



**Group Relations
Conference Series
at Boston College**
A GRI Group Relations Conference

INTER
SECTIONALITY
ONLINE

Race and Belonging

in Organizational Life

March 11-14, 2021



Our Context

Several recent events illuminate the nature and impact of systemic and structural racism. We see the disparate impact of COVID on communities of color. We see the different responses to protests and crime based on race. We acknowledge the impact of redlining on inter-generational wealth creation and the persistence of poverty. The deep racial rifts within the U.S. and elsewhere have been present for centuries, but these recent events bring both a sense of urgency to fully face and eradicate racism, as well as frustration that racism persists and equitable solutions seem difficult to achieve.

Many organizations and communities have responded by increasing diversity and inclusion efforts and espousing renewed statements and commitment to equity. Across the world, we are encouraged by the diverse array of women and men taking up leadership roles in their countries and organizations. And yet, some individuals and communities continue to experience disparate treatment, having to remain cautious about basic every day affairs, such as where and when they walk and drive. A half century after the Civil Rights Act was passed in the U.S., a 2020 Pew Research survey found that 64% of Black men in the U.S. say they have been unfairly stopped by the police. In this context, what does commitment to diversity and inclusion mean? What is the price for belonging?

Intersectionality ONLINE: Race and Belonging in Organizational Life is a Group Relations Conference that explores the conscious and unconscious life of an online organization and the experience of intersectionality within it. In this temporary organization, staff and members work together in their roles on the task of learning from our collective experience about the impact of race and belonging on authority and leadership, and about the intersecting and systemic dynamics that we engender together.





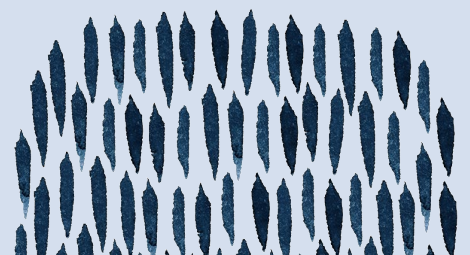
The Opportunity



The conference provides a space to learn in real time how experiences of race and belonging connect and intersect. We have the opportunity to build our capacity to improve leadership and organizational effectiveness while developing a spirit of inquiry into the lived experience of authority and intersectionality in organizational life.

We discern when and where authority and power are static and fluid, and how to exercise leadership in a changing environment, and as we encounter each other, we may ask:


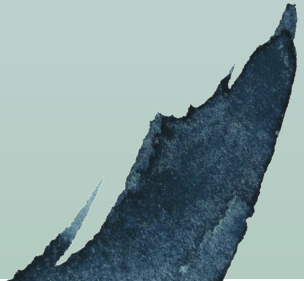
Can we bring all of who we are to our work online? If so, how? And if we do, what will be the impact that our collective actions and inactions have on the experience of others?

If you want to explore your capacity to authorize yourself and others to lead responsibly online and in the intersections, then join us as we navigate the space!





In this conference, you have an opportunity to learn about:

- The experience and dynamics of race and belonging in an organization.
 - Which social identities are privileged by you and others online; the meaning made of our social identities in organizational life; what our social identities contain for others.
 - Where intersectionality operates in organizations and online spaces.
 - How we experience technology; the impact that technology and working online has on taking up authority and leadership; the advantages and constraints of working online.
 - The relatedness of self and system; the relatedness of part and whole; why and when our relatedness and dividedness are linked.
 - The fluid nature of our work and relations; the fluidity of power and authority; the way power, roles, identities, tasks, and boundaries might shift or become more rigid in response to an emergent context online.
 - Working with competition, collaboration, conflict, coalition-building, envy, delegation, and love.
 - How we individually and collectively take up roles, negotiate authority, accomplish tasks, cross borders, and manage anxiety in a changing context.
 - How we do and do not authorize ourselves and others to bring all of who we are to our work together.
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INTERSECTIONALITY

