



The  
Eco-Leadership  
Institute



GROUP  
RELATIONS  
INTERNATIONAL

Creating a better world - together

Hosted Online (via **Zoom**)

28, 29, 30 January 2022

4, 5 February 2022

# Networks of **Desire**

A Group Relations Training Conference



## Director's Invitation

There is a growing democratic deficit that is pervading the world like a virus. Political democracy is under pressure across the globe. In the United States, the beacon of the free world has looked increasingly fragile and under threat. In China and Russia, rising state authoritarianism reverses hopes that embracing capitalism and consumerism would strengthen democracy. In the west, Populist movements engage with conspiracy theories and turn their backs on the democratic process, believing that liberal elites control the political space. On the liberal-progressive side, political correctness and cancel culture impose a different form of authoritarianism, aiming to silence the 'other' who doesn't fit their worldview.

Within the workplace and wider society, democracy is also being undermined in more subtle ways that are largely unnoticed and unquestioned. Culture control and algorithmic management in organisations undermine worker freedom and autonomy, whilst surveillance capitalism is pervasive via social media and endemic in our organisations. These types of culture control impose a form of authoritarian ideology that increasingly undermines autonomy and democratic workplace engagement, whilst claiming to set us free.

**Democracy and autonomy depend on the capacity to think.**

Hanna Arendt claims that totalitarianism is caused by loneliness — ‘the experience of not belonging to the world’ - that destroys the capacity to think with others, to discern for ourselves what is real and not real, and loneliness destroys the capacity for solitude, which is a necessary condition for thinking. For Arendt, thinking is always linked to experience.

As Donna Haraway urges us, ‘think we must, we must think!’

Facing these challenges to individual autonomy, and a collective democratic engagement in society, we invite you to think with others, and to consider...

## What is your **true desire**?

This event provides a space to confront and subvert the democratic deficit that we all internalise to some degree. The conference theme, **Networks of Desire**, offers a space of hope, thinking, and experimentation.

We will explore the entanglement of desires. Our conscious desires for autonomy, freedom, and democratic engagement, and our unconscious desires to enjoy the authoritarianism which we exert on others, and which is exerted upon ourselves.

We will explore in this conference how authority, power, and consent play out, what is given, taken, and resisted. We invite participants to get beyond the mantras of identity politics, to question their unconscious investments, and explore both their defences and desires. As Lacan teaches, 'our desires are always the desire of the other': this event will be a place to discover how your desires are entangled with the desires of others.

We invite you to join us to co-create entangled webs of life, and to see what democratic process of engagement emerges.

What can we learn from this experience?

What desires and thoughts will this event produce?

What can we take into our organisations and our lives?

A handwritten signature in white ink on a dark blue background. The signature is cursive and reads "S Western".

**Simon Western, PhD**

**Conference Director**





# What is a 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. Consulting Trainees will have the opportunity to consult with small groups or large groups, getting feedback from the observing staff.

Through observing trainee staff feedback and participating in small and large groups, 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. 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.

## Task

To explore the potential of emancipating ourselves from the conformist, authoritarian cultures we absorb. To resist and fight back against the democratic deficits that creep into our lives, specifically to:

- 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 organisational 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 organisations, 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. A more detailed schedule will be provided to participants a few days in advance of the training conference.

Date	Times (EST)
Friday, January 28th	10:00 AM - 4:00 PM
Saturday, January 29th	10:00 AM - 3:15 PM
Sunday, January 30th	10:00 AM - 3:15 PM
Friday, February 4th	10:00 AM - 4:00 PM
Saturday, February 5th	10:00 AM - 3:15 PM

**PLEASE NOTE:** All **consulting trainees** should attend a preparation meeting on **Thursday, January 27** at **10:00 AM to 11:30 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 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.

Consultant Training Fee	\$550
Non-Consulting Training Fee	\$400

To apply, please click the link below:

<https://forms.gle/LbXJ7t3Qw2eHuv5WA>

## Staff

Members of the staff design and manage the workshop by attending to the boundaries of workshop events, particularly in relation to time, task, and territory. Staff do not manage the participants or their behaviour, but instead, collectively manage 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.

### Executive Staff



**Simon Western, PhD**, 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 and Honorary Professor at Moscow Higher School of Economics. Simon's interest in this event comes from a lifetime's work focusing on humanising and democratising organisations, 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, JD**, 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). Evangeline is committed to the work of Group Relations International, which focuses on social justice, spirituality and group relations.





**Aodhán Moran** is a technical specialist who helps businesses tell their story online. At 19, he moved from Ireland to San Francisco to work in high-growth tech startups. He continues to craft digital experiences for both businesses and intellectuals, helping them to reach global audiences. Aodhán is interested in using the frame of the networked society to develop his understanding of where the group ends and where the individual begins.

## Consultant Staff

**Elyce Cole (she/they)**, MA (Teachers College, Columbia University), MSc (University College London), 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.



**Jeanine Baillie (she/they)**, PsyD, is a clinical psychologist, group facilitator and consultant to organizations in the co-creation of a healthy community, anti-oppressive, liberatory, and sustainable practices. Jeanine previously served at UC Berkeley as the Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) interim Group Program Coordinator, co-chaired the University Health Services (UHS) Justice, Inclusion and

Community Committee and was a member of the UHS clinical Transgender Care Team.



Jeanine was also a member of the Association of Postdoctoral and Psychology Internship Centers (APPIC) Diversity, Equity and Inclusion committee. Jeanine is dedicated to supporting historically marginalized populations, is passionate about the abilities of consciousness, and believes in the power of love to radically transform society. Jeanine is drawn to this GR event as an opportunity to share with, learn from, and connect with the collective around these important themes.

**Tanya Lewis, PhD**, is the Program Director for the Leadership and Learning Program at Bureau Kensington. She is the coordinator for Insight for Community Impact (ICI) and treasurer for CSGSS. Her background includes working at the intersection of equity issues within higher education and in non-profit social justice organizations. Tanya's interests include how to mobilize desire to foster learning and creativity.



**Tyrome 'Ty' Smith** has nearly 25 years consulting and leading executives and their teams by helping them understand human and organizational dynamics. Currently, he is a senior consultant to the Department of Defense. He is a trusted advisor and coach to senior leaders throughout the organization. He has conducted many senior-level engagements with the expressed intention of eliciting a strategic focus on revolutionizing how value is both conceptualized and executed. He was responsible for developing the innovation education program; including coaching and mentoring product development teams engaged in an internal incubator.

Ty has progressively grown his private practice consulting through his work with both private and non-profit institutions. He is a much sought after workshop presenter for topics ranging from unconscious bias to business model innovation. As a member and Vice President of the AK Rice Institute for the Study of Social Systems, he has consulted to both national and international group relations conferences.