foray into the world of online events, it was a test case, and, as a committee, we learned a lot regarding how to best manage the structure and process for such a large event. And once the workshop was over, we solicited feedback from

attendees about the structure and process so we can use that feedback to plan future events. Most of the feedback was positive, including the following:

Maria Conceição Silveira (Brazil): “Everything worked really well. It was my first experience, and I loved it. It was amazing to be in contact and work with so many great people from the TA community.”

Alastair Moodie (UK): “It was great to feel part of a global community—at one point I was talking to one participant in Bangladesh and another in Mexico.”

Danijela Djuric (Serbia): “I love that all four fields had their place in the workshop, and the choice of topics was interesting. I give high marks to the content and special thanks to the inspiring teachers.”

We are proud of the success of this first ITAA online event and look forward to moving in this direction again in the future. 📍

TAJ Theme Issues

“Systemic Oppression: What Part Do We Play?”

Coeditors: Helen Rowland and
Karen Minikin

Deadline: 1 August 2021



“Ecological Transactional Analysis”

Coeditors: Giles Barrow, Hayley
Marshall, and Sylvie Monin

Deadline: 1 February 2022

Please follow the submission
requirements posted [here](#).

Email manuscripts to
TAJ Managing Editor Robin Fryer,
MSW, at robinfryer@aol.com.

News from the IBOC

by IBOC Cochairs Sue Eusden and Jacqueline van Gent

TSTA Exams

On 16 May, the IBOC ran a set of online TSTA mock exams (Theory/Organizations/Ethics or TOE, Teaching, and Supervision) in order to prepare for the online TSTA exams that will be held 9-11 September 2021.

The various stakeholders (candidates, examiners, observers, and exam coordinators) have provided evaluative comments, which we put together in a report that is now available to the worldwide community via [this link](#).

The conclusion of this evaluation is that it is possible to maintain exam standards for the TSTA in the online Zoom environment with some careful accounting for technical and organizational factors. It is vital that all participants are well prepared, and this quality of attention ahead of the exams is key to their success.

Candidates need to be familiar with working in an online platform, and if they are taking the teaching/supervision exam, they are best prepared if they are already experienced in online teaching/supervising. We acknowledge the online exams will privilege those who are familiar with this, and it is a factor for candidates to consider before applying for an online exam. Online exams are not

a substitute for on-site exams, and candidates will be able to make a choice as to how best to showcase their competencies.

Examiners also need to be well-prepared, and the experience of the mock exams showed that this can be done. All the work before the exams helped to provide a thorough readiness on behalf of the examiners, from reading candidate files in advance through to building their skills and confidence in examining together in the online environment via Zoom training and examiner training before the exams.

Volunteers for audiences can be well prepared and supported throughout the process, and there is enough protection for them as well as for the candidates.

Online TSTA exams can offer a good opportunity for candidates to show their competencies and for examiners to engage with candidates to consider the exam evaluation criteria and make a fair and considered assessment of the candidate's capacities for certifying as a TSTA. The IBOC is encouraged by the experience and learning from these mock exams and will use this to inform and plan for the full set of exams in September 2021 and beyond. An addendum to Section

11 of the *Handbook*, clarifying procedures for on-line TSTA exams, is being prepared and will be available soon on the website.

In March 2021, the EATA Council of Certification (COC) also ran a set of online TSTA mock exams, which resulted in EATA's decision that in July of this year, COC will organize theory/organizations/ethics (TOE) online exams and no supervision or teaching exams. If and when COC will also run teaching and supervision online exams is yet to be decided within EATA. In the meantime, we want to emphasize that the IBOC will continue to recognize all EATA COC's CTA and TSTA (STA/TTA) exams both online and on-site.

We also wish to underline that the IBOC will continue to offer online exams and TEWs in the years to come, hopefully alongside on-site exams and TEWs when travel restrictions due to the pandemic no longer exist.

