



working with diversity

*Exploring the Dynamics of Cross-cultural Relations
in groups, organisations and communities*

A residential group relations conference

**23-28 November 2020
Melbourne, Australia**

An invitation to learn

In the natural world, biodiversity is an indicator of a healthy environment, one that is more vibrant, resilient and adaptive to change than monocultures. Similarly, individuals and businesses are commonly advised to diversify their assets, because this spreads the risks of exposure to market volatility. Research on multi-disciplinary teams demonstrates that their diversity results in new thinking and more innovative solutions to 'sticky' problems. Thus we know that diversity is significant and essential for healthy systems, creativity, human progress, and life *per se*. Commensurately, diversity and disruption can overwhelm our capacity to think – leading to denial, avoidance or other irrational reactions.

Globalisation has revealed and marshalled the world's diversity in an astonishing way. Not without consequences. Today we are experiencing environmental crises that are changing our way of life. Economic security and established alliances are being disrupted. Nations and peoples are dividing along old fault lines of religion, ethnicity, gender, class and historical geographic boundaries. It has never been more urgent to manage these divisions productively.

The imperative to work across boundaries, be they geographic, virtual, social and professional brings with it many challenges to cooperative endeavours. Teamwork demands that we make contact with others whose world views are both different and similar from our own. Cross-cultural relationships and interdependence is one of our most attractive human capacities. Its denigration or the attacking of the 'other' is our most destructive. **How** we connect and work with others builds group performance, shared culture and ultimately organisational success.

Much information is available on why diversity is important in the workplace. Many organisations institute policies and programs for addressing internal challenges and barriers. These programs commonly aim to change individuals' attitudes and behaviours. Yet unproductive workplace dynamics arising from cultural misunderstandings, unequal opportunities, unfair discrimination, conflict and bullying continue. And in civic communities, stereotypes are readily used to defend against engagement with others who are different from ourselves.

How can we better understand the reality of working with diversity? What is the significance of group dynamics, public voice, personal authority and clear roles for shaping constructive cross-cultural engagement?

The **Working with Diversity residential group relations conference** offers opportunities to study and enhance our capacity for enriching cross-cultural relationships. You will be engaged in exploring conscious and unconscious processes that determine group behaviour, role-taking and personal authority, leadership and followership. You are offered the opportunity to learn about the dynamics of group processes and cultural diversity and their influence upon productive working relations and community engagement. From these experiences we can learn to recognise destructive (anti-work) dynamics and to develop capacities for addressing them in productive, thoughtful and empowering ways.

Will you join us in this learning with the potential to make a difference to cross-cultural relations?

Jinette de Gooijer, Conference Director

“A group relations conference is an experiential laboratory where individuals can immerse themselves in systems dynamics and develop their capacity to have a public voice.”

Edward R. Shapiro, 2019
Finding a Place to Stand, p. 59

What is a group relations conference?

A group relations conference is a unique opportunity to study emotional experience and rational thinking, without giving precedence of one over the other. It is a powerful way to learn about the impact of unconscious processes, present in all groups and organisations.

Group relations conference technology originated with the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (UK) as a method to learn from one's lived experience of group and organisational behaviour. The method is based on clinical and research practices in psychoanalysis and the social sciences. A group relations conference is an immersive mode of learning about the roles we take up for effectively participating in groups, organisations and society.

In Australia, group relations conferences have been held almost continuously since the 1980s under the auspices of professional associations and university higher degree programs. **Working with Diversity: Exploring the Dynamics of Cross-cultural Relations** is the 6th residential conference hosted by Group Relations Australia.

Group relations conferences focus on experiential learning, unlike more traditional conferences. There are no 'conference presentations' for example. You will be engaged in various organisational and learning tasks in groups with different configurations designed to challenge ways of thinking about self, others and group behaviour. Learning happens within programmed events, and in interactions with others between events. The learning is participative, immediate and continues long beyond the time of the conference. It is an intensive model of learning with a ratio of approximately one staff to every five participants.

