

AUTHORITY, LEADERSHIP AND LEGACY:
CREATIVE DISSONANCE IN

BODIES at WORK



JULY 2025
7-12

**Endicott College,
Beverly Massachusetts**

A.K. Rice Institute and Group Relations International
Annual Group Relations Conference | In-person | Residential

www.akrinal.org

Dear Prospective Member,

Our bodies hold our body of work. That is, we carry our histories and our work in all the spaces we have occupied (organizations, schools, families, communities) with us wherever we go. We also carry the histories of those we love, befriend, work with and mentor in our bodies, as we have listened to and absorbed their stories of triumphs and heartaches. The legacy of parents, families, ancestors, friends, mentors, and the professional and personal communities to which we belong come with us. Our bodies are like complicated intersecting freeways of interwoven histories and story lines and, as such, our body of work is always in the act of becoming.


Our bodies hold our body of work.

When we come together in groups and as part of larger organizations, we bring all of our histories – ALL of our bodies of work – with us. And when we bring our bodies of work together, we co-create a crazy rich tapestry – a space that is at once abundant and disruptive, competitive and collaborative, volatile, enduring, ambiguous, and ever-changing. As such, our organizations can be incredibly vibrant, complex, creative, and dynamic places – they can also be dysfunctional, disengaged and unhealthy places.

In these spaces, how do we listen to dissonance, both within ourselves and within our communities? Dissonance is defined as harsh sounds or uncomfortable disagreements which lack harmony and alignment. Cognitive dissonance occurs when our actions are not aligned with our values and beliefs. When we hear dissonance, we tend to bury it, drown it out, or perhaps strive to resolve it, make it feel more harmonious. Often, the sources and consequences of dissonance within ourselves and within our groups are unconscious, not easily discernible or approachable in our day-to-day-life.

In music, dissonance can sound like clashing notes or chords that hurt the ears. Dissonance often seeks resolution, yet simultaneously, dissonance moves music forward. With a slight change of context or framing, dissonance can become something beautiful — unusual, and understandable.





In the U.S. and around the world, our context is shifting. For some, that which surrounds us feels more aligned, while for others, the surround is becoming more discordant and clashing. The question for ALL is — how do we listen to both resonance and dissonance, within ourselves and in the world surrounding us? When do we authorize and deauthorize discord and harmony? How can we stay with and work with clashes and division to find creative resolutions?

AUTHORITY, LEADERSHIP AND LEGACY: CREATIVE DISSONANCE IN BODIES AT WORK is a Group Relations Conference (GRC) that offers a space to listen to the experience of dissonance within ourselves as well as in our surroundings, while we work with others and while exploring creativity and movement forward. In this conference, we focus on both the possibilities and impossibilities of work held within the resonances and dissonances of our day.

Group Relations Conferences offer opportunities to learn about how we enact authority, power, (in)justice and leadership in the here and now, through our collective behavior and contributions. The conscious and unconscious ways we connect, divide and construct our lives together come to light, enabling us to more profoundly understand our location, dislocation and relocation in context with others.

As resonance and dissonance shift in real time within the GRC, we co-create a space where we can take up roles and leadership in old, new and creative ways, shed light on hidden aspects of our current reality, and open up new possibilities, new narratives, and new realities.

If you are ready to explore and work with creative dissonance in bodies of, and at, work; if you are ready to activate community and transform our sense of rupture; then we invite you to join and work with us.

Sincerely,
Evangeline Sarda
Conference Director

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

This conference offers an experiential way to study unconscious processes of group life that are ubiquitous but seldom available for examination. Because all members devote themselves to the task of exploring these processes, the unconscious aspects and tangled complexities of organizational life become accessible.

The conference is a temporary organization where learning about the dynamics of groups and social systems takes place through a disciplined focus on one's own experiences and those of others. As such, there are no presentations given by experts, but instead, opportunities to study and experience a living system as it emerges and develops. The different roles that participants take up and the collective behaviors, thoughts, feelings and fantasies that unfold during the life of the conference become the raw material and the data that participants can access in order to make sense of their current reality.

By using individual and collective experience as data, participants learn to see, hear and understand what is happening above and below the surface, and from there develop ideas to test how to be more effective at being and doing what we say we want to be and do in the organization.