Call for Examiners for September Exams

If you wish to be involved as an examiner or volunteer in the CTA and TSTA exams on 9-11 September, please make yourself available through our call for examiners, which

you can find on the exam calendar page of the ITAA website [here](#). We have 11 CTA and 15 TSTA candidates, so your involvement is most welcome!

New IBOC Administrative Assistant

Now that Janet Chin has retired, we are pleased to welcome Caroline Donovan as our new administrator. She introduces herself elsewhere on this page.

Thanks From Janet Chin

My thanks to the Board of Trustees and all members of the ITAA for the generous retirement present. Since I am an avid reader and supporter of local businesses, I greatly appreciate receiving the gift certificate to a local brick and mortar bookstore. I will make good use of it.

Thank you also for the kind words about me in *The Script* articles. I am honored by the recognition of my role in the organization.

I have enjoyed working with the many wonderful people in the ITAA/IBOC from around the world. Although I look forward to enjoying full retirement, I will miss my interactions with the TA community. Being a part of your community the past many years has been a pleasure. I wish you all well.

—Janet Chin 📧

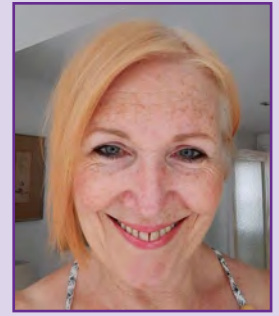
IBOC and ITAA Emails

Email IBOC at:
iboc@itaaworld.org

Email ITAA at:
info@itaaworld.org

Introducing Our New IBOC Administrator

With Janet's retirement, we are pleased to announce that Caroline Donovan has become our new IBOC administrator. We asked her to introduce herself here:



I live in Bedfordshire, United Kingdom, and have two amazing grown kids, a gorgeous grandson, and a dog called Lexi. I started my working life as a social worker with children and families for 12 years before moving into administrative work. Alongside my new role with the IBOC, I also work as an administrator with the Board of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Europe's largest conservation charity—and nature is one of my passions!

I'm delighted and a little nervous about taking on the IBOC role from Janet's experienced, capable hands. It's just impossible to pass on all that wealth of knowledge from so many years, so there are no doubt going to be occasional gaps for a little while. Please be patient while I get familiar and learn. I look forward to connecting with you all!

Caroline can be reached at iboc@itaaworld.org.

TA Publications

Tony White has a new book out in Russian and English titled *Redecision Therapy Today: A Redecision Relational Approach to Transactional Analysis*. It discusses the rededecision and relational schools of TA to see if they can in some way be reconciled, that is, to take the best of both and use them in one overall approach. This is challenging because of some basic dissimilarities in theory and philosophical views about basic human nature and how therapy should proceed, especially in terms of the use and importance of the transference or therapeutic relationship. For details about the book and ordering: <https://sites.google.com/view/tonywhiteneew-book/home>



Karen Pratt has written *Transactional Analysis Coaching: Distinctive Features*, which was published by Routledge in February 2021. The book distills the essence of developmental TA frameworks that are most useful for bringing alive professional coaching competencies. It offers clear outlines of TA frameworks and describes how they are applied in coaching using coaching conversations to illustrate the theory in practice. It will be of interest to coaches in training and can serve as a useful resource for clients in their ongoing development. For details and a 20% discount (enter code FLR40) go to www.routledge.com/9780367339241. 📧





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ONLINE GROUPS for 2021 - 2022

Online and international - based in UK

Advanced Training Group

Taking place on 8 Saturdays during the academic year, our Online Advanced Training Group is for those who have completed formal training and are on the journey towards exam preparation:

Are you looking to complete the hours requirements for the CTA exam? Do you have written work to complete and would like supervision or further theory input within a group setting?

The Advanced Training Group meets 9,00am - 1.00pm UK time, Content may include elements of supervision, discussion, theory exploration, sharing articles - the agenda is set by the group.

About the trainers

Beren Aldridge PTSTA(P) and Michelle Hyams-Ssekasi PTSTA(P), are experienced therapists and supervisors and are core trainers on our clinical training programme.