You can expect to learn about:

- **Skills for organisational roles** — for taking up leadership, followership and exercising authority; effectively consulting to groups at work; of working with uncertainty and 'not knowing'.
- **Yourself** — the formal and informal roles you take up in work groups, and why you might take up those roles; gain insight to one's own behaviour in relation to others; deepen your understanding of your own organisational and team experience; develop self-reflective practice and enquiry into "How is it that I am having the experience I am having, right now?"
- **Dynamic forces that influence group behaviour** — the conscious and unconscious dynamics of groups at work; the systemic forces at play within an organisation — rational and irrational, authority and power, the presence of unconscious bias in cross-cultural relations.

Who is the conference for?

The conference is for those who wish to grow their understanding and practice of working with others. It will appeal to those who have responsibility for groups at work, or who work across boundaries or with communities where culturally diverse collaboration is critical.

Participants come from different professions and backgrounds. They are leaders, managers, educators, researchers, consultants, clinicians, administrators, students, service providers, professional or technical workers.

They are typically people who seek to expand the range of possibilities for thoughtful action and for responding to conundrums at work.

Previous experience of an experiential group relations conference is not a requirement for attendance. Curiosity and desire to learn is all that is needed.



Learning groups

Participants enter the conference as a member of one of the two sub-conference groups. These form part of an organisational structure designed around boundaries of task, role and authority.

Participants become a member of one of these two groups based on prior experience of group relations conferences.

Sub-conference A: for participants with no prior experience

Sub-conference B: for participants who have attended one or more conferences

This differentiation acknowledges the influence of new and previous experiences upon learning and of different motivations and expectations.

Each sub-conference group will have their own study group system and will join together for large group, inter-group and whole-of-conference organisation events.

As the week progresses all participants will have opportunities to form their own small groups in events that explore inter-group relations and the conference as an institutional system.



Conference program

The conference is designed as a temporary organisation of staff and participants who together work on a primary task over six days, and in the process co-create an organisational culture that can be studied in real-time.

Participants are involved in a program of studying groups at work on designated tasks, supported by structured discussions to review and apply emergent insights. Staff work with participants to understand the ways individuals and groups take up roles and exercise authority in the face of irrational group dynamics.

Purpose and primary task

The purpose of the conference is educational. It provides opportunities to learn about the dynamics of cultural diversity and its influence upon productive working relations.

Collectively, participants and staff work on the following primary task:

To study cultural diversity and its influence upon group behaviour and interpersonal relations in the temporary organisation that is the conference.

Conference events

The conference is structured as a series of events. Each event aims to build awareness of conscious and unconscious dynamics, stereotyping and other personal and group dispositions that emerge when diverse people work together. Participants will experience being a member of different groups, of different sizes and complexity of relations, each with its own specific task.

Events include:

- Experiential events for studying small and large group processes in the “here-and-now”;
- Whole-of-conference activities for exploring complex systems at work and their emergent dynamics;
- Discussion plenaries for specific events and the conference as a whole;
- Review sessions for participants to reflect on individual experiences of roles taken up in the conference;
- Application sessions where participants identify how to integrate their emergent learning and apply it to back home roles and workplaces.

Dates

Conference begins 10 am Monday, 23 November and ends 3 pm Saturday, 28 November.
Arrival and Registration is from 8:30 am Monday.

Venue

George Hicks Building, International House, 197 Royal Parade, Parkville. Accommodation is in International House, a residential college of The University of Melbourne, located on the traditional lands of the Kulin nation.

Fee

\$3,850 (AUD)

The fee includes participation in the conference, 5 nights accommodation, all daily meals, and 3 evening meals inhouse.

Discounts

\$500 discount if you apply and pay in full by 31 July 2020.

\$400 each for two or more applicants from the same organisation

\$400 Group Relations Australia Members/Associates*

Some partial bursaries are available for those in need. Please contact the Director Resources and Communications to discuss, email: conference@grouprelations.org.au.

Accommodation

Standard accommodation is a mixture of multi-roomed apartments with shared bathroom, kitchen and lounge facilities, and single rooms with shared bathroom and kitchen facilities.

Applications

Download the Application Form: www.grouprelations.org.au.

Acceptance to the conference is not automatic and places are limited. An invoice will be issued on acceptance of your application.

Closing date for applications

Monday, 9 November 2020.