Joining the conference provides an opportunity to grapple with, enjoy, and develop new narratives that explore and contain the spectrum of harmonious and discordant experiences of what it is to be human. The learning enables us to take up our multiple and complex roles in our back home organizations and institutions in more effective and fulfilling ways.

WHO IS THE CONFERENCE FOR?

A diverse membership creates the possibility for rich learning. Conference members from a wide variety of fields, organizations, educational backgrounds, and vocations have gained valuable learning in group relations experiences. Members who have careers in the helping professions, community advocacy, organizational consultation, education, law, leadership, management, technology, and human resources have found the learning to be particularly applicable to their professions.

Learning through experience about the overt and covert ways that human systems function (groups, organizations, societies, etc.) requires the ability to tolerate division, ambiguity, paradox and anxiety. Our fears and anxieties often lead us away from the hard facts of reality and toward constructing ways of seeing and interpreting the world that protect us from difficult feelings.

This conference is designed for those who seek to stay with the trouble in order to deepen their capacity to engage in nuanced and difficult dialogue on the issues of the day and work for change in their organizations. While no particular background or experience is necessary to participate, personal and emotional resilience are important resources for this kind of learning.



WHAT CAN I LEARN ABOUT?

- How do we listen for, hear, and respond to dissonance and resonance within ourselves and within our communities? What do we do when we hear it / feel it?
- How do we respond to a rapidly changing, unpredictable and emerging context?
- How do we look at and work with our dividedness, both real and imagined – can our divides be simultaneously defensive, and also pathways to a profound understanding of the tangled complexity of our connectedness?
- Paradox – how can we hold and work with paradox; how can we stay with the trouble?
- Legacies – can we both honor and rupture the legacies that we have inherited – and be responsive to the legacies that we are creating and leaving?
- The experiences of others – how can I hold both my experience and that of another?
- The fluid nature of most things, including power, authority, role, identities, task and boundaries.
- The meaning made of characteristics such as race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, age, ability and neurodiversity in the context of this organization.
- Competition, collaboration, conflict, coalition-building, envy, delegation and love.
- The connection between self and system; the tangled relatedness of part and whole; how and when our relatedness and dividedness are linked.
- How we individually and collectively take up roles, negotiate authority, accomplish tasks and manage anxiety in a changing context.





CONFERENCE EVENTS

The conference is organized as a series of events that provide opportunities to learn through experience in a variety of social contexts. Each event offers a different view from which one experiences and perceives oneself and others, which may change over time. Participants develop different capacities as they adjust to the distinct dynamics of each event and explore the reality of their situation in the here-and-now. The events will begin and end promptly at the times designated. A final schedule will be provided at registration.

OPENING AND CLOSING PLENARIES provide an opportunity for members and staff to express and explore their thoughts and feelings on crossing into and out of the conference space.

SMALL STUDY GROUPS provide an opportunity to learn about dynamics in small groups similar to teams and committees. The small study group consists of 12 or fewer members with one or two staff as consultants.

LARGE STUDY GROUPS include all members in the conference and provide an opportunity to study the dynamics that arise in larger groups where it is more difficult to know or see every member and where group myths reflecting various assumptions can arise quickly and powerfully to impact emotions, thoughts and behavior. A team of consultants will work with the large study groups.

INTERGROUP EVENT AND INTERSECTING SYSTEMS EVENT

These events provide members with an opportunity to form their own groups and determine their own group task. They each open and close with a plenary and take place over several sessions. The Intergroup Event provides an opportunity to study how groups form and authorize their members to do work on their behalf, while the Intersecting Systems Event widens the lens of focus to include political and systemic forces that arise as different groups form and interact with each other and management.

SILENT EVENT / SENSING MATRIX / INTEGRATION

The task of these events is to explore the state of the conference system through silence, through creative expression, through the body and through dreams and associations, and to offer spaces where integration of complex learning and dynamics can occur.

BRIDGING GROUPS / TRILOGY EVENTS

These events provide participants the opportunity to reflect on their roles and experiences within the conference and, later, the application of conference experience to life beyond the conference.

PRIMARY TASK / AIM / PURPOSE

The **primary task** while in the conference is to learn from experience about authority, leadership, legacy and dissonance within and outside our bodies by exploring the conscious and unconscious dynamics that emerge in the here and now of this working conference and its wider context.