Membership of the Group is for a min of 5 dates during the year. Cost £300 for 5 days. £60 for each additional date. 25 Sept 2021 , 23 Oct, 27 Nov, 22 Jan 2022, 12 Feb, 9 Apr, 7 May, 8 Jun.

Exam Preparation Group

Taking place on 10 days during the year, our Exam Preparation Group will support you preparing for your CTA written and oral exams. Through individually tailored development activities such as discussions, planning or writing sections of the case study and mock exams, we will give you the understanding you need for both the written and oral exam processes.

About the trainers

Bev Gibbons PTSTA(P) and Andy Williams TSTA(P), are experienced therapists and supervisors who have successfully supervised candidates through both the CTA written and oral exam process.

Membership of the Group is for a min of 5 dates during the year. £375 for 5 days. £75 for each additional date. Dates: Sat 4 Sept 2021, Fri 15 Oct, Sat 27 Nov, Fri 10 Dec, Sat 8 Jan 2022, Fri 11 Feb, Sat 19 Mar, Fri 8 Apr, Sat 7 May, Fri 10 Jun. All dates are 9.00am - 4.00pm UK time.

www.tatraining.org
contact@tatraining.org
+44(0)113 2583399



The Times They Are A-Changin', Aren't They?

by Anne de Graaf and Jan Grant, Cochairs of the ITAA Ethics Committee

In recent months, we, the members of the ITAA Ethics Committee, have met regularly to reflect together on several crucial topics in relation to the ITAA Code of Ethical Conduct and the *ITAA Ethics Complaint Procedures Manual*. This contribution aims to update you about reforms the committee sees as necessary because the times they are a-changin'.

There are three closely related issues. The first concerns the changing view of the role of ethics in general and hence in the work of the professional. The second concerns the consequences of this changing view for "the tone of voice" of the code and procedures. The third concerns the balancing of autonomy and homonomy. The latter set this reform process in motion.

A Spirit of Inquiry?

In several discussions, it was argued that in recent decades a different view of the role of ethics has developed. At least two concrete complaints that we have worked on in recent years caused several members of the committee to start

cepts such as scapegoat, complexity, projection, lightning rod, ambiguity, blame, and so on played a part. After the dust settled, we decided to investigate what lessons could be learned. At a later stage, we will return to you (through a survey and a webinar) to broaden this dialogue.



ITAA Ethics Committee members: (top from left) Anne de Graaf, Michelle Thomé, Trudi Newton, Anne Tucker, (bottom from left) Jan Grant, Pierre Sebregts, and Tomoko Abe

questioning their role, task, and responsibility. We appeared to still be working with the belief that we were expected to "point out a culprit." Members developed an aversion to this possible outcome. There were fierce debates in which con-

In ethical debates, we experienced a slow but steady development from knowing what is right or wrong to engaging in a spirit of inquiry. Whereas previously knowing what is right or wrong played the leading role, now we seem to be getting past

that. We are inspired by the words of Dr. Leslie Brissett, secretary at the London Tavistock Institute, who said, “The adversarial system of ‘winner takes all’ or ‘first past the post’ may be relics of a mindset that seeks isolation and victory, requiring an ‘either/or’ mentality. Are we ready to engage in a thoughtful ‘both/and’ mindset? One that seeks to explore the volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity of our contemporary world?” (de Graaf personal notes from Tavistock Institute P3C course, June 2017).

Thinking about the consequences of this fundamental change, we asked ourselves if one should start an ethical debate with the aim of finishing it. Shouldn’t ethical debates be ongoing and never ending? This prevents scapegoats from being pointed out. Instead, we can be prepared to say, “I am sorry” and “I was wrong.” The role, task, and responsibility of the ethics committee can be to stimulate and initiate the conversation about ethics and keep it going. For us the goal of any ethical debate is not to find out what is right or what is wrong. We’d rather have as an objective to create awareness about the choices we make, even when they are unethical.

Parental?

