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**THE GROUP-ANALYTIC SOCIETY
INTERNATIONAL**

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Editorial

By the time of reading this, I imagine, for most of you that were there, that the Lisbon GASI Symposium feels like a distant dream. To help us remember, this issue contains an eclectic range of contributors who take us back to that excellently well-organised event in that extraordinary city. We have contributions from two first time attendees who hold up mirrors that tell us much about us as a community. We have an exchange of correspondence between two highly experienced group practitioners on the theme of group leadership styles in USA and Europe. We also have the perspectives of a team of workshop leaders, as well as a paper presented on a panel centred on the theme of the social unconscious and the foundation matrix. In addition, Contexts' new regular columnist announces the first ever GASI Symposium awards (SADs) reflecting back on the past two decades, as well as (amongst other things) a ten point guide to the large group.

This issue also contains two interviews, both conducted through e-mail, with two figures within the GASI community. The first is a brief exchange with Dr. Vivienne Cohen on recently being honoured for her contribution to developing psychotherapy within the UK National Health Service. The second is a more extended conversation with Terry Birchmore, the retiring (from this issue) editor of this newsletter. We also have a contribution from Joanna Moncrieff, one of the founders of the Critical Psychiatry Network, on the theme of mental health in a neoliberal world, reminding us of how "psychology is political".

Finally, this issue starts with an important proposal by GASI Membership Secretary Carmen O'Leary regarding the possible abolition of the associate membership category. Please take time to read her proposal and to send us your thoughts. Naturally, as one of the channels for the voice of the GASI membership, Contexts welcomes your thoughts on any of the content published here.

Peter Zelaskowski

President's Foreword

The big event this summer was the Symposium in Lisbon. The organizing committee worked very well, the participants numbers were those expected and we were all greatly relieved when it started. There were some fascinating keynote speakers and we were privileged to listen to some of the world's best minds and to a not less prominent row of Group Analytic lecturers. What was very impressive too was the work done in the Small Groups, the many workshops, the Social Dream Matrices and the difficult Large Group. Most of the feedback I heard was about the Small Groups, although the Symposium participants voiced many issues on all other sides of our conference.

The Large Group was a chapter by itself. Technically it was difficult because of the hearing problems in the first two days. Although the organizing and the scientific committees took great pains to choose a place with good acoustics and a sound organization of space (it is not easy to seat about 400 people in one group) we were surprised, when the space filled with people, how big the hearing problem became. The space in the middle seemed to add to an enormous empty feeling. What seemed to be even more difficult than the problems of the practical setting was that the Symposium happened in the middle of the Gaza war. The contingent of 30 Israeli group analysts, seemed to be in a heavy mood, having left their families in a dangerous situation in order to be in Lisbon and afraid of antagonistic feelings in the Society. The contradictory feelings between the Symposium participants, who seemed to be mostly non-verbal in the large group - which calls for the representation of the Social Unconscious or "Large Group Identities" (Volkan, 2002), were difficult to express.

The large group seemed stuck in spite of the efforts to encourage significant communication. The technical difficulties proved to be easier to solve than the emotional process: after a "popular revolution" in the second session, in which dozens of participants, who sat on one side of the floor, changed places by pushing their seats closer to the center of the central space of the group to occupy it. The overall area of the large group became smaller and easier to handle. On the next (third) day, the Large Group conductors changed the seating themselves, technically filling up the whole center space and enabling the almost four hundred participants to hear better. Maybe because of this input, the LG started to open up, and many participants found their voice. In spite of this, the difficulties in

communication seemed to return on the fourth day.

The Symposium finished by the traditional announcement that the next group-analytic Symposium will be...in Berlin. The organizers of the 2017 Symposium are already working. Another aspect I think worth mentioning was the bursaries and a new project which I called "shared responsibility", which was initiated to give emergency support to the local IGA and GASi. The Management Committee was very active in organizing support for many students and others who could not get financial help. In addition to the bursaries organized by the Symposium many other European organizations, like the IGA London, the Israel Foulkes Fund, etc. helped colleagues from less affluent countries to participate. I hope we can develop this trend, because there are always difficulties attending workshops, Foulkes' Lectures or Summer Schools (which will be in Prague next summer). The 'shared responsibility' initiative is additional support in case of financial losses. A number of Institutes in Europe, agreed to support the Symposium, in the event of an unforeseen difficulty, a loss which would endanger the ability of GASi or the local IGA to function. The Institutes of London, Copenhagen, Aarhus, Israel, Zurich, Berlin, D3G and Oslo promised to help and I was grateful for this, even if in the end we did not need it. In addition to the significance of financial backing it certainly involves the Institutes being more of a part of the Symposium, to send their members and to join the effort. We are hopeful we will have it for the next Symposium too, by then in a more advanced form.

Last but not least: our Society has not only grown with many new members, most of them students, but also some full and associate who came to the congress. We hope very much that many of us will further help more members to sign up, and that those who have just become members will be helped to continue with us. They will enjoy for many years the privileges of membership, such as the Journal of Group Analysis, participation in the Forum, the library, information as well as cheaper possibilities registering for workshops and the Foulkes Lecture.

Robi Friedman

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Be a Contexts Writer!

*“Substitute “damn” every time you’re inclined to write “very”; your editor will delete it and the writing will be just as it should be”. **Mark Twain***

Contexts welcomes contributions from GAS members and non-members on a variety of topics: Have you run or attended a group-analytic or group psychotherapy workshop? Are you involved in a group-analytic or group psychotherapy project that others might want to learn about? Would you like to share your ideas or professional concerns with a wide range of colleagues? If so, send us an article for publication by post, e-mail, or fax. Articles submitted for publication should be between 500 and 10,000 words long, or between one and eight A4 pages. Writing for Contexts is an ideal opportunity to begin your professional writing career with something that is informal, even witty or funny, a short piece that is a report of an event, a report about practice, a review of a book or film, a reply to an earlier article published here, or stray thoughts that you have managed to capture on paper. Give it a go!

Articles are welcome from all those who work with groups in any discipline: whether practitioners, trainers, researchers, users, or consultants. Accounts of innovations, research findings on existing practice, policy issues affecting group therapy, and discussions of conceptual developments are all relevant. Group therapy with clients, users, professional teams, or community groups fall within our range.

Length: Full length articles; of up to 10, 000 words, should show the context of practice and relate this to existing knowledge. We also accept brief contributions which need focus only on the issue at hand: brief descriptions, reviews, personal takes of workshops or events attended, humorous asides, letters and correspondence.

Presentation: articles, letters, etc. should ideally be in Word format and forwarded as an email attachment to the Editors.

Please don't worry about language, grammar and the organisation of your piece. We, as editors, receive many pieces from non-English speaking countries and it is our job to work with you to create a piece of writing that is grammatical and reads well in English. This help also extends to English speakers who may need help and advice about the coherence and organisation of a piece of work.

Writing for Contexts is an ideal opportunity to begin your professional writing career with something that is informal, even witty or funny, a short piece that is a report of an event, a report about practice, a review of a book or film, or stray thoughts that you have managed to capture on paper. Give it a go!

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GAS International New Members

Mrs Martina Britsa	Full Member	Arta, Greece
Ms Deborah Cook	Associate Member	London, UK
Dr Shulamit Geller	Full Member	Tel-Aviv, Israel
Mr Malcolm Peterson	Full Member	London, UK
Mr Markus Schirpke	Student Member	Berlin, Gemany

Letter to GASI membership from GASI Hon. Membership Secretary, Carmen O'Leary

London 23. September 2014

Dear colleagues,

Re.: **Associate Membership category.**

I made a proposal to abolish the above category at the last AGM that took place in Lisbon on the 28th July 2014. The AGM was well attended and we had an interesting discussion, but as we did not reach a firm conclusion, we agreed that I would open up the discussion to all the Society's membership. Abolishing the Associate membership category would necessitate a change in the constitution and this cannot be done without a majority vote of a quorate AGM. I think it is important that we all are involved in this decision and would like to hear your views.

My thinking about abolishing the **associate membership category** is based on the following:

- We state that we are a Society created '*to promote and support Group Analysis, primarily for professionals engaged in the practice of group psychotherapy or members of other professions with an interest in group dynamics*'.
(Note that it does not say that those professionals have to be qualified Group Psychotherapists or Group Analysts.)
- GASI does not train, approve or sanction any of its members to practice as Group Analysts or Group Psychotherapists, it is a Society set up to '*promote*' Group Analysis, '*primarily for professionals engaged in the practice of group psychotherapy*'.
- In Section 4 d (see table 1 below) the constitution says:

Associate Membership

Associate Membership shall be conferred upon such persons as the Committee, at its absolute discretion, shall decide are qualified by reason of their experience to further the objectives of the Society.

It seems to me that if we agree that a person is qualified '*by reason of his/her experience*' to further the objectives of the Society, then

we ought to be able to accept that person as a full member of the Society.

- The trend is for the number of Associate members to go down:

2009 – 48 Associate members	
2010 – 38	“
2011 – 41	“
2012 – 32	“
2013 – 27	“
2014 – 27	“ plus one group of 5

- The small increase in Associate membership this year compared to last year, might not be sustained, as in order to encourage attendance to the Lisbon Symposium we have made strenuous efforts and have given exceptional facilities to join GASI. This has included Joint Membership Categories that have allowed membership of GASI at a very low membership fee.
- The cost of Associate membership is currently £150-00 compared to £165-00 of Full membership and Associate members do not have voting rights, therefore they do not have a voice when it comes to making important decisions for the Society. This seems unfair to me.
- While the Associate membership category might have made sense when the Society was created, it does not make sense now, it belongs to another century, to a time when perhaps our venerable founders, believed that there was a need to protect the Society by not allowing full membership to those who had not undergone a specific training in Group Analysis. Since then, group analytic training has undergone many changes in response to the need to make it more accessible to health care professionals, and others, from many diverse backgrounds, both in the UK and worldwide. This flexibility and inclusiveness has allowed group analysis to grow and become a valuable treatment option. GASI is also growing and becoming a Society where thoughts and ideas, informed by group analytic concepts, can be shared and debated.

My proposal is that we abolish Associate membership and invite those

members to become full members if they so wish.

I look forward to your responses.