The **aim** of the conference is to provide the optimum space for participants to exercise their freedom, power and authority to take up their working roles in conference events and to find and do the work that needs to be done to serve the conference task and purpose.

The **purpose** of the conference is to build leadership capacity for one's life outside the conference and to develop a spirit of inquiry into the lived experience of organizational life in order to promote a better world.



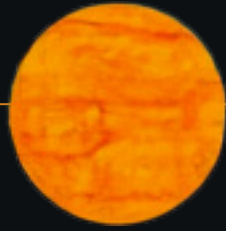
PRAXIS BUILDING

This conference offers a Praxis Building opportunity for those who would like to build their capacity to understand and utilize a Group Relations stance. Interested participants have an opportunity to take up a consulting role in their Small Study Group and receive direct feedback and role analysis from senior staff and fellow members.

Participation in at least **two** group relations conferences (or the equivalent) is required. Those who wish to apply should complete the supplemental questions at the bottom of the regular registration form. For more information, contact Sarah Rosenbaum at sarahcr@earthlink.net.

Early application is highly recommended.



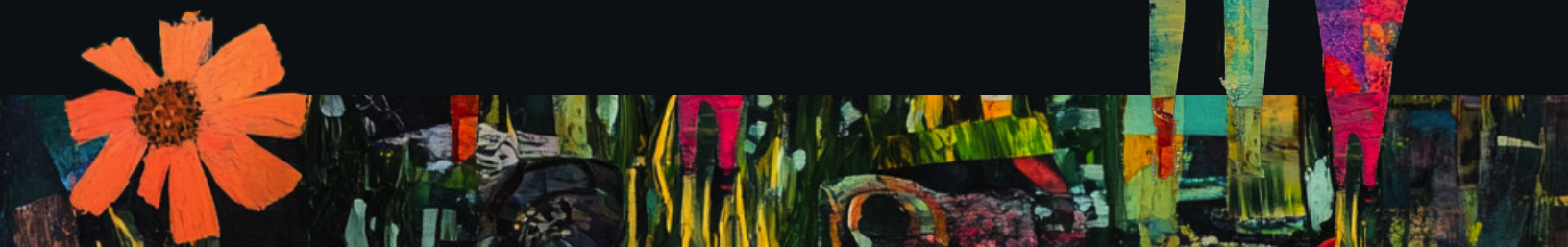


CONFERENCE STAFF

Staff administer and manage the conference as a whole and take up consulting roles during conference events. As administration, staff articulate the primary task, aim and purpose, and design the conference to serve those goals. As management, staff manage the conditions of conference events, particularly in relation to time, task and territory. Staff do not manage the participants or their behavior. Instead, participants are free to engage the primary task, aim and purpose as they choose and as they authorize themselves and each other to do.

As consultants, staff link their own experiences to the activities of the conference and offer working hypotheses and reflections that explore the unconscious aspects of the organizational behavior that is emerging. In these roles, staff are actively involved in the life of the conference. Their reflections focus on group level dynamics rather than on the individual, and on unconscious as well as conscious dynamics.

The ways in which staff work are always open for examination. Staff for the conference will be drawn from the list below, and may include others not listed here. Staff roles listed in this brochure may change based on circumstance at the time of the conference. A final staff list with staff roles will be provided at registration on-site.





Evangeline Sarda, JD
Conference Director

Associate Clinical Law Professor, Boston College Law School; Director, Prosecution Clinic, Co-Director, Criminal Process Clinic; former Faculty Director, Leaders Entering and Advancing Public Service (LEAPS); teaches CRT and GR Theory. Board Member: Group Relations International; Centre for Social Dreaming; American Key Food Products; University of the Cordilleras (Baguio, Philippines); former Treasurer, the Research and Education Collaborative with Al-Quds University (RECA). Member: IFSI, France; CSGSS (former board member); Fellow, A. K. Rice Institute. Graduate: Yale College, Columbia University Law School; former Domestic Violence Prosecutor and inner-city high school teacher. Philippine and Indian descent; born and raised in the U.S.; resides in MA.