* Applications to apply for membership of GRA are welcomed.



The role of staff

A team of professional staff facilitate participants' learning through consultancy and reflective discussions, and provide overall management of the conference organisation.

Collectively they hold qualifications and expertise in management education, psychotherapy, group relations, organisational consultancy and leadership coaching.

Staff work collaboratively with participants on the conference primary task, from their roles as consultants and collective management of the conference. They are informed by their own experiences and offer interpretations and hypotheses of what is happening in the 'here and now' experiences of conference events for all to consider and work on. These experiences include the hidden, unconscious processes in group interactions.

As a collective management they hold the boundaries of time, task and territory. Their roles are always open for examination.

Staff

Executive Directorate

The Conference Director and Associate Directors (in addition to their consultancy roles) constitute the Executive Directorate. The Directorate holds responsibilities for overall management of the conference program and its various sub-systems.

Jinette de Gooijer, PhD **Conference Director and Director Sub-conference A**



Jinette is former Director of Innovative Practice Pty Ltd providing role analysis, supervision and organisational consultancy services. She has worked on staff of group relations conferences in Australia and internationally since 2003, and published several articles, book chapters and a book in the field of systems psychodynamics. Jinette is also an exhibiting artist who integrates socioanalysis into her studio practice. She is a founding member and Past President of Group Relations Australia, a Member of Organisation Promoting Understanding of Society (UK), and recognised by the Tavistock Institute as one of its informal representatives in Australia. Jinette holds a Doctorate in systems psychodynamics and further qualifications in business studies and the visual arts.

Greg Cook, BSW **Associate Director and Director Sub-conference B**



Greg Cook is a psychologist and organisational consultant and a Director of Centre for Leadership and Management. CLM provides executive coaching, organisational consulting and leadership programs for government, health and tertiary education organisations throughout Australia. Greg also holds professional qualifications as a teacher and social worker and has worked in schools and prisons, in clinical roles in community mental health, acute psychiatry and in private practice, and in higher education. He is a member of Group Relations Australia and currently chair of the governing Directorate.

Caroline Farmer, MAppSci(OrgDyn) **Associate Director and Director Resources and Communications**



Caroline is an independent consultant and coach working with individuals and groups in a wide range of industries. She has been an Associate Consultant for Melbourne Business School Executive Education since 2014 and is an associate consultant and teacher with the National Institute of Organisation Dynamics Australia (NIODA). Prior to life as a consultant, she worked as a senior manager and innovative leader in the arts and cultural sector in Australia for almost 20 years. She is currently on the Board of ANAT (Australian Network for Art and Technology) and is a member of both Group Relations Australia and the International Society for the Psychoanalytic Study of Organizations (ISPSO). Caroline has a Masters of Applied Science Organisation Dynamics (RMIT University), and other qualifications in business studies and fine arts.

Consultancy team

Consultants to the events in the conference will be drawn from the Executive Directorate and the following:

M. Fakhry Davids, MSc



Fakhry is a clinical psychologist and psychoanalyst, originally from South Africa, who is in full-time practice in London. He is a Training Analyst of the British Psychoanalytic Society and Fellow of the Institute of Psychoanalysis; Honorary Senior Lecturer, Psychoanalysis Unit, University College London; Visiting Fellow, Centre for Trauma & Refugees, Uni. of Essex; & Member of the Tavistock Society of Psychotherapists. He is a founding Board Member of Partners in Confronting Collective Atrocities. An experienced lecturer and supervisor, he is the author of *Internal Racism: A Psychoanalytic Approach to Race and Difference*.

Ming-Hui Daniel Hsu, PhD



Daniel received his PhD in Counseling Psychology from New York University and managed a mental health counselling program for six years before moving back to his home country, Taiwan, in 2015. He currently works as a psychologist and organisational consultant in Taipei. Daniel has directed and worked on staff of group relations conferences (GRC) in Taiwan, New York, London, Beijing, Hong Kong, and Tel Aviv, and played a key role in training GRC consultants in China and Taiwan. He co-edited the Chinese translation of W.R. Bion's, *Experiences in Groups*, and the Chinese translation of a collection of articles on group relations theories. He is an Associate in the A K Rice Institute and the Founder of Group Relations Taiwan.

