**Blurred Borders and Dual Relationships in Group-Analytic Training: Can We Turn a Lemon into Lemonade?**

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Dear colleagues,

I wish to open my presentation, by expressing my gratitude to our Lithuanian colleagues, for organizing such a vivid and vital conference. I personally know that such an organizational endeavor demands from the chairpersons of the conference, members of the organizing and the scientific committees, as well as from many others, a huge amount of time and energy. I am sure you have all been burning the candle at both ends to make this conference happen - thank you for all that!

I would also like to thank you, for inviting me to share with you my ideas. As I speak to you today, I wear more than one hat. I am both a clinical psychologist and a group analyst, working mostly in my private practice in Tel Aviv; I am a board member of the European Federation for Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy (the EFPP); And I am also a member, a proud member if I might say, of the IIGA – the Israeli Institute of Group Analysis. Before delving deeper into the topic of my presentation, let me share with you a brief history of the IIGA, as well as some facts and figures about the current situation in our training program.

In 1965 Foulkes visited Israel, and stayed for two months. The visit was sponsored by UNESCO, and included lectures and supervision sessions for senior professionals. In 1978, two years after his death, senior professionals came to Israel in order to train and supervise therapists who wanted to work with groups. An Introductory Course was organized in 1991, and in 1995 a Diploma Course was opened with forty participants. The staff team consisted of members of the IGA London. It was planned in a setting of “blocks” of five to six long weekends a year. A spirit of innovation and hope surged through the hearts of these pioneers, who hoped that one day they would establish an Institute of Group Analysis in Israel. But the joy lasted for less than a year, when both participants and trainers were informed that the IGA had neither approved nor authorized the Course in the first place, and therefore, the IGA decided to close it down.

To cut a long story very short, after a period of shock, anger and mourning, a proposal was put forward, to found an independent Israeli Institute of Group Analysis, based on the certification standards and guidelines of the European Group Analytic Training Institutes Network (E.G.A.T.I.N.). All the members of the canceled course were invited to join the Institute in order to complete their training, and thirty three of them returned. A short time later a second course for senior group-therapists was opened, and the 'Israeli Institute of Group Analysis' was founded.

The IIGA continued to develop. Its first graduates became certified group analysts; the board designed its own training programs, appointed teachers, recruited students and managed new courses. In 2009, as part of the IIGA's desire to expand its connections and to become part of the international professional community, the Institute organized its first international conference. Since then, we have initiated many more local and international conferences, workshops, training and educational activities (Berman, Berger & Lavie, 2017).

It is beyond the scope of this lecture to further describe the diversity of these local and international activities. I can only say I am extremely proud of my institute and of the way it has developed, and continues to develop.

I would now like to move to the issue of dual relationships in group-analytic training. In many group-analytic institutes, trainees are challenged by the fact, that during their training period they have to take at least one theoretical course, taught by the conductor of their therapy group. This creates a situation of "dual relationships", which refers to "any situation where a therapist assumes two (or more) roles with a client" (Zur, 2009). Many of you are familiar with this situation, and as students had, or still have to, deal with its complexity.

This presentation has two objectives:

1. Defining the problems, disadvantages and complexities that dual relationships in Group Analytic training institutes present to both trainees and trainers.
2. Outlining some of the principles and indicators which in my opinion, can help navigate to a successful management of dual relationship situations.

Let’s begin with some definitions. Dual Relationships in psychotherapy may be of several types:

**Sexual dual relationship**: where a therapist and a client are also involved in a sexual relationship. Such a dual relationship with current or recently terminated clients is ALWAYS considered to be exploitative and harmful, therefore unethical and often illegal.

**Social dual relationship:** where therapist and client are also in social interactions beyond the therapeutic setting.

**Business dual relationship:** where therapist and client are also business partners or have employer-employee relationships.

**Communal dual relationshi**p: where therapist and client live in the same small community, belong to the same church or have children in the same school.