Carmen O'Leary

GASI Hon. Membership Secretary

	Table 1
4	<p>Membership</p> <p>Classes</p> <p>There shall be seven classes of membership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Founder Membership b) Honorary Membership c) Full Membership d) Associate Membership e) Group Membership f) Student Membership g) Joint Membership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Founder Membership <p>The Founder Members were Dr. E.J. Anthony, Dr. P.B. de Mare, Dr. N. Elias, Dr. S.H. Foulkes, Mrs E.T. Foulkes, Mrs. M.L. Abercrombie.</p> b) Honorary Membership <p>Honorary Membership shall be conferred upon such persons as the Committee shall elect to honorary membership.</p> c) Full Membership <p>Full Membership shall be open to such appropriately qualified persons as the Committee, at its absolute discretion, shall deem to have contributed effectively to the science of Group Analysis.</p> d) Associate Membership <p>Associate Membership shall be conferred upon such persons as the Committee, at its absolute discretion, shall decide are qualified by reason of their experience to further the objectives of the Society.</p> e) Group Membership <p>Group Membership shall be conferred, at the Committee's absolute discretion, upon a group of up to ten colleagues from any country with low economic status, as defined by international standards. Those colleagues shall have, as appropriate, the status within the Society of Full, Associate, or Student Members except that they will have only one vote between them at General Meetings (see para 15).</p> f) Student Membership <p>Student Membership shall be conferred, at the Committee's absolute discretion, upon any person who is currently attending a course in Group Analysis.</p> g) Joint Membership <p>Joint membership shall be available to married couples and those in established relationships. It is applicable to full, associate and student membership.</p>

Ideas about mental health in a neoliberal world

By Joanna Moncrieff

'Neoliberalism' is one of the terms used to describe the political and economic changes that have occurred worldwide since the late 1970s. Unravelling the class compromise reached after the second world war, neoliberal policies have consisted of the deregulation of financial markets, privatisation of state-run industries, and the rolling back of labour protections and the welfare state. Although underpinned by the democratic rhetoric of 'freedom' and 'choice,' neoliberalism can be better understood as a retrenchment of the forces of capital against labour. The results are clear. Neoliberalism has channelled resources back from the many to the few. It has re-established a supremely wealthy elite as well as widening inequality between all levels of society. David Harvey suggests that the redistribution of wealth has 'been such a persistent feature of neoliberalism as to be regarded as structural to the whole project' (1, p 16).

Socially, the dual strategies of exalting consumerism and increasing control have been central to the neoliberal project. Consumerism and control can be viewed as opposite sides of the same coin. People are encouraged to aspire to ever greater levels of conspicuous consumption, modelled by the lifestyles of the celebrity elite that are plastered all over the media and broadcast into everyone's living room. Shopping, which was once a means to an end, has been transformed into the UK's favourite leisure pursuit. At the same time, however, more and more people are excluded from the workforce forever by the movement of industry to areas of cheaper labour, and many others are stuck in low paid work with no prospect of advancement. Large portions of the population are only able to achieve the widely advertised 'ideal' lifestyle through illegal means. A highly unequal, consumer-oriented society entices people to crime, which was illustrated dramatically by the riots in London and other English cities over the summer of 2011.

Neoliberalism requires expanded mechanisms of social control to police the lawlessness and social fragmentation that its policies produce. Levels of imprisonment have been rising in many western countries, reaching staggering proportions in the United States in particular. In 2011, 0.7% of the US population were in prison, with 2.9% in prison, on probation or parole (2). Among African Americans, almost 7% of adult men were in prison, and one in three African American men can expect to go to

prison during their lifetime (3). 'In the US' comments Harvey, 'incarceration became a key state strategy to deal with the problems arising among discarded workers and marginalised populations' (1, p 77). Rates of imprisonment in the United Kingdom have also been rising, almost doubling since the early 1990s (4).

The dual drive to increase consumption and control the casualties of wealth re-distribution is bolstered by modern, individualistic notions of mental wellbeing and mental abnormality. Even before the age of 'neurobabble,' ideas like 'mental illness' located problems with behaviour and emotions within the individual, usually in a defective brain, but sometimes in subconscious mechanisms or defective cognitive structure. In this way the complex nature of how people relate to each other and to their environment was dislocated from its social context. In recent years, almost all human activity has been claimed to be explained by neuroscience- from economics to the appreciation of literature (5). These ideas sit well with neoliberal thinking, with its emphasis on the individual and its distaste for 'society'.

The concept of mental illness is useful partly because it provides a conveniently elastic justification for control and confinement to complement the criminal justice system. Once someone is labelled as sick and needing treatment, almost anything can be justified. As soon as the bizarre, disturbing and occasionally disruptive behaviour we call mental illness is attributed to a brain disease, its origins and meanings no longer have to be understood. It simply has to be corrected, with drugs or ECT or whatever else it takes. Normal considerations of the autonomy of the individual can be dispensed with. 'Health' trumps freedom in mental health law.

Neoliberal policies breed communities that no longer have the resources or the motivation to accommodate difference. As people are increasingly displaced from family and friends, as social support networks collapse and as work becomes casualised, the social integration that helped some people withstand emotional pressures in the past is often no longer available. Psychiatric facilities are in demand to manage the consequences, and the language of mental illness enables this to be done without revealing the social breakdown at its root.

In England, over 50,000 people were forcibly detained in a psychiatric institution during the year leading up to April 2013, which was 4% higher than the figure for 2010-2011 and represents an increase of 14% since

April 2007 (6,7). This is despite strong financial and political incentives to reduce the use of hospital beds.

The idea that mental disturbance is a disease that is easily amenable to treatment has also enabled the extension of control out of the hospital into the community. In 2008, a 'Community Treatment Order' was introduced in England and Wales that allows patients to be treated against their will while they are living outside hospital, even if they have no 'symptoms' at all. The orders do not require that people have a history of violence or suicidal tendencies. They can be made simply on the basis that without treatment the person presents a risk to their own 'health'.

When they were introduced, it was estimated that approximately 450 Community Treatment Orders would be applied per year. In fact, over 6000 were made in a year and a half to April 2010. The use of these orders continues to rise, with a 10% increase during the years to April 2012 and April 2013 (6). Community Treatment Orders almost always stipulate that the individual has to receive drug treatment that they do not want and do not like. Potentially, someone can be forced to receive these mind-altering chemicals for the rest of their life, even if they have full capacity to make decisions about their treatment.

As well as helping the prison system to deal with the fallout of neoliberal policies on individual stability and community cohesion, the more mundane medicalization of unhappiness has also bolstered the neoliberal project. The promotion of the idea that depression is a common medical condition caused by an imbalance of brain chemicals has helped displace responsibility for suffering and distress away from the social and economic arena onto the individual and his or her brain. The mass prescription of antidepressants reinforces the idea that it is individuals that need fixing, but psychological solutions, such as CBT (cognitive behavioural therapy), can also perpetuate this way of thinking.

Some of the reasons so many people are currently identified as depressed likely stem from the same factors that have led to the rising prison population- that we are encouraged to want what we cannot easily get. Sociologist Zigmund Bauman talks of how consumerism is driven by producing and maintaining feelings of inadequacy and anxiety. People cannot be allowed to feel satisfied. There must always be a lingering discontent to drive people to consume more, coupled with the

fear of becoming a 'failed consumer' (8). Yet, for many, work has become increasingly pressurised, insecure and unrewarding and as demands for increased productivity and efficiency increase, more people are excluded from the workforce through sickness, disability or choice.

Debt, as well as crime, is used to fill the gap between aspiration and income. But with debt comes stress, anxiety and feelings of vulnerability and loss of control. There are so many opportunities to fail, and 'success' is ever more improbable.

The proliferation and expansion of mental disorders creates myriad possibilities for failure. As varying moods, inadequate attention and excessive shyness are pathologised, more and more people are encouraged to believe they need to get themselves 'fixed.' Just as cosmetic surgery promotes the impossible ideal of eternal youth, so mental health promotion increasingly suggests there is a perfect state of mental health to which we all need to aspire, and which we need to work on ourselves to achieve. People are encouraged to exist in a perpetual state of frustration and disappointment with themselves, looking ever inward so they do not think to challenge the nature of the society they inhabit.

Ideas about the nature of mental health and mental abnormality are intrinsically linked to the social and economic conditions in which they emerge. Neoliberalism and its 'no such thing as society' champions have helped to produce a biological monster that subsumes all areas of human activity within a neuroscience paradigm and by doing so banishes the philosophical tradition that acknowledges human experience as irreducibly social. We can only begin to challenge this impoverished view of humanity when we understand its political functions and the ends it serves.

The psychological is political!

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Joanna Moncrieff

Consultant Psychiatrist, North East London. One of the founding members and the co-chairperson of the Critical Psychiatry Network. The Critical Psychiatry Network consists of a group of psychiatrists from around the world who are sceptical of the idea that mental disorders are simply brain diseases and of the dominance of the pharmaceutical industry.

Contexts Interview

Here, Contexts co-editor Peter Zelaskowski (PZ) interviews (by e-mail) Dr. Vivienne Cohen (VC) on being honoured on 27th August 2014 by East London NHS Trust, which named its official premises of the City and Hackney Specialist Psychotherapy Service ‘Vivienne Cohen House’.

According to her UK secretary Suzanne Benjamin, who acted as a go-between and put our questions to her, Dr Cohen was delighted to be asked to be interviewed.

PZ: First of all, many congratulations on receiving this wonderful tribute. Were you surprised to be honoured in this way?

VC: Yes – very much so – I was bowled over.

PZ: As the new editor of Group Analytic Contexts, I am delighted to be in a position to interview you on behalf of GASI. In 1989, you let me through a very special door in accepting my application to complete my internship at Barts, working with you and your group of IGA trainees and newly qualified group analysts. A number of people have commented on just how nurtured and well-taken-care-of they felt by you...a feeling I certainly share. ‘Once Vivienne adopted you, you really felt adopted’, as one person put it. Is this familiar to you?

VC: Yes – I enjoyed it – if I didn’t like the people then I wouldn’t have been able to do it – they were a lovely group.

PZ: Am I right in thinking you retired from the NHS in 1994?

VC: Yes

PZ: How have you been enjoying your retirement?

VC: Well I live in Israel much of the year with my children, grand-children and great grand-children. I currently have 15 great-grandchildren with one on the way. I started off in retirement by painting but I suffered collapsed vertebrae from Osteoporosis which put an end to that. I haven’t got a hobby that replaces work as such,

but spend much time with my family as well as going to museums, opera, ballet and I'm still enjoying travelling.

PZ: From a position of being less involved is there anything that you would like to share about the current interests and activities of GASI?

VC: No

PZ: On the GASI forum, where this tribute was brought to our attention, a number of people have commented on how fitting that the East London NHS should honour you in this way. Please, say something about your experience and history within the NHS. I understand you started in 1962.

VC: I qualified in 1951 and started in psychiatry in 1954. I then had children and in 1962 went to work under Prof. Linford Rees who ran the acute ward at the Maudsley. He was a marvellous man to work for. I was teaching at the beginning – supervising psychiatric social workers. I then joined the Psychotherapy unit of Dr SH Foulkes at Barts. He totally inspired me to get involved with Group Psychotherapy. I only ever wanted to work for the NHS – I didn't work privately because I don't like the idea of giving people what they could afford. I wanted to give them what they needed.

PZ: Could you say something about the challenges you faced in developing a service, a 'service-on-a-shoe-string' as I remember you proudly describing it, largely based on the work of trainee and newly-qualified group analysts.

VC: The truth is that I didn't really face challenges – everyone knew that they would not be paid – they were very happy to work for nothing in order to get the experience and my supervision which was obviously valued.

As an aside, Dr Cohen then went on to describe how they initially had 3 tiny rooms in the hospital, one of which was a converted bathroom. It had a ledge which originally must have carried the water from the urinals or such-like. One day one of the senior Dr's was leaning back on his chair and got the chair and therefore himself stuck in the ledge – he had to be rescued – Dr Cohen was in fits of giggles as she described the scene – she said we did have a good time and a good team!! She

said they then moved to a building adjacent to the hospital in Little Britain called William Harvey House – this was luxurious and elegant.

PZ: As one of the pioneering women both within NHS psychotherapy as well as within our field of group analysis, it would be fascinating to here you say something about your experience of some of the other pioneers (men and women) you worked alongside. Who influenced you? And how?

