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GROUP  
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# Networks of Desire

A Group Relations Training Conference

Simon Western, Curator  
Evangeline Sarda, Initiator

20-22 & 27-28 January 2023 Online via Zoom



# Invitation to Join

## Networks of Desire 2

We invite you to participate in our second **Networks of Desire** Group Relations Training Conference.

The Conference aims to explore how networks of power, and networks of desire, work within us, and between us.

Traditional forms of hierarchy and position power that have dominated the past centuries still exist, and yet, more powerful, hidden influences shape our lives. Power and culture control circulate in our networked society, forming and limiting our desires. At the same time, there is a great opportunity to follow our true desires (individually and collectively). This conference invites you to explore that opportunity. What is your **true desire?**

### **Approach to the GRC experiential learning.**

Despite the claim that GRC learning is here-and-now and purely experiential, it has always been shaped by ideology, method and theory. Making the theme and method explicit prior to this GRC conference helps to undo the hidden power in the network, and to deconstruct the usual top-down power/authority held by the director and the staff team.

**BART – Boundaries, Authority, Role and Task** are the classical GRC learning approaches. Understanding BART well, and clarifying boundaries, roles authority and task are meant to produce containment, good leadership and good organization. Yet whilst BART remains a useful guiding framework, it also is highly problematic because it reflects the 1950s culture from where it emerged. We can say it reflects vertical power in a system. In today’s culture, the dominance of vertical power is challenged by horizontal power, i.e. no-longer is it possible to have such clear boundaries, roles are multiple and blurred, tasks are complex, and authority is underpinned by hidden power.

The Networks of Desire conference works with a new method and acronym, NIPI which Simon Western has used to address the challenges we currently face and to frame other GRC work.

**NIPI- Networks, Identity, Power and Influence (Western, McDonnell 2022)\***

Today we live in a networked society and power circulates in networks, not simply at the top of organizations. This changes how we are authorised and how authoritarian ideologies entrap us. Our identities are more fluid, and we need to engage with individual, group and national identity questions as it is a hugely powerful force in contemporary society. Influence is exerted in social media networks; it swirls around us and we are often dislocated and undone by the forces that influence us. Using NIPI to frame organizational and GRC dynamics helps us move from seeing power and authority as top-down to engaging in the horizontal as well as the vertical dynamics that shape our identities, desires and influence.

The invitation is to join us exploring your experiences and to ask yourself . . .

## What is your true desire?



**Simon Western**



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\*Western, S. and McDonnell, B., 2022. NIPI not BART: Designing a group relations conference for our precarious-interdependent world. *Socio-analysis*, 23, pp. 61-81.

## Training Conference

A training conference is a group relations conference with the additional aim to provide training for consultants who use a group relations lens in their work and wish to develop that lens more, and who may wish to take up group relations staff roles in the future. This conference is both an experiential here-and-now event and an opportunity for all to learn about authority-in-role as the event unfolds.

Those who join as **Consulting Trainees** will have the opportunity to consult with small groups or large groups, and will reflect in public upon their work with an observing staff team member.

Through observing trainee staff-team reflections and participating in small and large groups, those who joins as **Non-consulting Trainees** have an opportunity to learn about the roles they take up on behalf of groups, group relations methodology and theory, and taking up a staff role in a group relations conference.

## Aim and Task

In this event, we aim to explore the potential of emancipating ourselves from the conformist, authoritarian cultures we absorb. We also aim to resist and fight back against the democratic deficits that creep into our lives,

Specifically, we will:

- Become participant-observers of our own and others' experience in the networked society as it emerges
- Experience our experiences, as they manifest in the here and now, exploring conscious and unconscious dynamics
- Understand our hidden pleasures that arise from authoritarianism; experience how agency, leadership, and followership play out in our networked society
- Learn about ourselves and others in the networked dynamics of organizational life
- Co-create networks of desire that liberate us from authoritarian cultures.

## Method

Networks, Identity, Power, and Influence (NIPI) will be the four frames for consultants and participants to help them review their engagement and make sense of their experience. This is the second group relations conference using this methodology. Dr Simon Western evoked NIPI because we live in a networked age. We live in more fluid and turbulent times, the Precarious Interdependent Age (PIA) (Western, 2021). In PIA, power, identity, and influence swirl and are entangled in networks. The lenses of NIPI can help us to understand ourselves, our organizations, and our worlds.

## Schedule

Events will begin and end precisely at the times scheduled. This experience is designed so that each event builds on the one previous; participants should plan to attend all events. The basic schedule is below. A more detailed schedule will be provided to participants a few days in advance of the training conference and times may be adjusted slightly as participation is finalized.