Kristina Karlsson, MLshp&Mngt(OrgDyn)



Kristina was born and lives on the land of the Wurundjeri of the Kulin Nations in Australia, where she works as a systems psychodynamically trained organisational development practitioner for the Victorian State Government. She has nearly twenty years' experience in organisational development, public policy, legal practice and dispute resolution in the native title, emergency management, legal and banking sectors. Among other achievements, she has led government department processes to negotiate and implement native title settlements with Victorian Traditional Owners, and organisation-wide processes to develop inclusion and diversity strategies. She is a member of Group Relations Australia and ISPSO. She was awarded ISPSO's Harold Bridger Award in 2019.

Helen McKelvie, MLshp&Mngt(OrgDyn)



Helen is an Associate of NIODA Consulting and member of NIODA's teaching staff in the Master of Leadership and Management (Organisation Dynamics) program. She provides coaching and consulting services in leadership and team development and organisational change. In addition to her academic qualifications in organisation development, law and arts, Helen is an accredited practitioner of PRISM Brain Mapping, an online, neuroscience-based behaviour mapping instrument, and is a registered Analytic Network Coach. She has training and experience in workplace mediation, and yoga teaching qualifications. She is a member of Group Relations Australia.

Peliwe Mnguni, PhD



Peliwe is an Associate Professor in the Graduate School of Business Leadership at the University of South Africa. She has a doctorate in leadership and organisation dynamics from Swinburne University of Technology in Australia. Her research and coaching practice focuses on Women in Leadership. She has served on staff in group relations conferences in Ireland, France and Peru. Peliwe has won two international awards, namely, the ISPSO's Harold Bridger award in 2011 and the Excellence in Organizational Scholarship award from the Center for the Study of Organizational Change, University of Missouri-Columbia, in 2013.

Allan Shafer, DLitt et Phil



Allan is a clinical psychologist and psychoanalytic psychotherapist in private practice in Melbourne, and a socioanalytic organisation consultant. He is a former President of Group Relations Australia, a member of the Victorian Association of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapists and was an Executive member of the Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy Association of Australasia. He has published numerous articles and chapters in socioanalytic and psychotherapeutic journals and books. Allan has, over the past 30 years, directed or consulted on the staff of Tavistock-style group relations conferences in Australia, the UK, India, China, Hong Kong, Israel, Poland and Taiwan. He was Associate Director of the Tavistock Institute's 2019 Leicester Conference.

Enquiries

Caroline Farmer

Director Resources & Communications

e: conference@grouprelations.org.au

"It was such a powerful way to explore and understand both groups and myself within groups." Andrew McKensey, MD

"[the conference] provided greater insight into our own and others' behaviours to develop and manage relationships to enhance collaboration.

[it helped to] realise that there is a need to belong to the group and sit together, rather than just focus on getting through the work or the task at hand. ... it truly benefited from a mixed group across organisations and professions and the residential nature provided the opportunity to reflect and not be pulled into operational or day-to-day issues."
University of Sydney participants

Host organisation



Group Relations Australia

Group Relations Australia (GRA) is a not-for-profit professional association established in 2005 whose members seek to develop the field of group relations and systems psychodynamics.

We apply its methods to working with groups, organisations and communities, in the belief that there has to be a better way of living and working in groups, organisations and society — a way that promotes learning from experience, engaging the whole system, and developing our capacity for thoughtful, effective action.

Our members work as organisation consultants and managers, academic researchers and teachers, psychoanalysts and socioanalysts amongst other roles. Through GRA, they enjoy the benefits of mutual links with international associations in the field of group relations.

We conduct a stimulating range of activities and events for members that include: professional practice meetings, working conferences, workshops, seminars and lectures. The Association also publishes the peer-reviewed journal *Socioanalysis*.

www.grouprelations.org.au

Sponsoring organisation

The Tavistock Institute

The Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (London) (TIHR) applies social science to contemporary issues and problems. It was established as a not-for-profit organisation with charitable purpose in 1947.

The TIHR is dedicated to the study of human relations for the purpose of bettering working life and conditions for all humans within their organisations, communities and broader societies.

www.tavinstitute.org