**Professional dual relationship** where therapist and client are also professional colleagues, as often is the case in training institutions.

As you can see, a dual relationship situation is a challenging one, because it touches the issue of therapeutic boundaries. And when one speaks of boundaries, it is inevitable not to touch the intimidating, yet alluring issue of boundary crossing.

Boundary crossings and boundary violations refer to any deviation from traditional, strict, 'only in the office,' emotionally distant forms of therapy. **Boundary violations** occur when therapists cross the line of decency and violate or exploit their clients. **Boundary crossing**, on the other hand, is not harmful in nature. Actually, it might involve clinically effective interventions, as in the case of a well formulated treatment plan. Examples are, flying in an airplane with a patient who suffers from a fear of flying, having lunch with an anorexic patient, making a home visit to a bedridden patient, or going for a vigorous walk with a depressed patient. Potentially helpful boundary crossings might also include giving a non-sexual hug, sending cards, exchanging appropriate (not too expensive) gifts, lending a book, attending a wedding, confirmation, Bar Mitzvah or funeral, or going to see a client performing in a show.

Not all boundary crossings constitute dual relationships. Making a home visit and many other 'out-of-office' experiences are boundary crossings which do not necessarily constitute dual relationships. Similarly, exchanging gifts, hugging, or sharing a meal are also boundary crossings but not dual relationships. However, all dual relationships do constitute boundary crossings (Zur, 2009).

Group analytic training is usually held in one of two *modi operandi*:

1. The ‘Block groups’ model, in which students meet a couple of times a year for a concentrated few days of learning. In this model, psychotherapy groups consist solely of trainees. Therefore, the concept of the ‘strangers group’ in which members are not supposed to have contact with each other is obviously untenable (Reik, 1993)
2. The 'conventional model', which is based on a 'once weekly meetings' for a couple of years. Within this model, trainees usually choose their psychotherapy group. The conductor of that group is probably a member of the training institute and can also teach a course or two during the whole training program.

Both training models present a clear demonstration of dual, even multiple, relationships. In 'Block training' you usually don't find the situation of 'a conductor-teacher dual relationship', since the training institute usually takes care of separating the "Theory" from the "Practice"(Hears and Behr, 1995; Hilpert, 1995; Reik, 1993; Tsegos, 1995). This is not the case with the 'conventional model' on which I would like to focus. For many years, the training program of the IIGA was conducted according to the 'conventional model''. As a result, in the past 8 years, a large majority of approximately 75 percent of the students were challenged by finding themselves as both patients and students of the same person at the same time. Surprisingly, little has been written on the impact of these professional dual relationships. This fact may be rooted in the history of group analytic training. In Foulkes’ writings there is very little addressed in regard to training issues, and he never wrote on the role or responsibility of the training analyst. He did, however, mention that “If there is a sufficient choice of training group analysts, it is perhaps slightly preferable to have the future candidate mixed up with an ordinary patients’ group…” (Foulkes, 1975). Yet, his interest was solely about the nature of the training groups (ordinary patients vs. professionals) and he took little interest in transference - countertransference issues involved in the training relationships.

But **there are** problems with the situation when your group conductor is also your teacher or supervisor. As part of my preparation for this presentation, I conducted a survey among IIGA members and students. I found that many of them were disturbed to some degree, by the professional dual relationships with their group conductors. There were students for example, who in their class, or in institutional educational activities, had to listen to their teachers using case-studies taken from the same group the students were participating in. Even though the names where disguised, and the students were not directly exposed, you might imagine the amount of stress, embarrassment and hurt some of these students experienced.

I also learnt from the survey I conducted, that 80 percent of the IIGA's students terminated their participation in the group either immediately, or shortly after, they completed the compulsory term they had to spend in the group, according to E.G.A.T.I.N. standards. In some cases, students noted that dual relationship complexities were among the fundamental reasons for their desire to stop their participation in their groups the moment they could.