VC: Firstly I have never seen myself as a pioneer or anything special. Dr S H Foulkes whom I trained under at Barts was very influential in my career. He developed Group Psychotherapy during the war, at the psychiatric hospital for the RAF and Army at the Military Neurosis Centre at Northfield. He turned it into a series of interlocking groups – each ward had a group and a music group etc. He was a complete pioneer in the field.

Largely speaking there were no women before me in the field of Group Psychotherapy except Jan Abercrombie who was not clinical in her teaching – she was a Reader in Architecture at University College.

PZ: Looking back, do you have any regrets?

VC: No!

PZ: Do you have any comments on the current challenges facing group analysis, particularly in relation to the NHS?

VC: Group Psychotherapy is facing challenges as it is considered too time consuming. Nowadays people look for quick cures which is why behaviour therapy is popular – it rarely works long term.

PZ: Many thanks for giving us some of your time. Is there anything else you would like to add before we finish?

VC: Many thanks.

PZ: With deepest gratitude.

**Some impressions of the International Conference:
'Learning through experience about inclusion and exclusion
phenomena in and between the traditions of Bion, Foulkes
and Main'**

Belgrade, 5th to 8th June 2014

By Carla Penna

The Conference was about the encounter of the three British traditions in groups: group analysis, group relations and therapeutic communities with the title 'Learning through experience about inclusion and exclusion phenomena in and between the traditions of Bion, Foulkes and Main'.

Marina Mojovic and Bob Hinshelwood were the chairs of the event and Earl Hopper, Malcolm Pines, Hanni Biran, Tija Despotovic, Ivanka Dusnic, Dieter Nitzgen, Luca Mingarelli and myself were the staff members. Each day one of the traditions was explored and the interconnections between them were discussed, although the great majority of the 90 participants had a group analytic training. But many also had a training in group relations.

Marina is a fantastic host who always does her best to make us feel comfortable. This time it was no different and her house, the food and the weather outstanding. She also counts on a wonderful community of students and trainees. It is possible to observe how these young people are well prepared by their teachers and are so mature and sensible. Persons are always the best in Marina's Conferences and each time I increasingly enjoy this community created and sustained by Marina, Tija, Ivanka, and Jelica.

Nevertheless it is not easy to work in a traumatized country with deep sad feelings existing in their inhabitants. This time the subject of inclusion and exclusion was the main topic and was visible during the conference, the lectures, the small / median groups and in the relationships among the participants and staff. It illustrated how it is difficult to deal with inclusion and exclusion processes. It was not easy...not at all.

In addition acquiring together three giants of group work in England - Earl, Malcolm and Bob – and observing the interaction among them was

an incredible learning process. For me it was a pleasure to learn from them...

This time Earl's participation was fundamental in conducting the large group and now, a few days after the end of the Conference, I can tell you that Earl was 'dangerously' well inspired. Let me explain. In Serbia the lack of father figures is a huge problem because during the 20th century men perished in many bloody wars. In counterpart, leadership in the country is problematic. Serbia had controversial father figures like Tito and Milosevic, but also had nice kings and a special Orthodox Patriarch.

During the working days there were many projections towards Bob, Malcolm and Earl and during the LG sessions this was clear and powerful. Earl had to contain all these strong feelings. It was not easy and now I understand that consciously or unconsciously he offered himself, his own body as a receptacle of intense, sometimes aggressive, but necessary projections. He allowed the making use of his person/body image which allowed the disclosure of important contents of the Serbian social unconscious. He was also able to "experience" in loco his fourth basic assumption which was great!

After four strong LG sessions Earl did his presentation, interweaving personal data with theory, which in the end framed the experience giving a special meaning to his courageous participation at the event. He was able to make people project onto him but afterwards to relate with Earl as a person made of flesh and blood. It was part of an important integration process for the community.

Now I understand what he says sometimes about sacrifice (I think that Marina also captures it very well too). His work at the Conference represented a good 'sacrifice' of the analyst/man on behalf of a group - representing a whole nation - in search of the safety of a good father figure (a good internal object to be finally introjected). He made his contribution to this and I believe that Malcolm and Bob in their own style contributed also to this so important wish/dream of Serbian Society.

Wars always destroy much more than we can imagine!!!! In Serbia it damaged some core values, and self-esteem that needs to be again cultivated/restored with hope and courage. This is what Marina and her colleagues are doing sometimes with the help of some friends.

In sum there is much more to tell, but for now it is enough.

Carla Penna

EXPERIENCES OF LISBON: THE 16th GASi EUROPEAN SYMPOSIUM IN GROUP ANALYSIS

28th July – 1st August 2014

BEING A NEW FACE AT THE LISBON SYMPOSIUM

Hello. My name is Sarah Tyerman and I was one of the 'new faces' at the Lisbon Symposium. It was my first exposure to group analysts en masse, some 44 nationalities someone said.

People said it was nice to see some new young faces there. Actually I am a 'new old' face. I am in my last stage of training as a Group Analyst at the IGA London after retiring from being a government policy analyst for 35 years.

I first want to thank GASi for giving me a Bursary to attend Lisbon. Truly it was one of the most rewarding, exciting experiences I have had in a long professional life.

Why? Well, the day I got back I emailed a friend saying that I had just come up to the surface from somewhere very deep. Intense immersion, coupled with not enough sleep. A richness of choice that I was not alone with: standing in front of the workshop lists, I heard other voices saying – how to choose? There is so much here that we want to know about.... [even] they have given us too much!

The wealth of provision included the fabulous food and drink throughout. If an army marches on its stomach, so does a conference. From coffee breaks to the four-course conference dinner, we were very well fed and watered. I watched with amusement when the organizers put out ice lollies in the afternoon break – so many distinguished colleagues reverting to childhood in a rush to grab the goodies.

It was all part of the great generosity and warmth shown us by our Portuguese hosts. In the Large Group a Portuguese member wanted us to understand that the doors of the meeting hall had been left open as part of a good host's wish to keep his guests cool in the hot Lisbon summer.

Generous as that thought was, it did not seem to counteract the fearful emotions that were sparking around the Large Group. I had never been

in a Large Group bigger than 40 before and here was one of 300+ where an entire bloc of participants dragged their chairs forward, there was no continuity of dialogue because of constant interruptions of “can’t hear” and people, including non-participants, were coming and going through the open doors.

I had been intrigued before the Symposium by the role played by GASi’s online forum. My sense was of an unboundaried, unfacilitated space where a small minority of members were exchanging aggressive, politicized statements about the Israel-Gaza conflict, seeking support for their own position rather than consensus. But others on the Forum were holding out the expectation that a wider(?), more reasoned(?), dialogue would take place in the Large Group.

This didn’t seem to happen. Instead there was a re-enactment of the conflict, little listening, mainly angry shouting. Some understanding emerged on the third day when the President spoke of his anguish about leaving his family in Israel to fulfil his responsibilities to the Symposium. A Russian delegate talked about finding a welcome amongst colleagues at a conference in Ukraine. I cried, as did others. But the ceasefire didn’t last and the fourth session was very hard again. Above us a plaque in the hall exhorted ‘Workers Unite’, but down below on the hall floor, there seemed to be no escape from discord and division.

Yet I loved it. It was one of the most vital, absorbing struggles to connect that I have ever witnessed. I felt proud to be part of a profession that even tries to make sense of the tragic discord in the world. And as we know from our own groups, often the work happens in the space between sessions. In the small and median groups, in the myriad of conversations over meals, meaningful connections were made, individual human stories were told that meant so much more (to me at least) than political statements.

I want to thank my small group particularly. It was a very containing space in which I could let loose the intense emotions I was experiencing. Everyone participated with a depth and honesty that was very moving.

Before this becomes a panegyric, here are my grumbles. As with our own groups, difference is so hard to face and yet is everywhere. Gender and sexuality was one of the sub-themes for the last day yet seemed barely to feature in the formal agenda. In every other way, the gender

divide felt huge to me, and was certainly much reflected in my small group. Issues of sexuality and sexual orientation felt invisible, formally and informally. When are we as a Society going to tackle this?

Another big difference was seniority. It was very evident who the big names were, and how well they knew each other and sometimes disliked each other. They addressed each other by name in the Large Group, distinguishing each other from the ranks of anonymity.

‘So what’, I hear you say. Isn’t hierarchy inevitable in any organization? Well, yes, but let’s be on our guard lest it becomes an agent of exclusion. A new member said she felt a little lost, not loved, because the senior members did not reach out and make the newer ones feel included. One of the best aspects of Foulkes’ teaching was his questioning about what kind of leader a group analyst should be.

I went to Lisbon uncertain whether I was an enthusiastic group analyst or not. I came away thrilled to be one. Here was a way of looking at the complexities of human connections that mattered passionately to a large number of people of different nations and cultures, more united by their passion than divided by it. There was such courage on display all week: from individuals facing their anxieties about giving a workshop to the impetus required to connect with the unknown but similar person next to you at dinner.

Thank you to the organizers for completing their very difficult task so successfully, thank you to everyone I met individually for your companionship and thank you to the Large Group for putting me in touch with painful but real struggles.

Sarah Tyerman

Writing in the Place of Speaking

Reflections on the 2014 Group Analytic Society International Symposium in Lisbon by Deborah Cook

When Peter asked me to contribute a piece to the newsletter at first, I felt apprehensive. I came to the symposium as an outsider, illustrator and educator, and it is perhaps for this reason that I have decided to make my writing a mismatch of pictures, associations and feelings. The text that follows is a subjective reflection on the large group that considers questions of perception, spatiality and intent.

As I recall, I walked up the stairs to the first group with Peter. It felt liberating to be unaware of the symposium's cultures and histories, free of the hierarchies and vulnerabilities associated with my profession. Initially, I was struck by a heightened sense of being open to possibilities both unexpected and unknown. I experienced a profound sense of the potential of sharing knowledge - but there seemed an impossibility of knowing where to start. The large group seemed rambling, chaotic and unpredictable, reminiscent of the work of the Tanztheater Wuppertal under the leadership of Pina Bausch. Bausch's dance pieces are an inventory of social ills represented by the way people relate to one another. They are images of us trying to disguise that we are afraid, perplexed and alone.

Somebody said, "It's very hard to have a completely new experience." And I thought, "I have one now." I asked a man in the queue for lunch, "What are they trying to say? Why do the *same* people keep talking all the time?" He said, "My dear, they are fearful and can't contain their anxiety."

However flawed we seem to be, Bausch entices us into admitting that we are all in it together. Her use of physical space is psychologically brilliant. Unhappy with the distance between the speakers and the audience one spirited woman began to move her chair. She retreated, re-advanced, and others followed. Someone said, "It's an attack on the group." And I thought, "No. They have just moved the chairs to hear better."

The conventions of the large group favor experienced and audible speakers. However, rather than get frustrated at the inability to hear: what about the frustration of the speaker to say what s/he really means? How different it could be if everyone spoke in his or her mother tongue.

Briefly the group seemed to break through the emotions and aimlessness towards hearing. There was a moment when everyone was present, engaged, and with themselves, listening. The image had the elegance of a complex movement sequence in physical theatre. And yet, there was an unspoken mythical structure to the group that I did not have access to. The free-floating aggression scared me; it felt foreboding and out of control. At times, it felt a senseless and brutish creation. Somebody said, "We have become a mob." The writer Ben Marcus describes *The Living* as:

Those members, persons, and items that still appear to engage their hands into what is hot, what is rubbery, what cannot be seen or lifted.¹

The experience became more disconcerting as the week progressed. There seemed no respite. However, when it was over, I sensed a loss and missed the large group and a profound feeling of knowing something with so many others.