Sarah Rosenbaum, PhD
Associate Director of the Conference and Director of Praxis Building

Sarah is a clinical psychologist and consultant in private practice, and a co-founder of DBT of Greater Philadelphia. She is a long-time member of the New York Center, a Fellow and past president of the A.K. Rice Institute; and a co-creator and training faculty for Group Relations International. She lives just outside Philadelphia with her husband, mother, two teens and two cats.



Rebecca Abell, PsyD, CGP
Associate Director of Administration

Psychologist and Director of Psychology Externship, MedStar Washington Hospital Center; Membership Committee Co-Chair, Washington-Baltimore Center for the Study of Group Relations (WBC); Member, A. K. Rice Institute for the Study of Social Systems (AKRI); Member, Center for the Study of Groups and Social Systems (CSGSS); Certified Group Psychotherapist (CGP), American Group Psychotherapy Association (AGPA); Member, Mid-Atlantic Group Psychotherapy Society (MAGPS); Co-Creator, Group Relations International (GRI).



Ihan Anita Ip, PhD
Administrator, Praxis

Adjunct Faculty, Department of Leadership Studies, SOLES, USD; Leadership Coach and Consultant, Nonprofit Institute, USD. Co-creator of Group Relations International, Member of GREX and of the A.K. Rice Institute of the Study of Social Systems.



rev. lyla meadows, MDiv
Administrator

Clinical Chaplain, Presbyterian Healthcare Services; Ordained Interfaith Minister, OUnI; Spiritual Director; Former Steering Committee, NYC Transformative Justice Hub; Regenerative Farmer.



Andrew Alsoraimi-Espiritu
Subsystem Team Lead-in-Training

Andrew is the Assistant Director of Admissions and Marketing, School of Global Policy and Strategy, UC San Diego; Member, City Farmers Goat Cooperative; Co-Creator, Group Relations International; Vice President, GREX: West Coast Affiliate of the A.K. Rice Institute; Board Member, Sparrow Academy: A Public Waldorf Charter School; Returned Peace Corps Volunteer, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan



Alfredo Bambarén
Consultant

Alfredo is an economist in Perú, Fellow of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (Germany), Senior Coach / Master in Ontological Coaching (Chile) and consultant in Institutional Transformation certified by IFSI (France) and Bath University (England). Last 30 years in Perú: Social manager in international technical cooperation projects, public entities (Ministry of Women and Social Development), at private mining companies (community relations), consultant in strategic development, university professor (URP/UPC), and member of the Board of InnovAcción (Group for the Design and Institutional Transformation), working on conferences with the Group Relations methodology.



Medria Connolly
Elder

Medria is a clinical psychologist in private practice in Santa Monica, California. She has been in practice for more than 30 years working with adolescents, adults and couples. She is also an advocate for Reparations to African Americans and co-author of the article, "Transforming Ghosts into Ancestors: Un-silencing the Psychological Case for Reparations to Descendants of American Slavery". Medria is on the IFPE Board and a Fellow of the A.K. Rice Institute.



Leon Anthony James, RN, BSN, MA
Consultant

Leon is an Infectious disease and epidemiology, mental health and emergency medicine Registered Nurse and photographer living in Baltimore, Maryland. Member, Washington Baltimore Center for the Study of Group Relations, Member of the WBC Wells School Steering Committee, Member, Association of Nurses in AIDS Care, and Member, International AIDS Society. Proud 2nd generation Jamaican, graduate of a HBCU and Baltimorean-New Yorker-Baltimorean.



mak wemuk, JD
Praxis Consultant

mak wemuk is the principal of Luna Consulting & Coaching (nonprofit executive coaching, health equity, organizational development, racial equity). He also is a Fellow, the Chair of the Conference Committee, and a Director Development Mentor of the A.K. Rice Institute; the Vice President of the Washington-Baltimore Center for the Study of Group Relations (WBC); a member and the current weekend conference director of the Center for the Study of Groups and Social Systems (CSGSS); a Co-Creator of Group Relations International; a Past-President of the National Association of Latino Healthcare Executives (NALHE); and a member of the National Lawyers Guild. He is the father of four powerful young women and lives in the Chicago area.