We belong to many groups, and we thrive when we belong. Our many group memberships contribute to the richness of who we are and to the intricacies of our life together. Some of our group memberships feel so inherent to who we are that we hold them as identities. Indeed, we are often asked to categorize ourselves by a kind of “large group” membership such as gender, ethnicity, race, religion, home address, age, education, profession, school affiliation, and others. These categories become the social identities that we carry to, and for, the world. When we are caught in tense social situations, we and others often latch onto one social identity, one large group membership to frame the experience and help us to understand: Why in this moment do I feel advantaged or disadvantaged, empowered or disempowered, authorized or de-authorized? In heated moments, we seek to understand by simplifying and understanding the situation in ‘black and white’ and ‘either-or’ terms. But is it ever that simple? Is there justice in these splits and simplifications? In our current world, are we tasked with doing more?



Intersectionality is a way to see how intersecting identities within ourselves are linked to intersecting systems within society. On a micro level, it provides a frame to explore the complexity of locating and positioning ourselves when our different group memberships become activated simultaneously in a way that can lead us to feel both included and excluded, and compels us to choose one membership over the other. On a more macro level, Intersectionality attends to the gaps in our organizational and institutional structures that do not account for the times when our different social identities and group memberships are mobilized simultaneously, gaps that make it difficult to find just solutions and push us to simplify rather than embrace our richness and complexity.



Methodology

This is a different kind of online conference. Instead of a series of PowerPoint presentations given by experts to organize learning and disseminate information, learning is experiential. This conference offers a space to be in the present with others, to co-create a temporary organization where together we explore the here-and-now of engaging as people within a living system through online technology.

During the conference, we make use of our individual and collective experiences to understand what is happening, and from there develop ideas to test how we can be more effective at being and doing what we say we want to be and do in the organization.

By focusing on the conscious and unconscious processes that impact groups and influence leadership styles in the context of the evolving culture of the online conference system, we learn to see and hear what is underneath the surface. The opportunity offered is to grapple with, enjoy, and develop new narratives that explore and contain our experiences of what it is to be human in a network-age and to take up our different leadership and management roles in our organizations and institutions through online technologies.

Research

During this conference, Dr. Seth Harkins, Ed.D., will be conducting research about the learning that takes place during and after the conference event. The purpose of the research is to understand member, staff, and organizational learning.

As part of this research, you may be invited to complete pre- and post-conference surveys. Responses are confidential and anonymous, and your participation is completely voluntary. Dr. Harkins will also be observing staff meetings and events during the conference.



Primary Task / Aim / Purpose

The **primary task** of this conference is to study the conscious and unconscious exercise of authority in the taking up of roles in an online organization through the interpersonal, intergroup, and institutional relations that develop with and through technology in the online conference as a system.

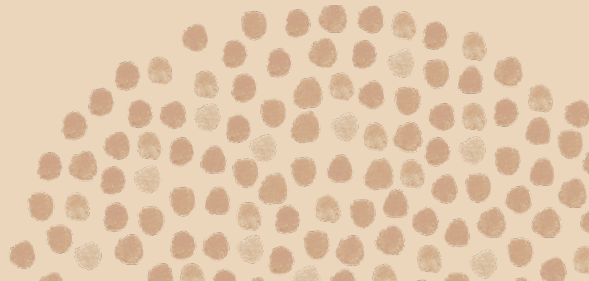
The **aim** of the conference is to provide opportunities to learn through experience about the rational and irrational ways that organizations and groups function in an online space, and the impact group processes and technologies have on the exercise of authority particularly as it relates to the experience of intersectionality, race, belonging, and being online.