My parting memory is of a man's visit to outpatients at a Lisbon hospital due to a swollen foot. His story told of the kindness of a nurse who had been in group therapy with E.L.Cortesão. The narrative brought the warmth and lived lives of the Portuguese people into the symposium hall. It acknowledged the work of the group analytic movement in Portugal, and seemed to thank the organisers in a way that had escaped the preceding speeches. I shared my appreciation of the story with my travelling companion on the plane home, but as the acoustics in

¹ Marcus, B. (1995). *The age of wire and string: stories*. New York: A.A

the hall were so poor, he had not heard it.

Deborah Cook

Royal College of Art

Dear Contexts Editors,

I finally have time to take a few minutes to report on my experience in Lisbon - especially as regards to the differences between Group Analysis and psychodynamic group psychotherapy as I practice it in the USA. I have both conducted and attended small groups in several Group Analytic conferences. I am not a theoretician at all and not well-read in Group Analytic theory, but I'm a strong clinician with lots of experience and expertise in North American style training groups. So take these comments as coming from the trenches of practice and not necessarily reflective of the theories.

What strikes me most are the differences between Group Analysis as I've seen it done (and as members of the groups at GASi seem to expect) and how I lead small groups. The GA folks seem to be much less active and focus more on reflection and understanding than on affect. There seems to be a disbelief in the possibility of something new happening in the moment. It has seemed that the cure offered is that things will hurt less if we understand them more - but nothing is really expected to change. This was even more striking to me this year, as I have become more and more relational in my work and more focused on working with attachment wounding and providing opportunities for improving attachment security and changing internal working models. Perhaps it was only in the matrix of the groups I've seen (a very limited sample), but these ideas seemed foreign, puzzling, and initially unwelcome for the most part to the GA folks.

So, while acknowledging that it is problematic to generalize from such a small sampling, as well as the many studies that show theory is often unrelated to actual practice, this has me thinking about the cultural issues and Social Unconscious of our societies. It makes perfect sense to me that as a North American I am focused more on the future and on what can change rather than solely on understanding what has already happened. I just read Molyn Leszcz and Jan Malat's (two Canadians) wonderful chapter on "The Interpersonal Model of Group Psychotherapy" in Jeff Kleinberg's *The Wiley-Blackwell Handbook of Group Psychotherapy* (2012) and see a similar forward-leaning focus on healing and change in their work. The USA is still a young society compared to Europe with such a long history and the immense burden of wars and trauma over the years. Perhaps this youthful exuberance allows us to believe more easily in the possibility of change and the hope

for a better future. I'm interested in hearing your thoughts about these ideas and welcome your responses and debate.

Martha Gilmore, PhD, CGP

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Response:

Dear Martha,

Other colleagues have already responded to your mail, so I will try to concentrate on what might be additional.

What I find difficult is finding the balance. How do we address differences, and which differences, without creating and/or perpetuating myths. To discriminate differences first you have to define homogeneous entities that then you can compare.

In fact, I am not sure about distinctly different styles that I could attribute to being American or European. As I told you in Lisbon, I liked your style of conducting the group. In fact, from time to time in the group, I might as a conductor have waited a bit longer, perhaps laying more emphasis on lateral transferences (which has a slightly different accent than being "abstinent"). But if this personal style of yours is typically American - I don't know. Here in Germany I know some very good and successful colleagues who also put much more emphasis on the open activity of the conductor than I (mostly) do.

Some years ago we (the Munster Institute for Therapeutic and Applied Group Analysis together with a University and an Institute of East Germany) conducted some research (ratings, recordings, observers, group discussions, etc.) to compare the way colleagues from both Institutes were conducting groups. It was a very intense and emotional experience. It turned out that the emotions had very much to do with our identifications with our respective Institutes and, moreover, that our theories didn't mirror so much what we were doing. The differences that we found in the end had more to do with different personal styles and

with gender.

Having said that, this does not exclude the possibility that somebody coming from outside would feel that there could be something similar in all the so different styles of practicing group analysis in Germany, e.g., when I first came into contact with group analytic circles in the UK, I was puzzled about the emphasis on open psychoanalytic interpretation in the group. What I missed was the German intensity of theoretical discussions, though this has also changed over time.

So, I don't say there are no differences, though they tend to dissolve the moment you want to grasp them – like the famous cows that move back, when you approach them.

Thank you for bringing this topic and making me think about it more clearly.

Warm regards

Regine (Scholz)

Reflections on running the 4Ms workshop at the Lisbon Symposium 2014

By Linde Wotton

Metaphor, Music and the Re-Making of Meaning: A Workshop Offering a Live Study of Improvisation in the Dynamic Life of Groups. Run by Marit Joffe Milstein, Ido Peleg, John Schlapobersky, Linde Wotton.

This was a workshop spread across two days, looking at how change might come about in groups through improvisation - based on the musicality of communication and developed through metaphor. We started each day with a brief theoretical introduction illustrated with material from a large group, followed by an action exercise and then a small group fishbowl experience. A different pair of conductors led the workshop on each of the two days with the other two conductors in the outside circle of the fishbowl. The composition of the group was also different each day as not all of the original participants were able to attend on the second day, when we were also joined by some new members.

I wondered what expectations we had set up with our title when I realised that we had dancers, musicians and drama therapists amongst the participants - and feared that we would disappoint. However, I was struck by the participants' pleasure in being invited to take part in a joint exploration rather than being told 'this is how it is'. The paradox is that this opportunity was created by the firm structure imposed by the conductors - and this, of course, is true of all analytic groups.

The members of our workshop were courageous - especially those who came back for more on the second day - because action techniques pose quite a challenge for group analysts, comfortable with free floating discussion. As one participant commented, 'It seemed that I could more easily be eaten up/engulfed by the others in the non-verbal exercise than when we used words.' The metaphor of being eaten perhaps linked to the introductory material which came from a large staff group in a psychiatric hospital where part of the discussion related to the size of plates at meal times. Even the fishbowl format that we used for the verbal part of the workshop held particular associations for some people - to do with conflict resolution rather than experimental improvisation. Indeed it was renamed, through the humorous 'Freudian slip' of one of the participants, as the bowl-fish or, as I heard it, bull-fish (bullying / bull

in a china shop?). The re-naming generated laughter and with it the heightened emotions of relief. As John noted in retrospect, we could construe this as either '*the moment of novelty*' or the condenser phenomenon at work – they are closely related and we might explore the connection in future work.

There was a marked difference in tone between the two days. The idea of 'home key' is set out in my paper on communicative musicality in groups, *Between The Notes* (Wotton 2012), which lends a vocabulary to the analysis of the workshop. Was the home key set up by the action technique, the conductors of the inner group or the make-up of the group as a whole and the patterns of tension and release already established in the matrix from the previous day to which we resonated?

The first day was unusually restrained - despite the apparent creativity and expressed emotion. The improvisatory technique involved one member of the inner group initiating an action, which the rest of that group copied until another member felt the impulse to take the lead and change the action to a new one, which would then be taken up by the group. It was in fact difficult for people to initiate change that day, in an atmosphere that quickly became highly charged - and perhaps competitive? It was as if people felt that the only way in was to 'interrupt' the other's flow, rather than to play with it. It had, as Marit pointed out later, a monologue quality (Shlapobersky 1993) and indeed, the small group went on to talk of the fear of annihilation. When the outer group joined in with the improvisation exercise, one of the new 'actions' introduced was walking rather than staying on the spot. At first everyone happily took this up, feeling that at last we were all connected, however, the sense of pacing in a circle soon became oppressive and we longed for someone to break that pattern. It was an example of the way in which one member's free movement can oppress another (Peleg 2012), which the group went on to discuss later - including the question of which group in the fishbowl had greater freedom and power - the inner one with a voice or the outer one, observing and reflecting - and who was constraining whom?

On the second day, during the conversational part of the exercise, the inner group members spoke in strikingly quiet voices, despite repeated requests from the outer group to speak up. Although the inner group was made up of people who had not been there on the first day, it was as if they knew about what had happened and were keen to protect the

shared rhythm, the intimacy, which they were developing, from a possible spoiling/attack by the outer circle. It perhaps also linked to one aspect of the introductory material that day - about a castle in which groups of people have always hurt others.

It was noticeable during the improvisation exercise on the first day that rigidity quickly became apparent - and was experienced as oppressive - whenever repetition went on too long, without sufficient variation being introduced (initially in the reluctance for anyone to take over the role of instigator in the exercise and again later, when the pacing, which was at first experienced as 'at last we are connected, we have a joint rhythm', persisted for too long). How hard it is to define how long is 'too long' - and yet how exquisitely sensitive we are to it. Similarly, an attempt to move a long way from the form that was set up by the conductors and to break the boundary of the inner group before the shared temporal frame was safely established, led not to greater creativity but to disconnection and a lack of shared meaning. Nonetheless the group persevered and improvised ideas around the limits of freedom and control that are inherent in interactions with others - a theme that had been introduced by the conductors of the inner circle in their talk at the beginning but which was developed on the basis of the experience of the group members that day.

For myself, in the inner circle on the second day, I was concerned that, in such a short period (30 mins), we might not be able to achieve a shared temporal frame within which to improvise. However, one member of the outer group noted a faster rhythm of exchange between the two youngest people in the inner group than between other members and it seemed that it was their exchange (about a non-Portuguese delegate being offered 'hashish' by a local drug pusher) that brought about a change of pace. The group generated metaphors about inside/outside and rich/poor and these were developed and explored and then applied to include the immediate context of the inner and outer groups in the workshop. Images of inside and outside, rich and poor, 'haves' and 'have nots' in the symposium and beyond, were explored as polarizing opposites. We concluded with the idea that personal riches could only be experienced through connection with others - something that was perhaps already contained in the expressive hand gestures accompanying the first speaker's description of Lisbon's higgledy piggedly medieval streets. In turn, this could be linked to the other aspect of the day's introductory material - about our deep

interconnectedness. One important aspect - very relevant to the process of improvisation - was the idea of making creative use of whatever is available, which stemmed from one members' account of staying in an unexpectedly disappointing hotel in Paris and finding a way to use and enjoy the experience.

Strikingly, there was a wish for a third workshop - to unravel (remake the meaning of) what had gone on across the two days. As Ido said, our symphony needed a third movement. This very human wish to remake meaning is embodied in music in the recapitulation in sonata form, the da capo aria or the twelve bar blues, where the themes are restated at the end of the improvised sections - by which time they are heard differently and a new meaning is developed.

Our thanks go to everyone who joined us in this live study and improvised with us in order to explore these ideas. It was very satisfying to hear the term 'musicality' - from the theory of communicative musicality (Malloch & Trevarthen 2009) to which we had introduced the members of the workshop - extending beyond it. It was used in the large group on the final day of the symposium. In fact, as Marit pointed out to me on reading this, there are many parallels between our 'bull fish' workshop and the last large group – particularly our difficulty in establishing a joint creative rhythm. People repeatedly cut across or interrupted each other, contributions felt too long, even if in 'clock time' they might have been shorter than those of previous days, and rarely built on what had gone before. We often remained at the level of monologue; where one person's freedom curtailed that of the others, and it was very hard to improvise together in order to create some change. This large group did, of course, mark the end of the whole symposium - could that have been significant? (My word processor lacks the reversed question mark, which I understand is the Esperanto punctuation symbol intended to express irony.)