Mary B. McRae, EdD
Elder

Mary holds a private practice in individual and group psychotherapy; coaching and group facilitation for groups and organizations. Fellow, A. K. Rice Institute for the Study of Social Systems; member of the New York Center for the Study of Groups, Organizations and Social Systems, President William Alanson White Institute, Member of Black Psychoanalyst Speaks.



Richard Morgan-Jones
Consultant

Richard is an International Organizational and Group Relations consultant, Psychoanalytical Psychotherapist and training supervisor. Academic degrees from Cambridge, Exeter and Oxford universities UK, in Anthropology, Education and Theology. Distinguished member of International Society for the Psychoanalytical Study of Organizations. Senior member of British Psychotherapy Foundation and British Psychoanalytic Council. Director of Group Relations for Association Psychoanalytic Coaches and Business Consultants Moscow. Author of "The Body of the Organisation and its Health". Co-editor of "Introduction Field Theory for Counsellors, Psychoanalysts and Psychotherapists." He lives in the UK.



Yu An Wang, MA, SEP®, LMHC, LPCC, NCC
Consultant

Yu An was born and raised in Taiwan and is currently living in Los Angeles. Private practice psychotherapist in Los Angeles; non-profit long-term care consultant and trainer; former board member, affiliate representative, and secretary for AKRI; member of AKRI, GREX, and the New York Center; and a co-creator in GRI. Graduated from Master of Counseling at Northwestern University. Trained in psychodynamic, group psychotherapy, Somatic Experiencing®, mindfulness, multicultural, and social justice oriented approaches. Has been involved in the Group Relations field in a variety of different roles throughout the USA, China, Taiwan, and Israel since 2014.



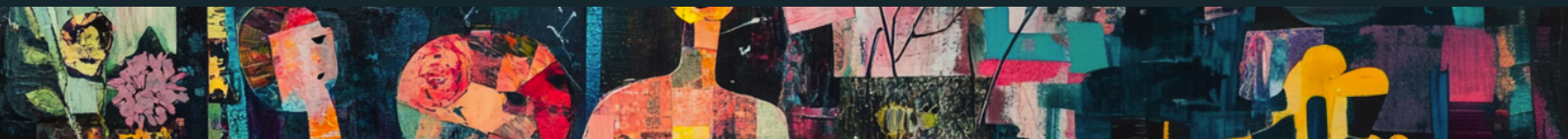
Leo Wilton, PhD
Consultant

Leo is a Professor in the Department of Human Development at the State University of New York at Binghamton. Lifetime Member, Association of Black Psychologists; President, A. K. Rice Institute for the Study of Social Systems (AKRI); Member and Past President, New York Center for the Study of Groups, Organizations, and Social Systems; Secretary, Washington-Baltimore Center for the Study of Group Relations (WBC); Co-Creator, Group Relations International; Fellow, American Psychological Association (APA); Lifetime Member, Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora (ASWAD).



Ting Li Zhou
Praxis Consultant-in-Training

Ting Li is a China National Psychological Counselor, Forest Therapist, and Nurse-in-Charge. She has participated in Group Relations work in the Tavistock tradition since 2014 and has completed a series of trainings for consultants organized by the Division of Group Counseling and Group Therapy (DGCGT) of the Chinese Association of Mental Health (CAMH). She has had training in group relations as a small study group consultant, large study group consultant, and director in training organized by Israel, Group Relations International, and AKRI. She has served as a member, consultant-in-training, and consultant, head of large study group consultant team, and consultant's trainer in China, United States, Israel, and in online group relations conferences. From 2022 to 2024, she has organized an online long-term large study group program as the director for three years. Co-creator of Group Relations International, Founder of LiveinGroup, Certified Social Dream Matrix host of social dreaming International Network. Social dreaming matrix host of the New York Center.



ATTENDANCE

The conference is designed to be a single integrated educational experience with each component building upon the next. Individuals who know in advance that they are unable to attend all sessions are discouraged from applying. Anyone who must leave for any reason is requested to inform the administration.

Members who do not complete in-person registration may be administratively withdrawn from the conference without a refund.

SPECIAL NOTE

The conference is an educational endeavor and does not provide psychotherapy or sensitivity training. Although the experiential learning available can be stimulating and enriching, it can be emotionally stressful and confrontational as well. Thus, applicants who are ill or experiencing significant personal difficulties or are intensely emotionally triggered by views different from their own should forgo participating at this time.