Another aspect of the problem concerns the fact that professional dual relationships pose contradictory expectations on trainees. A member in a therapy group is invited to express everything that comes to mind, but as a student he is expected to be politic and rational. Confronting your group analyst with your critique about him in the group is not the same as confronting him with a similar critique in the class setting. What is probably considered "brave" and "therapeutic" in the group's context with your group members around you, might become "suicidal" or "bizarre" when said to your teacher while surrounded by your student peers.

This complexity goes the other way, as well. Teachers behave differently than group therapists. When I teach I use a lot of space, as if I am acting on a stage. I get up, I walk, I use my hands and my body language to demonstrate ideas; often I use a blackboard to write or draw on. Many times I use personal experiences when clarifying my ideas. I enjoy discussions and encourage my students to actively participate in the class, yet I enjoy performing as well, and I don't try to hide it. But, when I conduct my groups, my appearance changes. I rarely use direct self-disclosure with my patients, I speak in a much lower and quieter tone, and my body doesn't move so much. In the different settings I am not in the same role, therefore I am, in a way, not the same person. When no dual relationships are involved, there is nothing about this duality to write home about. But when dual relationships do present themselves, the degree of freedom of both trainees and trainers are questionable.

One of the biggest opponents of dual relationships in the group psychotherapy training programs is Robert Pepper. His fundamental statement is that when boundaries are blurred, as in the case of professional dual relationships, the transference becomes contaminated and its therapeutic value decreased and even diminished. He argues that in order to explore and work-through transference issues in the group, “basic principles of analytic group treatment need to be observed, such as introducing only minimal social structure and social reality … [and if not] these “incestuous” arrangements can have serious negative effects on transference, group processes, and on group members ” (Pepper, 2007).

Most of the courses during the training program are mandatory, and the fact that students are taught by their group analysts is a "done deal" that they just have to contend with. Pepper goes on to say that, any therapist who engages in dual relationships, and who simultaneously accepts the existence of the unconscious, would be wise to consider the possibility that these relationships blur the boundaries of the treatment, and that the violation might reach the point of breaching ethical lines (Pepper, 2014).

So, why do training institutes and training group analysts get involved in such a problematic structure from outset?

One answer to this question would be – because they have no choice. In many training institutes there are a limited number of professionals capable of educating new generations of group analysts. I believe this is the predominant situation in either small, or developing countries. Training institutes are in constant need of recruiting candidates; therefore make every effort to have the best teachers run the program, even at the risk of dual relationships.

A second answer to this question is – because they are used to it. As mentioned previously, Foulkes paid little attention to training issues. He was preceded by Freud, who disdained academia, and created a free-standing training institute, in which emotionally incestuous relationships flourished (Kirshner, 2000).

A third answer to this question could be – because they are narcissistic enough to believe they can easily handle the situation, or because they put their needs before those of their trainees. The wish to eat the cake and have it too is human, and group-analysts are, after all, human. Ego, money, power-struggles and honor issues present themselves in training programs, as in any other organizational system. If the training institute, in its attitude and regulations, encourages dual relationships and doesn’t apply the brakes, it might just add fuel to the trainers' narcissistic flame.

Until now, I have briefly reviewed and outlined some of the complexities we encounter in our training programs. Before continuing to the second objective of this presentation, namely speaking of how to manage these complexities both effectively and productively, I would like to share with you a personal vignette. For some years I refrained from getting into such situations of professional dual relationships. For instance, I gave up teaching a course at my institute, due to the fact that, at the same time, one of the students in that course would participate in my analytic group. I evaluated the situation, and not without remorse, came to the conclusion that having me as both his conductor and his teacher would be too heavy a burden on his shoulders. But I can tell you it was not an easy decision to make. I kept blowing hot and cold about it for weeks, and like the weather in Amsterdam - chopped and changed my decision four times a day before I was able to let go of my desire to teach that course.