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Linde Wotton

Talk given as one of a panel of papers entitled 'The Social Unconscious and the Foundation Matrix'. The author is giving her perception of current Israeli society.

By Hanni Biran

Israeli Society is experiencing a severe split these days, and it is difficult to find links between its poles. Under the auspices of the social nets of the internet (Facebook, WhatsApp, etc.) a culture of verbal violence and brutal attacks, on anybody expressing a moderate opinion about the Palestinians, is spread all over the country. Posts are filled with curses, foul-language and warnings against those who speak against the occupation. Protesters against the occupation get violently attacked and beaten up by the extreme rightists who are silently or less so by the majority of the people. Most of the Israelis are a large and strong mob and the rest is a thin layer of pro-peace and war-haters.

How can we understand such a bitter polarity within the Israeli Society, at these difficult times? What are the unconscious processes that bring such a wide split and the deterioration of speech culture?

I would like to suggest a working hypothesis: Emotions are going crazy because of the lack of a moderating and containing leadership. There is no leadership that is rejecting and fighting violence inside the Israeli society and negotiates peace talks that is also generous to the Palestinians, talks that would show the light at the end of the tunnel. A hypothesis resulting from that first one: Our leadership has no trust in peace and therefore there is no moderation of the Jewish People's anxiety. The Jewish people suffered a huge trauma of The Holocaust and has registered a danger of extinction. Now this People is living on the verge of an upcoming catastrophe and the paranoia is so strong, it overcomes the trust in peace.

A group analyst, as any other citizen, has a political opinion but he is not expected to work from within it but has to work from the ethical stance, an ethic that protects human rights and human dignity.

As group analysts we should be very modest concerning our abilities to influence unconscious processes in society at large. In the chaotic state we experience it is important to keep our emotional way of speaking and our role as containers for our patients' unbearable anxiety. Our duty is to enable people to talk about their stress rather than expressing it with

violence or anxiety attacks.

While Tami El'ad and I were conducting a Large Group of Educational Psychologists, in the center of Tel-Aviv, there was a rocket alarm and all of us, 60 people, hurried to the shelter. We saw how the alarm intercepted the emotional dialogue. That brought us the understanding that at time of peril all thinking stops and all speech is blocked. A moment like this is real but also metaphorical in its relation to society at large. In time of danger the society seldom thinks.

The picture is so complex. When one sees the buildings in Gaza demolished to the foundations, when one sees the violent death of people, entire families; men, women and children, one feels the urge to stand up and scream at the government and the Chief of Staff to stop the insanity. But, is this the whole picture? Not really.

Together with the wish for my government and the IDF to be more careful about human lives and human rights in Gaza, of the innocent and the uninvolved, there is the Hamas and his deliberate strategy to involve civilians, and not only on the Israeli side, as a fighting strategy, either as TARGETS – all the Hamas rockets and offensive tunnels are aimed at civilian places, or as deliberate casualties that will win them political points – by using the Gaza civilians, adults and children alike, as human shield, by shooting the rockets from the city centers and public institutions, hiding tunnels entrances in civilian houses and the tunnels themselves under the whole civilian area, and using hospitals and UN facilities as headquarters and fighting hideouts.

The Hamas is a bitter enemy engaged in a Jihad war. Their aim is to eliminate Israel, and then the rest of the western culture, even in all those countries in Europe that support it and attack Israel politically, because the Hamas is a part of the international Jihadistic Islam and is not different than Al-Kaida, Boku-Haram, The *radical Islamic State* of *Iraq* and Syria (ISIS), etc.

There is a need to condemn the Israeli occupation and strive to end it. These almost 50 years of rule over the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza also put the political Left Wing into a terrible psychological occupation. I'm going to an international conference in Lisbon and know that unwillingly I represent the terrible images of the destroyed city of Gaza and over a thousand dead and thousands of injured civilians. I

know that the image of Israel in the world is demonic and considering the images from Gaza this is not something to be surprised about. Nevertheless, in the same way my government is making me an unwilling aggressor there is the Hamas that occupied the rule in Gaza by force, and by killing a lot of the PLO (PATACH) representatives in Gaza, Palestinians themselves, and occupied the will of the Gaza civilians by fooling them as if their war is a war of liberation (when it is actually a Jihad war against everything that is western). The Gaza civilians support the Hamas because they think it is a war of liberation, and they are willing to sacrifice anything and everything to stop the occupation.

The question that can still be asked is: Can we achieve freedom and Peace for our people in peaceful ways? Many elements in both sides, Israeli and Palestinian, contribute to the difficulty of transforming aggression into dialogue. The Hamas and a large part of the Palestinian people have to replace their Death Culture (JIHAD) with a Life desiring culture, and our government should express more generosity towards the Palestinians, who have been suffering the lack of freedom for so long, much more than the 47 years they are under the Israeli rule.

I think that if we, Israeli Group Analysts, will say that our government is all bad and wrong and the Palestinians are all good and right, we would be very far from the truth, we'd be living in a world of black & white, aggressor and victim, persecutor and persecuted angel and devil. The world is not built this way. The solution would come when both sides will try to see the whole, when they will acknowledge each other's sufferings, when they will be ready for concessions, when there will be a connection through the experience of belonging to the Middle East, rather than one of possessing people and their land.

This is a citation from an article from the famous Israeli author David Grossman:

“The Israeli despair has a strange component of a kind of ‘joy towards disaster’, or at least joy towards disappointment: kind of gloating for those whose hope for peace has failed. This is an especially crooked happiness, since it is gloating to ourselves: It sometimes seems that in the heart of the Israeli an insult is boiling for the fact that in 1993, when the Oslo agreements were signed, he dared to believe – not just in the enemy that for a moment became a partner, but in general, in the possibility of goodness, that sometime it may be good. In this region,

that we may ever experience ‘good’ here”.

With these harsh words Grossman is actually talking about strong feelings that reside inside the Social Unconscious.

I want to add and balance this hard statement by saying that the Hamas in Gaza does not believe in goodness either and suffers, too, from the terrible social disease “Joy towards Disaster”.

Hanni Biran

E-mail Conversation between New and Departing (PZ & TB)

Editors of Contexts

Conducted between 5th and 27th June 2014

PZ: Thanks for agreeing to this e-mail interview, during this period of time in which you are gradually withdrawing from the role of Contexts editor. After 8 years and (I suppose) over 30 issues, I imagine you're ready to move on. What are your thoughts about the Contexts you're leaving behind as compared to the Contexts you encountered when you started?

TB: Hmm, an interesting question. To tell you the truth, I don't have a clear recollection of Contexts as it was before Paula Carvallo and I became co-editors. I had joined the Society in the mid-1980s when I had only recently started my career as a Clinical Psychologist and my membership had lapsed in the late-1990's (I think!). I had only fairly recently re-joined the Society when I was asked to co-edit Contexts. I remember the issues edited by Anne Harrow and Sheila Ernst, with a red cover and published by Leeds University (where I did my Clinical Psychology training), which were interesting and I remember as having included much more correspondence and informal pieces than the current version of Contexts - these issues were more like a newsletter. The Forum may now have taken on this role. Before Paula and I edited Contexts I have no clear memory of the small number of issues I must have received after re-joining the Society.

Regarding Contexts, however. It has seemed to me that the publication has increasingly been squeezed, during the time of my editorship, between the Journal and, now, the Forum. It used to be a newsletter, a means of communication between the membership in much slower times - letters, complaints, suggestions, and small informal pieces were published, often in the letter format and headings in which they were sent - and perhaps more from the "important people" in the Society. The question, then, increasingly over the time of my editorship has been "What is the role of Contexts?" "Does it have a role?" "What is its function?" The Forum exists and provides a potentially democratic and immediate forum for dialogue between Society members - yet it is disturbing that, as always, certain voices predominate.

The distinction between the Journal and Contexts is less clear and, at times, it has appeared that we are competitors, for example, over

publishing papers from the Foulkes Study Day. This competitiveness has arisen, I believe, because of the change in Contexts - we are now more of a Journal, publishing articles that might well have been published in other places - a move that has been necessitated by the space that we occupy, otherwise there would have been little to publish. Yet, we are a small enterprise, without the help that an editorial committee might provide. I am pleased with how Contexts has developed, yet this has always felt precarious, dependent on the work that the editors are able to undertake between issues.

The image of the person desperately cycling under the surface yet maintaining an image of calm comes to mind.

Yet, Peter, I think that your question might well have been motivated by a wish to know something about how I have edited Contexts and how I have managed to "carry the load" due to your own anxieties about taking on this role?

It is difficult to take over from someone who has been deemed "a success" (perhaps not by everyone) - although I'm not a football fan, see the recent English Football manager... But, I'm not sure about this - Paula and I were a good team in the early days and we managed to occupy and find a space that was available. I've done the best I could, given other commitments, but it could have been better if I'd had more time. Above all, I've enjoyed the journey despite the inevitable frustrations and anxieties. Above all, it has enabled me to have a voice and to be part of the Group Analytic Community, which I value immensely. When I first went to the IGA London, as editor, at a Foulkes Weekend, I knew almost no-one and I felt an outsider. This is no longer the case.

There might be an interesting follow-up question about the benefits or downsides of the outsider position (How much in control of this interview am I.....???!!).

PZ: You're absolutely right about my anxieties carrying the load - now I can't get David Moyes' tortured face out of my head (he took over from Sir Alex at Man. U.) - a load I'm pretty sure I'll be seeking to share at some point soon. I've done a lot of co-conducting over the years and I'm enjoying our year of co-editing, which for me has felt like an apprenticeship in which I've been given time to learn and develop

before I take on the full responsibilities of the editor. Having said all that, what are the ups and downs of the outsider position?

TB: There are other examples other than David Moyes, Peter (although I'm embarrassed to say that I know who he is.... (-:).

The position of an outsider? We might, slightly, be in the territory of literature here. I read Colin Wilson's "The Outsider" when I was in my teens, and after reading Dostoevsky, Kafka, Blake, Lawrence (who was born and lived just few miles from my home town), this captured something of my own experience - of being of the "working class" yet moving into other territory at University. Hoggart's book, "The Uses of Literacy" captured, for me, much of my own experience in moving from a working class background into other territory. So, a position on "the edge" is familiar to me.

I have thought, until fairly recently, that being on the edge of a group is a disadvantage - indeed it is, when we are requesting articles from London, for example, when we are not in the social network (real or imagined). But being at the edge may enable different questions to be asked, different voices sought. Fairbairn, it is always asserted, was only able to develop his independent ideas because he lived at the periphery, far away from the consensus, in Edinburgh. You may find Barcelona both an advantage and a disadvantage in your new editorship.

The disadvantage of the "edge position"? Well, I'm not sure. Do we not all take up this position with our therapeutic groups? It is an advantage to be both within and outside the Group. For me, this is a comfortable and familiar position.

But we are talking about editing Contexts. Engaging the readers and potential contributors is the main issue as is "looking outside the box" and obtaining articles from a wider psychotherapy, or other community. Some ability to seduce may also be part of the skill mix.

I would recommend seeking a co-editor who may be able to obtain articles from other sources than yourself and you can share the load of seeking contributions and editing.