The last two major complaints we dealt with made it clear that most members of the committee were uncomfortable with the expectation of being a kind of “TA judge.” They prefer to work with the principle that as soon as people are involved, there is no longer any linear causality. The consequence is that the Parental tone of voice of the wording of the complaints procedure and the code of conduct needs adjusting to change from assessing to exploring when the ITAA Ethics Committee is made aware of a

situation. If the current theory and practice of the committee mainly invites the Parent ego state (judge) to come into action, we are determined to also invite the Adult ego state (explore) in. And an effective ethical debate also needs energy from the Child ego state: Ethics can be exciting!

Balancing Autonomy and Homonomy?


The ethics committee agrees that, as a sign of the times, it is worthwhile to explore the consequence of balancing autonomy and homonomy in our thinking about and action on the Code of Ethical Conduct. Given that the stated goal of TA is autonomy, which Berne (1964) defined as the “the release or recov-

ery of three capacities: awareness, spontaneity and intimacy” (p. 158), it is important for us to look at this ideal. Is it perhaps time to take a less individualistic approach and also consider our need for belonging, for connection, and for community?

To be continued!

The current members of the ITAA Ethics Committee include Anne de Graaf (NL), cochair; Jan Grant (AU), cochair; Trudi Newton (UK); Tomoko Abe (JP); Anne Tucker (NZ); Pierre Sebregts (NL); and Michelle Thomé (BR)

Reference

Berne, E. (1964). *Games people play: The psychology of human relationships*. Grove Press. 

ITAA News

SEC Focus Group on Nonviolence

Nonviolence is a multidimensional principle and approach that is contextual depending on the cultural environment in which it is practiced. Given our ethical stance as transactional analysts, we will explore the implications of nonviolence personally, professionally, socially,

and globally. The objectives of this focus group (part of the ITAA Social Engagement Committee) are to explore the meaning and relevance of nonviolence using a TA lens and begin a dialogue about nonviolence. Possible outcomes of this group include outlining and describing different dimensions and levels of nonviolence, developing a manifesto on nonviolence as applicable to TA training and practice, and researching possibilities for nonviolence as an approach to resolving personal/professional/global conflict.

Join us for nonviolence focus groups online (via Zoom) the second Saturday of each month, beginning 10 July 2021 from 9-10:30 am GMT/UTC.

Please register before 6 July via email to sashi.c@nityagurukula.org or via WhatsApp: +919944412305

SEC Webinar Recording Now Available Free on YouTube

All in the same storm? But not in the same boat?

Missed the event? Just want to see it again? The recording of our third webinar (which took place on Monday, 28 June 2021) is now available on YouTube.

[Click here for access.](#)

Intersectionality Focus Group Report

by Victoria Baskerville and Samia Nelson

The intersectionality focus group of the ITAA Social Engagement Committee (SEC) is seen as an emerging group process in which group members will live into an awareness of the complexity of their intersectional identity and what this means for us as transactional analysts.

Twenty ITAA members met online from around the world, including India, Turkey, the USA, Iran, and the UK, and within this was a diversity of cultural identities that

“Like many other groups of this nature, people came either because of their intersectional experience and their experience of oppression or because they held an awareness of the need to hold the political and social as central to their practice.”

brought a complexity of transcultural experience. We began by asking what brought participants to the encounter. This set the scene for musing the unconscious. And like many other groups of this nature, people came either because of their intersectional experience and their experience of oppression or because they held an awareness of the need to hold the political and social as central to their practice.

What was evident in this group was whether individuals located themselves in their country of residence or their home country, that is, their place of birth having either immigrated years ago, moved away more recently, or the place of their ancestors. As the facilitators, we introduced ourselves through our cultural narratives, inviting radical openness and nondefended dialogue (Hart, 2017), thereby inviting members' willingness to tell their cultural story and to locate both the oppressed and privileged aspects of self.

In such groups, what can emerge for those who are predominantly oppressed is both a vulnerability and a sense of relief at having a space in which to voice their experience and struggle. Alongside this, those holding predominantly privilege can go to a place of feeling should I be here, am I an imposter? This, of course, mirrors the imposter daily experience of minorities.