Half a year ago, the IIGA opened a new group analytic program for non-therapists professionals, who wished to expand their understanding of Group Analysis and its implications for organizational and educational consulting. Since I am also an organizational consultant, it went almost without saying that I would be part of the teaching staff of that program. This time I was relaxed and untroubled regarding the possibility of dual relationship complexities, since students of the new program were not obliged to participate in a therapy group as part of their requirements. But as you surely know, man makes plans and God laughs, and during my preparation for the course – which, by the way, was titled: "The Unconscious" – it became clear that with 8 out of the 11 registered students, I have, or had, close professional relations. I was lucky to have three students I had never met before… This time I decided to go on with my preparations, explore all avenues, and to work through the difficulties and complexities in this tough situation. The coincidence, that the timing of writing this presentation coincided with the time I was facing a real situation of complex dual relationships, extensively helped me to contain the situation, and hopefully for the best.

Finally, as the last part of this presentation, I would like to outline three fundamental principles of managing dual relationships in Group Analytic Institutes. These three principles are intertwined, and should be considered as KSF – Key Success Factors; if these principles are left out of the scenario - the risk of losing control on the dual relationships' situation increases.

The first principle is simple, at least in theory. It brings to mind the basic ethical code of all healing professions, the Hippocratic Oath, which states: "PRIMUM NON NOCERE" - FIRST, DO NO HARM. It is the trainer's primary role to protect the trainees, because it is most probably the trainees who have to bear the brunt of the trainer's unsatisfactory attention to the complexities of the situation. Therefore, it is the trainer’s professional and ethical responsibility to carefully estimate the pros and cons of getting into dual relationships, and should he decide to jump into the water, the least he can do is to plan the move, and make all necessary efforts to reduce a negative outcome. Trainers, for sure, do not deliberately intent to harm trainees, but we must remember that the road to hell is paved with good intentions, and that it is **the trainer's** obligation to provide a safe environment for the process of group therapy to play out in. Most of us will definitely agree that, given an ideal world, it would be for the best if a full separation between the educational and therapeutic parts of the training programs could always be implemented. Since we have not as yet reached perfection, dual-relationships are probably here to stay. But trainers must put aside all other considerations, except for those that benefit the trainees. That includes issues of money, reflected in the trainer’s ambition to earn a living; issues of ego, manifested by the trainer’s belief he can’t fail due to his "super-abilities"; and issues of honor presented through the trainer’s desire to be as central and admired as possible. It is only after the trainer has given the decision deep second and third thoughts, and not before he is completely convinced that he has prioritized the needs of the trainee over those of his own, that he should proceed with the process of engaging in dual-relationships with the trainee.

The second principle calls for a well-planned decision-making model. Forcing ourselves into a process of planning helps to "Begin with the end in mind", namely to envision in our minds what we, at present, cannot see with our eyes. This visioning ability is considered one of the 'Seven habits of highly effective people' (Covey, 1989), and is also most relevant to dual-relationship situations. Nowadays, we can find more than a few planning tools for these situations; each of them spotlights different aspects of the complexities trainers are confronted with.

One of these models, written by Michael Gottlieb (1993) is specifically designed to address potential dual relationship ethical dilemmas. The model is based upon the use of three dimensions (Gottlieb, 1986) which are believed to be basic and critical to the ethical decision-making process. The first dimension is Power. It refers to the amount or degree of power which a trainer may bear in relation to a trainee. It is crystal clear that the trainer has a lot of power in his relationships with the trainee, even more so when the trainer is both the teacher and the therapist. Secondly, Duration of the Relationship, as an aspect of power, is important because it assumes influence increases over time. Power diminishes when relationships are brief, such as in a single assessment session for referral, and increases as relationships progress, such as that of a student and teacher. Thirdly, Clarity of Termination refers to the likelihood that the trainee and the trainer will have further professional contact. In some programs the relationships are due to terminate when the training ends. However, in some training institutes, the IIGA among them, trainees usually become full members upon their graduation, and probably have to continue to live with their trainers "in the same house" for many years.