Registration and conference membership may be refused or rescinded at the discretion of the conference staff.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Please email Rebecca Abell at GRleastGRC@gmail.com
no later than June 1 if you are seeking CE credit.

WITHDRAWAL POLICY

Fees can only be refunded (less \$100 administration charge) if a written notice of cancellation (via email) is received by 6 PM PST on June 1, 2025.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Staff will not report the behavior of any individual member to anyone outside the conference nor to the boards of the sponsoring organizations.



CONFERENCE LOCATION

Endicott College
376 Hale St., Beverly, MA 01915

CONFERENCE DATES AND TIMES

July 7, 2025 (Monday) - Conference begins at 1:00 PM

July 12, 2025 (Saturday) - Conference ends at 1:00 PM

The conference begins promptly at 1:00 PM on Monday and will continue until 9 PM. Thereafter, days will begin at 8:45 AM and end at 9:00 PM on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, and at 5:30 PM on Wednesday. The conference ends with lunch on Saturday. The cafeteria opens for meals each day at these times: breakfast 7:30-8:45 AM; lunch 12:00-1:00 PM; dinner 5:00-6:00 PM. Breaks will be interspersed throughout the day. A final Conference schedule of events will be provided at registration on site.

Information about dorms and on-site registration will be sent by email after all registration forms have been completed and registration fees paid.

ALL: CREATIVE DISSONANCE is a residential conference. Fees include dormitory housing beginning **JULY 7th** at registration, and meals beginning at dinner on the same day. Dorm rooms can be reserved up to 24 hours before the conference opening and after the conference closing upon advance request; an additional fee is required.



REGISTRATION FEES

	EARLY REGISTRATION	AFTER MAY 31, 2025
Registration and Praxis Building fee	\$2,950	\$3,450
AKRI member/GRI co-creator	\$2,750	\$3,250
Group of 3 or more from same organization	\$2,750	\$3,250
Full-time student	\$2,500	\$2,950
Extra night with room and board	\$150	\$150
Sliding scale*		
\$2,150 - \$3,450		

Registration Closes: June 27, 2025

Bursaries are available.

For more information, please contact Rebecca Abell at: GRleastGRC@gmail.com

REGISTER HERE

* SLIDING SCALE FEE INFORMATION

For general membership (not available for Praxis Building) we are offering a sliding scale fee to promote financial accessibility to the conference. In determining your fee, please consider the following:

- \$2,950 reflects the cost of the conference. If you have stable employment, mid-to-high income, a savings account, and/or are able to pay for "wants" and do not have to worry about paying for necessities, please consider paying this rate or above.
- \$2,150 is the lowest fee on the sliding scale. If you have low income, unstable or no employment, little expendable income each month, struggle to maintain access to basic needs like food and health care and/or would be unable to attend the conference at the full cost, please pay at this rate. If this price point is still prohibitive, please reach out to us at griestgrc@gmail.com to discuss further bursary options and payment plans.
- If paying for the conference would require sacrifice in non-essential areas of your life but would not cause long-term financial harm or prevent you from meeting basic needs, and/or if you fall somewhere between the above descriptions, please consider paying the suggested fee or at a rate between \$2,150 and \$2,950.
- If you have plenty of expendable income or you are receiving financial support from your employer, please consider paying more than \$2,950. Any funds in excess of this amount will be directly applied to providing scholarships for those with financial barriers.
- Please keep in mind that a sliding scale relies on honesty and accountability. If you choose the lowest price when you actually can afford more, you are limiting access to those who truly require financial flexibility.
- If you choose an amount other than the suggested amount, please choose an amount that is between \$2,150 and \$3,450 on the 50 and enter the dollar amount without the dollar sign (e.g., 2250, 2850, 3150) in the discount area of the registration form (near the end) and be sure to click "apply."

RELATED READINGS

The Tavistock Primer II

Charla Hayden
René J. Molenkamp

Key Concepts that inform Group Relations Work

Theresa M. Monroe, rscj

Group-As-Mother: A Dark Continent in Group Relations Theory and Practice

Sarah C. Rosenbaum

The Denigrated Other: Diversity and Group Relations

Marvin R. Skolnick
Zachary G. Green



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Please check our web page for updated information.

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