PZ: Funnily enough "The Outsider" ("L'étranger") by Albert Camus was the catalyst for my intellectual awakening as a teenager. I easily imagine

myself in outsider positions. I also quickly take up outsider positions, lurking out there on the edge, and need reminding of my obvious insider mainstream privileges. Even though I do a good imitation of being middle class, I am also from a working class background. In the context of Barcelona this part of my identity often feels dormant. When I come back to the UK, suddenly I'm working class again. That is not to say that class isn't an issue in Spain. It most definitely is. But, I feel there is a way in which British class struggles somehow disproportionately shape the GASi agenda and make it difficult for us to work beyond the old London-centric borders. I have a feeling that this will continue to be the case while there is no specifically British GAS. What do you think?

TB: Hmm.... you pose a really problematic question Peter. Does the British class system infiltrate the decision making, relationships, and culture of GASi? I think that I'm probably too immersed in this to say.

I could say that I know that class issues do predominate in certain sections of our culture - football vs. snobs, for example. And certainly this is a microcosm of the cultural wars that are taking place in wider society in the UK, if not elsewhere.

The issue is identity, is it not? Who do we identify with? Where do we come from? The preoccupation with Foulkes may be just another version of the Creation Myth (who took the apple?). Freud, in a past life, gave his favourites rings as marks of esteem which marked them out as "higher class". Yet, historically, he has been judged as authoritarian and needing to control his followers. Do our parents always disappoint? The authority of our parents is always the first class issue.

In writing this, though, I'm aware of the current elevation of those with no talent into the category of "genius", a probably unmerited title. We would be deficient, as a profession that claims to analyse cultural trends and the influence on us, to discount the influence of popularisation on our profession, on ourselves as well as on our group members.

Class. Upper or lower? Who looks down on whom? And is the looking down with good reason? Categorisation of a whole population is unreasonable, a form of prejudice. Yet, it may contain a truth.

I don't think that a British GAS will solve any of this. The current trend towards separation seems to be popular: UKIP and Scottish Nationalism

in the UK, and Catalan separatism where you live - all based on an intolerance and persecution of difference. What is the point of a British GAS? I don't know how to answer this. It seems to me to be a device to create more barriers and prejudice.

And then, also, persecution in other countries that are associated with GASi? How do we relate to this? What is our stance? This is a class issue also that may well infiltrate, in dynamic terms, the dynamics of our organisation: the workshops and events we create; the themes of our discussions.

Working class vs. upper class is not the only issue.

Yet, we seem to be moving far away from Contexts. Would I, on the basis of this, give you a job as an interviewer on the BBC?

PZ: LOL!! If the reply is the measure of the question, I'm well on my way!! Truth is I'd been feeling pretty uncomfortable with my previous question, even thought about withdrawing it, then your wide-ranging and generous reply arrived.

This is as much based on my ignorance of what is happening in the British NHS as CBT wipes out all (including GA) before it, but I have a concern about how GASi's drive towards internationalization and inclusivity has left a vacuum of representation in the UK. You may be right that another layer of bureaucracy just creates another set of barriers and another set of membership fees that people can ill-afford. Perhaps Contexts has a role in promoting dialogue and debate here, comparing and contrasting how different countries (and local membership bodies) deal with these issues and help develop GA within their public and private sectors.

Recently you successfully prompted some discussion and writing on the forum and in Contexts around music and GA. I've been wondering about exploring links to other art forms, poetry and the short story for instance. Inviting other forms of expression and communication of our group experience. Do you see any future in this in the context of Contexts?

TB: Absolutely Peter but, as always, the trick is in encouraging people to write for Contexts. Your idea of using poetry and stories in Contexts

sounds interesting. I know that you are interested in the use of art, dance, etc. in group work and hopefully we will see that reflected in future issue of Contexts. Yet I think that Contexts needs to be a broad based publication and needs to display the wide range of work and interests of our readers and membership.

I've always been interested, though, in getting those outside of our membership to write for us and these pieces have often been refreshing because they write from an outsider perspective. The arts may be a good theme to attract outside voices to contribute to Contexts. We can get too inward looking and fail to recognise the value of alternative conceptual schemes. The equivalent of the baby spitting out the bad food (which is not from mother) perhaps.....

There is a danger, however, in setting off on a certain course. We are dependent on our membership, and some others, to write for us. If our preoccupations do not mesh with those of our readership we are in trouble in the long term - contributions will dry up, the ship will not sail. It also needs a constant eye on the quarter deck - for example, the idea of a "Book Corner" in Contexts has not really worked because I have been unable to have the time to foster and develop this idea, to seek out potential contributors and to support them in their writing task. There is only so much that a sole editor can do.

Are we in control of the ship, to run with this metaphor, or are we controlled by the elements, the seasons, the currents and winds that direct us where they will? Well, partly both. I liked to feel that I had a direction, had plans, and wanted to steer towards a certain compass, and my requests to people to write for us was an attempt to do this - but, in the end, what I revived determined what appeared. Some promises dissipated into the ether whilst others brought forth unexpected treasure.

I'm not so sure that the above is a good metaphor to have used. Metaphor, of course, is an important part of art and I've always been interested in using it in groups - some groups seem to make this easier than others. Terry Lear was my small group conductor on the Foundation Year Course - and he was a wonderful user of metaphor in the group. I remember him telling a story about a hare and tortoise race, quite different from the usual one, which nailed to perfection what was going on with one of the group members. I will never be as good as this.

Is "interpretation" anything other than metaphor?

PZ: Murray Cox and Alice Theilgaard would say that metaphor carries us across borders into new worlds of meaning well before we know it's happening to us. I'm grateful for your quiet warnings, steering me away from getting too carried away with my own concerns and interests and reiterating the core relationship of the editor and Contexts with the GASi membership.

I've enjoyed our brief interchange over the last couple of weeks. I'm hopeful (as a method for generating copy) for this tortoise-paced style of interviewing, with built-in time to think and respond. It could also work in a group form. So thanks Terry. Anything else before we sign off and start putting the next issue together?

TB: Well, this conversation appears to be coming to an end and I'm also mourning for the loss of a group which ended last night. As always, I'm often surprised by the twists and turns of events, the sudden and unprepared for revelations that might explain why certain things have occurred or been said, and the unexpected things that group members have valued in the group.

What will I miss in this role as editor of Contexts in this Large Group of our International Society? I don't know, yet. I think that I will feel relieved of the burden of responsibility for keeping the ship sailing: of the anxiety that has developed increasingly towards each deadline for publication due to the conviction that there would be little to publish - and, so far, my anxieties have been groundless apart from a few near misses. Giving birth every three months means almost constant attention to the task as a single editor. I'll also be able to enjoy GASi workshops free of the responsibility of asking other attendees to write for us.

What I may miss is the permission that this role gives to us - to be able to write to people we don't know and have never met to ask for contributions; the recognition it affords within the club; the ability to produce something of value for the Society. A privilege indeed.

I have found, over the past eight years, that I have needed to be constantly on the look-out for potential contributions. Things I have read

on the internet, on the GASi Forum, in journals and books, with a constant eye on inviting contributions to Contexts. The position of the editor, it seems to me, is not just to edit text but to facilitate people to write for us, to value their contributions, and to help them to give birth to something that we can publish. Often, an initial request may be all that is needed.

So, more advice from me I'm afraid (always a bad idea):

- 1). constantly think about what might be publishable in Contexts and don't be afraid of asking for it.
- 2). try to get a good co-editor who will be prepared to share the work and whom you will be able to work with.

So, I mourn not only for the loss of my group last night but also for the forthcoming loss of my role as Contexts editor. I am grateful for the unexpected treasures that others have managed to contribute in my time as editor and which I have read with pleasure before anyone else has been able to do so.

I'd also like to acknowledge the role of Paula Carvallo in the first few years of our co-editorship: she was a great co-editor and we were able to creatively discuss and put into place our mutual ideas about the direction and development of Contexts. Paula, you were also part of the development of Contexts over the past eight years. Thank you for this.

Over to you now Peter. You know that I will be available if you need me but I'm confident that you will be fine and will develop Contexts in ways that I was not able to do. I may even send you articles from time to time..... Another good thing about my editorship, it has given me a voice in print.

PZ: Thanks Terry...for this treasure of a reply. I think GASi has much to thank you for.

Group Analytic Concepts: Group as a Whole

“Group-as-a-whole theory is an applied branch of group dynamics research and theory. It evolved in the heart of a century punctuated by 2 world wars. These wars and the sociopolitical climate that fostered them provided historical context and clinical impetus for group-centered approaches to psychotherapy. The contributions of Wilfred Bion, S. H. Foulkes, and Kurt Lewin are recalled in light of the historical context in which their work evolved and the currently active and vital body of theory and practice that may be traced to their efforts. Two fundamental themes are emphasized: (a) the perennial tension between individual and collective needs and (b) the equally ubiquitous tension between authoritarian and democratic patterns of group life” (Ettin et al, 1997).

“When individuals form a group, whether for clinical, organizational, or political purposes, the resulting union becomes an entity in its own right, with developmental, structural, dynamic, and relational properties that both reflect and transcend the individuals who make it up” (Cohen, Fidler, & Ettin, 1995).

“Foulkes states that the group-analytic dynamic processes can be studied, according to one's purpose, from the vantage point of the group as a whole, of the interpersonal area or within each person. It depends on the situation which is highlighted; the processes are all-permeating, they are at one and the same time intrapsychic, interpersonal and group processes.

'Individuals experience, but processes interact'. He likes the concept of interacting processes to avoid the 'pseudo-problem of individual versus group, or individual and group, or individual in the group', while the processes clearly are 'the expression of living individuals, not entities moving under their own steam'" (Foulkes, E (ed). 1990).

“In order to see something whole we have, I believe, to see it in relation to a greater whole, so that we can step outside of that which we want to see. For instance, a larger group can be seen only in reference to still larger communities, or perhaps in reference to its leaders or its task. Smaller groups can be seen whole only in relation to other groups. This is what I have in mind when I say that in our therapeutic groups, the group itself is the horizon. The group as such can only be understood from inside itself. Insofar as we also are included, we cannot strictly speaking see it as a whole either, except in relation to ourselves, nor should we

habitually address it as a whole. A situation in which it is meaningful to address the group as a whole is, for example, when the conductor, the analyst, wishes to point out some response to his function or any shared responses in relation to himself or to some other member. The therapeutic group on the small scale, optimally of seven to nine persons, is the situation of choice to see the individuals composing this group really as a whole, in the round. However, as pointed out, this group situation highlights the internal interaction, transgresses the boundaries of the individual, of what is usually considered internal, intrapsychic, and shows it to be shared by all" (Foulkes, E (ed). 1990).

"While having an eye on each individual member and on the effects they and their utterances have on each other, the Conductor is always observing and treating the group as a whole. The "Group as a Whole" is not a phrase, it is a living organism, as distinct from the individuals composing it. It has moods and reactions, a spirit, an atmosphere, a climate, as Klapman* calls it. One can judge the prevailing climate by asking oneself: What sort of thing could or could not possibly happen in this group? What could be voiced? The Conductor can gauge his own distance to the group by asking himself: What sort of thing could I say within this situation, and what could not be said? In fact, it is the group as a whole with which the Conductor is primarily in touch and he experiences its individuals inside this setting. He should sense what this group needs at any given moment, be it encouragement, reassurance or stimulation, steadying or excitation" (Foulkes, 1983).