The model is a five-step model, and is to be used as follows:

**Step 1**: Assess the current relationship according to the three dimensions. From the trainee's perspective, where does the relationship fall on each of the dimensions? How large is the power differential? How long will the relationship last?

**Step 2**: Examine the contemplated relationship along the three dimensions, as was done for the current relationship. It makes a difference if the trainee has already joined your group, and teaching is the additional setting, or if you already teach a trainee who also plans on joining your group. In such a case, for example, you may decide (together with the trainee) to postpone the trainee's entrance to the group to the end of the semester, or even taking a cooling off period.

**Step 3**: Examine both relationships for role incompatibility. According to Kitchener (1988) the role incompatibility increases as a function of:

1. Larger differences in expectations of the two roles.
2. Greater divergence of the obligations of the two roles.
3. An increase in the power differential.

If the two different roles are highly incompatible, more careful attention is required. Teaching a purely theoretical course is probably less incompatible than teaching a more practical course – one which involves simulations or role play.

**Step 4:** Seek consultation or supervision from a colleague. The new relationship must be assessed from the standpoint of the trainee, and decisions should be made on the most conservative basis. Consultation with a colleague should be considered a routine matter when making such decisions. A colleague familiar with the circumstances, the trainee, and the trainer, is an ideal choice.

**Step 5**: Discuss the decision and its implications with the trainee. It is essential that the trainer be the initiator of a sincere dialogue with the trainee. This dialogue should review the essence of the decision-making model, its rationale, the pertinent ethical issues, available alternatives, and potential adverse consequences as a matter of the forming dual-relationships. If the trainee is unable to recognize the dilemma or is unwilling to consider the issues before deciding, the situation should be considered at risk, and the trainer should reconsider entering into dual relationships with this trainee.

The third principle to manage conductor-teacher dual roles complexities is based on:

1. The acknowledgment that, when a trainer and a trainee get in a dual relationship situation they are actually involved in a major Role-Conflict. Social roles contain inherent expectations about how a person in a particular role should behave as well as the rights and obligations which pertain to that role. Role conflicts arise when the expectations attached to one role call for behavior which is incompatible with that of another role (Kitchener, 1988).Trainers should accept the fact that both parties –trainers and trainees - have to adjust to these role-conflicts, resulting from the alternating contexts. They shouldn't expect "integration", "consistency" and "coherence"; what will probably be the outcome is the opposite: we might expect fragmentation, confusion and/or contradiction.
2. Role conflicts are not unmanageable. Yet in order to get through them, they require, in addition to proper attention, effective tools. The use of the “multiple self-state” approach is one such tool. Relational and intersubjective theories view the self as a structure composed of a number of areas and mental networks, separated and distinct from each other. No more autonomous, clustered and confined self, but rather a perception of the self as a composition of 'multiple selves' (Messer and Warren, 2000), and developed by using repressions and dissociations (Bromberg, 1994). Based on the multiple self-states perception, the ability to move between the different and distinct self-states, is an indicator of a healthy mind, and is compatible with what is required from all of us in the world we live in. Making an inner space for this multiplicity should assist the trainer to adequately handle the dual-relationships situation.

I have come to the end of my presentation, but surely there is still much more to say regarding the issue of dual relationships in our Group-Analytic training. I hope I have managed to shed some light on both the complexities and the challenges hidden in the situation of dual relationships.

I have titled the second part of my presentation: "Can we turn a lemon into lemonade?" Well, personally I am not as yet convinced we can. But we can't turn a No into a Yes without a Maybe in between. And should this MAYBE go on resonating within us, I am more than satisfied.

I would like to conclude by thanking you again for the opportunity to speak to you today. I wish us all fruitful and meaningful time in beautiful Vilnius, and a continuation of our successful study days.