When considering a metaperspective on this group, it was important to acknowledge and account for the fact that the group was being facilitated in English by two United Kingdom facilitators, which in itself could become an oppressive dynamic. However, it was also noted that both facilitators have complex cul-

tural narratives and experience both the oppressor and oppressed in self. Considering the way we introduced ourselves led to a discussion on the palpable hierarchy within our TA organizations, with particular regard to professional status. We chose to name this as potentially another oppressive structure in the group.

Intersectionality has become a popular term, but it was clear in the shared space that we can only truly embody intersectionality as a lived experience as we begin to account for our part in systemic oppression and the understanding that all oppression is connected.

We have asked participants to respond to two reflective questions so as to offer here a collective lens and to bring alive the lived experience of intersectionality.

What brought you to the group?

- Intersectionality is a big buzzword but what does it mean for therapists and our work?
- My curiosity about and deep regard for people's journeys and diversity of human experience
- My need to be mirrored, for my story to be heard and for my voice to matter

- My belief that we can create collective wellness through learning about and embracing our differences as well as our similarities
- I hold an intersectional framework in mind to uncover and support both the privilege and oppression my clients experience. I joined this group so I could not only share my perception of the value of this way of working but also listen and learn from others whose identity, or that of their clients, hinders or supports a forward motion of change.
- I came to the group to talk about my own culture and the challenges I had with the Islamic culture and politics. But when I heard that people talked about the TA community and discrimination, I realized I had a deep feeling that I had repressed so much that I couldn't even see anymore.
- I became curious about my own journey of remembering certain parts of my identity as a consequence of being a "brown," Muslim woman and psychotherapist, not to mention an academic and an immigrant. My understanding of intersectionality is about making sense of partially overlapping and partially disjointed aspects of the self.
- I am curious about intersectionality and maternal mental health, particularly because I work with a culturally diverse client group but

Victoria Baskerville (She/Her), TSTA (P), SEC member and focus group cofacilitator, can be reached at Victoriabaskerville@icloud.com. Samia Nelson (She/Her), CTA (P), SEC focus group cofacilitator, can be reached at samianelson@icloud.com.

with a common thread: They are all emotionally distressed mothers.

- I am quite interested in intersectionality because I have lived most of my life in an international environment and have experienced prejudice regarding my nationality. I am quite interested in radical psychiatry and the concept of alienation and oppression.
- Curiosity and interest in the experiences of others and myself
- A desire to make training in psychological therapies more accessible and inclusive and to increase access to psychotherapy for marginalized and underprivileged individuals
- To finally be able to be part of a supportive group in which we can all share life experiences

How did you experience the group?

- I feel privileged to be invited to be part of the group and to hear people's stories
- I felt both excited and anxious—will my voice matter? Will people learn anything from hearing my story? Will I be understood? Will I be able to understand and empathically challenge?
- I love that it provided me with a safe space in which to talk and to learn about my and others' experiences.
- I found the space itself respectful and permission giving, and it was a warming experience to hear the stories of those who attended, their difference and how this impacts them personally, the impact of their own narrative on the work they undertake, and also

how the focus of difference can support a positive existential position between client and therapist.

- I enjoy the group being global TA folks with whom I can broaden my lens and safely explore and experience the meanings, implications, and potential triggers of intersectionality.
- I was excited to be part of such a diverse and international group, which reflects who I am.
- I enjoyed the diversity of people and experiences in the group and the beginnings of finding an essence of intersectionality and how it impacts psychotherapy processes and is accounted for but also to explore my own senses of oppression and exclusion through an intersectional lens.
- I realized I had a deep feeling of inferiority when talking to friends because of my nationality. This group was the first place I could talk about these feelings and become aware of them. I hope there will be more of these groups so we can talk about what we have repressed and feel better and healed.
- I found it engaging, and I learned something about myself in the context of difference with others.
- For me, entering a group with so much cultural diversity and minoritized experience felt psychologically safe. I also felt excited and inspired.

Reference

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