"We have become used to thinking of intra-psychic processes, ipso facto as inside the same individual person, inside the same skull as it were. If we make such an assumption we beg one of the most important questions which arises. The fact that these mental processes are taking place physically in each individual brain is undoubted. If we hear an orchestra playing a piece of music, all the individual noises are produced each on one particular individual instrument, yet what we hear is the orchestra playing music, the conductor's interpretation, etc. We do not even in terms of pure sound hear a simple summary of all the individual waves, which reach our ears, but these are modified significantly, being part and parcel of a total sound. In the same way mental processes going on in a group under observation reach us in the first place as a concerted whole. Those familiar with Gestalt psychology will find no difficulty in understanding that the whole is more elementary than the parts. With this insight we have arrived at one of the basic concepts in group

psychotherapy without which all other observations are misinterpreted or insufficiently described, namely that what we experience in the first place is the 'group as a whole'". (Foulkes and Anthony, 1984).

"Foulkes describes the group as a transpersonal, or supra personal network in which its members are equivalent to nodes and the whole, the group, is primary and prior to its parts, the individuals. He talks about the transpersonal network giving utterance through individual speakers. He describes the 'group-as-a-whole' as a living organism, a spirit, atmosphere, or climate, distinct from the individuals composing it, having moods and reactions. According to Foulkes, then, when people come together in a group they create a new phenomenon, a suprapersonal psychic system, a matrix, which he describes as a hypothetical web of communication, a total unified field of mental happenings of which the individual is a part" (Stacey, 2005).

"The usefulness of therapists making group-as-a-whole interpretations in long-term group therapy was actively debated in the 1960s and 1970s. Advantages and disadvantages were delineated. An often-cited survey study of therapy groups that had emphasized group-as-a-whole interpretations found that many patients were dissatisfied with the therapist's technique and the outcome of therapy. Although group-as-a-whole concepts subsequently became a part of the theory of many orientations of group therapy, there has appeared to be reluctance among many therapists to make group-as-a-whole interpretations, especially in short-term group therapies. Contrary to this tendency, an argument is made and a case illustration presented, which advocate the use of group-as-a-whole interpretations in short-term group therapies" (Piper et al, 2006).

"Group-as-a-whole theory is an applied branch of group dynamics research and theory. It evolved in the heart of a century punctuated by 2 world wars. These wars and the sociopolitical climate that fostered them provided historical context and clinical impetus for group-centred approaches to psychotherapy. The contributions of Wilfred Bion, S. H. Foulkes, and Kurt Lewin are recalled in light of the historical context in which their work evolved and the currently active and vital body of theory and practice that may be traced to their efforts. Two fundamental themes are emphasized: (a) the perennial tension between individual and collective needs and (b) the equally ubiquitous tension between

authoritarian and democratic patterns of group life” (Ettin, M F, et al, 1997).

“Group-as-a-whole theory is a relational paradigm of some complexity. Despite the growing popularity of this perspective, there is abiding confusion about the essence of group-as-a-whole practice and whether the approach attends sufficiently to members and part processes. The threefold aims of this article are to (a) show how group-centred thinking differs essentially from traditional psychodynamic theory that relies heavily on familial dynamics, interpretation, and transference analysis; (b) present the mind-set and working principles for a generic treatment that specifically utilizes collective forces generated in the context of the group matrix; and (c) compare and contrast the thrust of recent dyadic relational therapies with group therapy generally and the group-as-a-whole approach more particularly. The relationship between the whole (group) and its parts (members and what they bring) is detailed and demonstrated as it appears in the context of fused, affiliated, fragmented, and differentiated groups” (Ettin, M F, 2000).

“Related to the problem of excessive reticence is an attitude which assumes that the therapist should confine interventions to pronouncements about the group as a whole. Often these pronouncements take the form of interpretations, another technique borrowed from classical psychoanalysis and from some forms of psychoanalytic group psychotherapy, and often used inappropriately or prematurely in an effort to hold the group to a psychoanalytic mode of functioning.

The problem with predominantly group-as-a-whole interventions, as with excessive reticence, is that individual group members are often left feeling unheld or unrecognised. Anxiety and frustration are increased, and group members find it more difficult to interact freely with one another in a mutually therapeutic mode or tolerate one person holding the focus for very long. Such groups tend to be affected by an increased drop-out rate and function with an anxious, compliant culture. Supervision in such a situation concentrates on encouraging the trainee to recognise the importance of acknowledging individuals, modelling dyadic interactions within the group, and increasing the repertoire of interventions to include not only interpretations but other forms of communication, and especially to feel free to ask occasional questions

and offer affiliative comments. The challenge to therapeutic omniscience is, not surprisingly, often greeted with relief” (Sharpe, 1995).

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Citations and Abstracts of Articles in Other Journals

Piper, William E; Ogrodniczuk, John S (2006). Group-as-a-whole interpretations in short-term group psychotherapy. *Journal of Contemporary Psychotherapy*, 36 (3), 129-135.

The usefulness of therapists making group-as-a-whole interpretations in long-term group therapy was actively debated in the 1960s and 1970s. Advantages and disadvantages were delineated. An often-cited survey study of therapy groups that had emphasized group-as-a-whole interpretations found that many patients were dissatisfied with the therapist's technique and the outcome of therapy. Although group-as-a-whole concepts subsequently became a part of the theory of many orientations of group therapy, there has appeared to be reluctance among many therapists to make group-as-a-whole interpretations, especially in short-term group therapies. Contrary to this tendency, an argument is made and a case illustration presented, which advocate the use of group-as-a-whole interpretations in short-term group therapies.

Lindgren, Annika; Barber, Jacques P; Sandahl, Christer. (2008). Alliance to the Group-as-a-Whole as a Predictor of Outcome in Psychodynamic Group Therapy. *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*, 58 (2), 163-84.

Eighteen patients diagnosed with burnout-related depression and receiving short-term psychodynamic group psychotherapy were included in this study. The participants completed the group version of the California Psychotherapy Alliance Scales (CALPAS) five times during treatment and evaluated the relationship positively. Alliance increased significantly as treatment progressed; however, the amount of change was small. Level of alliance to the group-as-a-whole, averaged over time, was predictive of two out of three outcome measures, whereas growth in alliance during the early phase of therapy was not predictive of outcome. Exploratory examination of the alliance at different time points showed that alliance to the group-as-a-whole at mid-phase of treatment was substantially correlated with outcome. Personality features such as dismissing attachment style and being overly nurturant or exploitable were predictive of early growth in alliance.

By a Staff News Editor at *Psychology & Psychiatry Journal*. (2014).

Group Psychotherapy; New Group Psychotherapy Study Findings

Recently Were Reported by Researchers at University of Toronto.

According to news reporting originating in Toronto, Canada, by Vertical News journalists, research stated, "Attachment has increasingly been identified as central to therapy process and outcome. Attachment theory proposes that an individual's prior interactions with attachment figures develop into templates that will guide the way they form connections and perceive their relationships with others." The news reporters obtained a quote from the research from the University of Toronto, "This study examined clients' ratings of their relationship with the therapist as well as their ratings of group climate at multiple discrete points during treatment. These variables were examined in relation to attachment classification prior to therapy. Results demonstrated that clients' perceptions of relationships in group therapy varied as a function of attachment classification."

Sharp, W. (2014). Sticks and Stones May Break My Bones, But What About Words? *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*, 64, 281 – 296.

Helping children to use words to express their thoughts and feelings is the goal of psycho-dynamic group therapy. The subject of this paper was a group of boys in a weekly school-based counselling group. The article explores ways in which the boys could only discharge psychic tension in action and uncovers a fear of using words as a mode of expression. By conceptualizing what he calls 'action-talk,' a stage between the use of action and talk which sounds like talk, but is not, the author resolved resistances to progressive communication. The importance of being aware of the therapist's own need to control the direction of the group, tendency to avoid negative feelings, and the importance of open-ended, talk-based therapy approaches (versus curriculum-based or psycho-educational groups) are discussed.

Ward, N et al (2014). Religion and Spirituality in Group Psychotherapy: Clinical Application and Case Example. *Spirituality in Clinical Practice*, suppl. 21 (2), 133-144.

This article explores the issues involved in addressing religion and spirituality (R/S) in non-thematic group psychotherapy through a case study of a process-oriented group for adults. The group, which occurred within a psychology-department-affiliated clinic, consisted of 7 community members, 2 co-leaders, and 1 process observer. Videos from the first 28 sessions of the group, from initial group formation to the departure of the first group member, were reviewed. When a client brought up religion or spirituality issues in a session (N = 10; 36%), those sections were transcribed and then reviewed at greater depth. Three examples from those transcripts illustrate 3 important issues when dealing with R/S in group psychotherapy: (a) how to decide when to address and when not to address R/S in session (i.e., choice points), (b) how to manage potential conflict that could arise among group members from the discussion of R/S issues, and (c) how to effectively process R/S issues in a general process group. Guidelines are provided based on the case study and existing literature for dealing with R/S in group psychotherapy, specifically for groups where R/S is not the main theme.

Lorentzen, S and Ruud, T (2014). Group therapy in public mental health services: approaches, patients and group therapists. *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing*, 21 (3), 219–225.

Group therapy is used extensively within public mental health services, but more detailed knowledge is needed. All 25 health authorities in Norway were invited to describe their groups: theory, primary tasks, interventions, structure, patients and therapists. Four hundred twenty-six groups, 296 in community mental health centres and 130 in hospitals, were categorized into nine types, based on theoretical background. Psychodynamic groups were most frequent, followed by cognitive-behavioural, psycho-educative, social skills/coping and art/expressive groups. Weekly sessions of 90 min and treatment duration <6 or >12 months was most frequent. Main diagnosis for 2391 patients: depression (517), personality disorder (396), schizophrenia/psychosis (313) and social phobia (249). Patients with depression or personality disorder were mostly in psychodynamic groups, psychosis/bipolar disorder in psycho-educative groups. Cognitive-behavioural groups were used across several diagnoses. Most therapists were nurses, only 50% had a formal training in group therapy. There is a plethora of groups, some based on one theoretical school, while others integrate theory from several 'camps'. Patients with similar diagnosis were offered different group

approaches, although some trends existed. More research evidence from regular clinical groups is needed, and clinician–researcher networks should be developed. More group therapists with formal training are needed.

Terry Birchmore

Request for Foulkes Letters and Documents for Society Archives

We are appealing for letters, notes, and correspondence from Foulkes that Society members may possess. This will add to our already valuable society archive that contains much interesting material, papers and minutes and that is a significant source of information on our history and development.

Please contact Julia in the GASl office if you would like to donate any original or copied documents:

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Events

GAS International Quarterly Members Group (QMG)

The dates for sessions in 2015:

Saturday 24th January

Saturday 18th April

Saturday 5th July

Saturday 24th October

Format: there are three 90-minute sessions with a 90-minute break for lunch; the day runs from 9.30am - 4.30pm with the first group starting at 10.00.

Conductor: Ian Simpson.

Venue: Guild of Psychotherapists
47 Nelson Square, London SE1

The venue is a three minute walk from Southwark Underground Station. In addition to the large group room, we have the use of a kitchen. Morning refreshments are provided. For lunch, the Guild is in an area where there are many good, inexpensive places to eat.

The fee for the group is £25 per day or £80 for the year.