DATE	TIMES (EST)
Friday, January 20	10:00 AM – 4:00 PM
Saturday, January 21	10:00 AM – 3:15 PM
Sunday, January 22	10:00 AM – 3:15 PM
Friday, January 27	10:00 AM – 4:00 PM
Saturday, January 28	10:00 AM – 3:15 PM

**NOTE:**

All Consulting Trainees should attend a preparation meeting currently on Thursday, January 19, at 9:00 AM to 10:30 AM EST

## Registration

Participants may join by applying to be a consulting trainee or a non-consulting trainee.

### Consulting Trainee

Consulting trainees have participated in at least one Group Relations Conference or training. Each consulting trainee will have an opportunity to consult to either Small Study Groups or Large Study Groups. When not in the consultant role, consulting trainees participate in the member role. The staff team will closely observe the consulting trainee and facilitate a public review for the benefit of all participants after each group session.

### Non-consulting Trainee

A non-consulting trainee is interested in learning more about the Group Relations model of experiential learning but may not be interested in taking a consulting role at this time. A prior Group Relations experience is preferred but not required. Non-consulting trainees participate as members in Small and Large Study Groups facilitated by consulting trainees and observe the public review of consulting trainees.

<b>Consultant Training Fee</b>	<b>\$575.00</b>
<b>Non-Consulting Training</b>	<b>\$425.00</b>

To register, click button below

**REGISTER**



The Staff Team designs and manages the workshop by attending to the boundaries of workshop events, particularly in relation to time, task, and territory. The Staff Team does not manage the participants or their behaviour, but instead, collectively manages the boundary conditions that allow the participants' freedom to engage the primary task as they choose and as they authorize themselves and each other to do.



## **Simon Western**

is the founder of The Eco-Leadership Institute and CEO of Analytic-Network Coaching, an ethically driven coach training company. He is an internationally acclaimed author on leadership and coaching. His innovative book *Leadership: A Critical Text* (Sage, 2019) is taught at business schools across the globe. Previously a family psychotherapist, he is a Past-President of ISPSO, Adjunct Professor at University College Dublin.

Simon's interest in this event comes from a lifetime's work focusing on humanising and democratising organizations, and as a social-movement activist focused on social justice issues. Currently, he is a member of the Irish Green Party and recently published research on leadership in the Occupy Movement.

## **Evangeline Sarda**

is an Associate Clinical Professor of Law at Boston College Law School and a board member of Group Relations International (GRI), Centre for Social Dreaming (CSD), and the Research and Education Collaborative with Al-Quds University (RECA). She is also an AKRI Fellow. Evangeline is committed to the work of Group Relations International, which focuses on social justice, spirituality and group relations.







## **Betsy Hasegawa, Ed.D.**

(she/her/hers; Ainu First People of Japan and Japanese heritages; Ed.D., Harvard Graduate School of Education) serves as Special Advisor for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Community with the Seattle Colleges District.

Betsy is still amazed that she was asked to build community, develop leadership, and promote healing as part of a large scale change process to co-create an intentionally anti-racist college district. As part of this, Betsy gets to work with students, faculty, staff, and community to promote more active, relational, and connected ways of teaching and engaging, with the hope that we can improve educational experiences and achievement for BIPOC students. Betsy is part of the latest cohort of Dr. Simon Western's Analytic-Network Online Advanced Coach Training. Dr. Hasegawa also serves on the Lummi Nation Peacemaking Circle Leadership Team, is a Fellow of the AK Rice Institute for the Study of Social Systems and is a Co-creator with Group Relations International.



## **Elyce Cole, MA, MSc**

(she/they) is an organization development and change researcher and consultant specializing in group dynamics at the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations. Alongside her work, she pursues a doctorate in Advanced Practice and Research in Consultation and the Organization at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust/the University of Essex.

Elyce's research interests include examining organizational issues linked to group dynamics, power, authority, and group identity/intersectionality through a systems psychodynamic lens.




## **Brant Evans, MA**

is the executive director of Journeymen Asheville, a nonprofit that conducts rites of passage retreats for young men, as well as trainings around mentoring skills for adult men. Previously, he held leadership positions in the wilderness therapy industry.

Brant is especially interested in looking at group dynamics through the mythopoetic lens, synthesizing the works of Bion, Jung, Joseph Campbell, Robert Bly, Robert Johnson, and others.

He was introduced to group relations work in 2015.



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