You can pay on the day by cash or cheque
or in advance at the GASI office:

1 Daleham Gardens, London, NW3 5BY
+44 20 7435 6611

All GASI members are welcome to the QMG.



39th S.H. FOULKES ANNUAL LECTURE

Friday 8th May 2015 at 7:00pm

**Venue: The Brunei Gallery
University of London
Thornhaugh Street
Russell Square
London, WC1H 0XG**

On Making A Home Amongst Strangers: The Paradox of Group Psychotherapy

Speaker: John Schlapobersky

Respondent: Gwen Adshead

Mr John Schlapobersky - Training Group Analyst IGA; Member AGPA; Research Fellow,
Birkbeck College University of London

Dr Gwen Adshead - Consultant Forensic Psychiatrist, Psychotherapist and Group Analyst
M.Inst.GA

**Study Day to follow on Saturday May 9th 2015
Venue: Tavistock Clinic, NW3**

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EGATIN

European Group Analytic Training Institutions Network

www.egatin.net



IGA

The Institute of Group Analysis

www.groupanalysis.org



GASW

Group Analysis South West

www.gasw.co.uk

Jointly hosted by Group Analysis South West (GASW) and the Institute of Group Analysis (IGA)

EGATIN Study Days

24-26 April 2015

Group Analytic Training and the Social Context

Exploring the relevance of group analytic training as a tool for thinking in the political
and socio-cultural environment

Guest Speaker:
Farhad Dalal

The Bristol Hotel

Prince Street, Bristol BS1 4QF

www.doylecollection.com/hotels/the-bristol-hotel

Hotel Tel. No: 0117 923 0333

[Register online here](#)

And other accommodation in the area is as follows:

Youth Hostel: www.yha.org.uk/hostel/bristol

Marriott Bristol City Centre: www.marriott.co.uk/hotels/travel/brsdt-bristol-marriott-hotel-city-centre

Novotel Bristol Centre: www.novotel.com/gb/hotel-5622-novotel-bristol-centre/index.shtml

Travelodge Bristol Central: www.travelodge.co.uk/hotels/78/Bristol-Central-hotel

Other hotels may be found on Trivago: www.trivago.co.uk



Please make a note in your diary:
**2nd International Summer School in
Group Analysis**

"Who is Afraid of Groups?"

Prague

July 15th - 19th 2015

Actual information to be found on the
GASI website

<http://groupanalyticsociety.co.uk/>

CONTEXTS' COLUMNIST

MY WORLD – YOU'RE WELCOME TO IT (MWYWTI)

Beat me daddy, eight to the bar.

The First Ever SADs

After extensive canvassing, MWYWTI is proud to announce the first Symposia Awards of the Duo-decennium or SADs, the "Oscars" for Group Analytic conferences.

SAD for Most Fabulous City – Bologna: infinitely varied shades of pink, coherence of architecture, the beauty of decaying grandeur, a central square to meet in, a structure you can find your way around easily, perfect temperature, porticos so you can walk the city out of the sun, the residents' sense of style (even the old geezers walk proud).

Apologies to the disappointed but Molde: too small (sorry Peter); Dublin: too Irish (yes, I know, nesi*, sorry Cariosa); London: too big (sorry Kevin); Lisbon: too steep (sorry Patrícia).

SAD for Most Dramatic Environment - Molde: Fjord, sea and mountains on mountains on mountains.

Honorable Mention – Lisbon: the advantage of being steep.

SAD for Best Lunches – Bologna: a generous, delectable spread, wines (plus other drinks) without stinting in a lovely, private square with shade under the colonnades if you want it. Come on, what else would you expect from the food capital of the country with the greatest cuisine in the world?

Honorable Mention – Molde (all that seafood!)

SAD for The Craic – Dublin: the advantage of being Irish! Boy, they know how to talk and give you a good time.

SAD for Best Dinner – Bologna: Magical Mystery Tour to the venue, good food (see above), intriguing surprise visit to light strewn dungeon for post dinner dancing, everything and everyone looked magical.

Honorable Mention – London: Hey, it was free!!

SAD for Quaintest City Transport – Lisbon: for their ancient Trams (as long as you're not in a hurry).

SAD for Best Dance Music – London: all hail HUAWI - 'nuff said (well, not quite 'nuff as they even got a ringing endorsement from the Chair of the Scientific Programme Committee as he was bopping away).

SAD for Best City Airport – Molde: the advantage of being small, so gloriously quick and hassle free both off and on. Also, the wonderful view whilst landing.

SAD for City of Romance – All must have prizes! Many have found love at the different venues and even married those they met. One thing's for sure: Bologna, Molde, Dublin, London, Lisbon – they were all sexy.

And, finally, two special awards:

SAD for Most Delicious Custard Tarts – Lisbon for their *pastel de nata*.

SAD for Most Unusual Social Event – London for their GASI Olympics, especially *Synchronised Swimming on Dry Land*, where one team managed to incorporate a satire on the large group (you had to be there)!

Oops, almost forgot, an extra

SAD Honorable mention – Kevin Power (MWYWTI hums a tune and signals with its hands to indicate that it's sure you'll agree that London has the advantage of being big!)

Next awards in 2026

* not even smiling inwardly

A winning team at the GASI Olympics displays its medals



Elephants R Us

At the last Symposium LG there was much talk of elephants in the room; however the one cited, though contemporary, was external to the group and perhaps distracted from a more enduring issue with greater internal relevance. Looking round the large group there was one thing immediately obvious for those with eyes to see – only one black face. In fact MJ herself drew attention to this but it wasn't followed up despite another African's well-intentioned attempts to join her. Now this really did strike MWYWTI as avoidance (and it usually hates this concept since what is being "avoided" is everything else in the Universe).

At Lambeth College in south London at least half the students on counselling courses are from ethnic minorities with a substantial African/ Afro-Caribbean representation. MWYWTI has heard that Goldsmiths Group Psychotherapy course was similar. In both of these instances there are probably two factors: one – the cost of the courses (though this begs some other questions) and two – the reputation of the larger, containing institution, its perceived accessibility to these groups.

MWYWTI had previously mentioned this issue, somewhat tactlessly, at a large group at the Molde Symposium (it said that the group was "hideously white", an expression that had been used about the BBC by its Director General) only to be told that this was an inexplicable "British obsession" (in which case, good for us). But why isn't it an obsession elsewhere, are there no under-represented black minorities in other

European countries or elsewhere?

So where is this issue being discussed? GASI isn't a training institution but shouldn't it be concerned? After all some of its African/ Afro-Caribbean members seem to have faded from view and where is the Black/ White group when you need it? MWYWTI has been told that the IGA is thinking about this and would like to change things but, of course, it is difficult to attract students who can feel alienated by not already being sufficiently represented.

When things improve in this respect, when there really is diversity, then issues of race, ethnicity and other differences become much easier to discuss without everyone walking on eggshells or minorities feeling that they have to initiate discussions or represent anyone other than themselves.

What's Up, Doc?

Doc's last consultee of the day is Lavinia Palace. She flops onto the couch.

Doc: Lying down this time, not often you do that - must be bad.

LP: I'm such a bitch, there's something wrong with me!

Doc: Hmm, a familiar theme. What's up this time?

LP: I'm just so ungrateful. It's like I'm a glass of water that Psychoanalysis has put a drop of black ink in and now I can't get the darkness out. Nothing is straightforward; I'm always looking for a suspect motivation. Well, someone must have died 'cos the IGA has contacted me about honorary membership.

Doc: And that's.....bad?

LP: Well I understand when they give it to someone who's done a lot for group analysis, you know, publications, sitting on committees, public profile etc.

Doc: Yeah and you've done all of that stuff.

LP: (Sits up to look at Doc) I have. But I've also got my own

qualification as a group psychotherapist outside of the IGA. So what are they saying, that it's not good enough, that I need something else to authenticate my work? Or can an organisation be narcissistic.

Doc: Well, it's true that with institutions, the whole can be less than the sum of the parts.

LP: (Gesticulating wildly) So it seems like they're aggrandising themselves both by having the chutzpah to think they can award those who are already qualified and sort of gather unto themselves for their own glorification. I mean, there's not really any other group training any more: LCP, Goldsmiths and now WPF, they've all gone down the pan but surely even the IGA can't want to be a monopoly, that's no good for anyone, it's all a bit overkill!

Doc: There's the Tavi now, or Re-Vision?

LP: C'mon, Doc, be serious!
So tell me, this IGA offer - honour or insult?

Doc: (Applauding sarcastically) Good question, dramatically put. But I think we have to return to what you said about there being something wrong with you, though I disagree with your terms. Your metaphor was interesting but misleading – Psychoanalysis hasn't put anything into you, it's made you aware of the darkness that was there in the first place. So instead of thinking about the IGA, let's get back to you because you've been offered a thoroughbred but see it as an old nag.

LP: (Lying down again) OK.....but if I did accept membership – it'd be free, right?

A Modest Proposal

MWYWTI has seen a great suggestion for radical political change - all government posts and other positions of power, including Prime Minister, President or Queen/ King, to be allocated randomly amongst the eligible population with a twenty-year run in. Terrific because this would make the nation ensure an excellent, broadly based education for all its citizens with a firm moral foundation, take care of everyone's mental health but also introduce thorough checks and balances on all such rôles.

So how's about doing this with the Foulkes lecture - random allocation amongst GASI members (non-compulsory and without the run in)? MWYWTI doesn't know about you, but the Foulkes Lecture, what some lecturers have described as the greatest honour bestowed upon them, seems to be more of a poisoned chalice. It hasn't been to one where the lecture wasn't torn to shreds in the pub afterwards; maybe that's just the crowd MWYWTI mixes with, though it's sure you've heard your own critics.

As it's impossible for the lecturer to get it right, random allocation might free things up: it would empower, honour and trust our membership, introduce a frisson as we wouldn't know what to expect, perhaps make us all a bit more forgiving in our judgements. MWYWTI can't think of any GASI colleague who couldn't make a good fist of it if given the opportunity to air their favourite obsession, though in the current climate maybe they wouldn't want to.

Regretfully MWYWTI is sure that no-one will take the above suggestion seriously. However, it really, truly begs GASI to re-structure the study day so that we don't have to sit through any *more* talks (we've already had the lecture, so plenty of meat to chew on) but give us extra small groups, further chance to talk things over with colleagues in the tried and trusted GA way. That's why MWYWTI goes to the day and it knows that, in this, it's not alone (hi, John)!

The MWYWTI Ten Point Guide to the Large Group

1. Don't expect anything and you won't be disappointed.
2. Speak if you can, it'll get you connected, transform your relationship to the group and make it easier to speak in future large groups.
3. If you do speak, SPEAK UP.
4. But don't hang around too long or the moment will have passed (see 9 below).
5. Keep it short and to the point - don't ramble, rant or grandstand.
6. Don't anticipate a response; it doesn't mean that nobody loves you.

7. Depending on how long the group is meeting for, and how large it is, there may not be much development, in fact some are doomed to never develop i.e. at GASI Symposia. However it's usually the case that people can hear each other better after a few days.

8. If you insist that there is something the group *should* talk about then you are betraying its principles. Be a bit more Bionic - lose your memory and desire.

9. Remember, the group won't stay on the same topic for more than 5 minutes – relax and float downstream.

10. Don't expect anything and you won't be disappointed.

"Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible"

The Dalai Lama

And don't forget: there's always time for a pastel de nata!