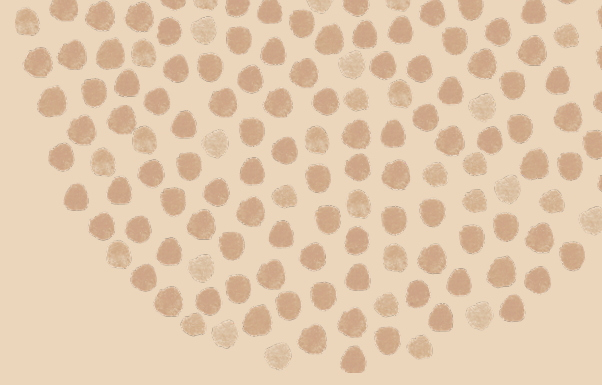
The **purpose** of the conference is to build the capacity to improve leadership and organizational effectiveness and to develop a spirit of inquiry into the lived experience of authority and intersectionality in organizational life in order to promote transformation.



Conference Events

The conference is organized as a series of events that provide opportunities to learn through experience in a variety of social contexts in online spaces. 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

These sessions open and close the conference, providing an opportunity for members and staff to express and explore their thoughts and feelings on crossing the border into the online conference space during the opening plenary (when the organization begins), and the experience of closing the borders of the conference space during the closing plenary (when the organization ends).

Here and Now Small and Large Study Groups

Here-and-Now events use a “group-as-a-whole” context and focus on the relationships and relatedness that develop in the moment. Small study groups provide an opportunity to learn about dynamics in small groups similar to teams and committees, offering an intimate configuration. The small study group consists of 12 or fewer members with one or two staff as consultants. In contrast, large study groups 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 group. The task of the small and large study groups is to be present to the here and now of the conscious and unconscious dynamics of the group as they arise in the online space. The aim is to engage the primary task of the conference as a whole which is to study the conscious and unconscious exercise of authority. The purpose is to provide an opportunity to learn and build capacity to improve leadership.





Intersecting Systems Event



In the Intersecting Systems Event (ISE), members have an opportunity to form their own groups and determine their own group task. The ISE takes place during several sessions and provides an opportunity to study the systemic forces that arise as different groups form and interact with each other. The primary task is to explore intersectionality, race and belonging within the conference-as-a-whole, as well as the more hidden relatedness between and among groups in the conference system, and within the surrounding context. This event opens and closes with plenaries to cross the border into and out of the ISE system.

Silent Event/ Social Sensing Matrix

All conference participants, members, and staff participate in these events. 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. The purpose of these events is to access conscious and unconscious dynamics of the whole system through a different means and form of expression.

Review and Application Groups

The task of these groups is to provide members the opportunity to reflect on the roles they have taken up and their experiences in conference events, and to begin to apply the learning to life outside the 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. A final list of staff will be provided at registration.



Administration



Conference Director Evangeline Sarda, JD

(she/her/hers) Associate Clinical Professor of Law, Boston College Law School; Faculty Director, Leaders Entering and Advancing Public Service (LEAPS), Prosecution Clinic, Criminal Justice Clinic; Chair, Diversity and Inclusion Task Force. Treasurer, the Research and Education Collaborative with Al-Quds University. Past Postgraduate Fellow, Massachusetts Institute for Psychoanalysis. Member; AKRI, Midwest Center, NY Center, CSGSS (former board member). Certified by Georgetown Strategic Diversity and Inclusion Management, (Cohort 12, 2021). Board member: Group Relations International (GRI); Centre for Social Dreaming (CSD).

Conference Associate Director Laura Dorsey-Elson, Ph.D.

(she/her/hers) Associate Professor & Director of Instruction, Morgan State University; President, Washington-Baltimore Center for the Study of Group Relations; Past Internal Director & Current Member, A.K. Rice Institute; President, Elson Consulting Group.



Associate Director of Administration Annysa Polanco, MSW

(she/her/hers) Director, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Penguin Random House. Diversity Professional/Advanced Practitioner Candidate (CCDP/AP), Cornell University. Trained Facilitator on Race, Power, Privilege, Cultures Connecting. MSW, Boston College. Member, AKRI.



Associate Director of Technology Robert Hsiung, MD, DLFAPA

(he/him/his) Psychiatrist, private practice. Past Associate Professor, Psychiatry, University of Chicago. Member, CCSGO and AKRI. Board member, Group Foundation for Advancing Mental Health, and past board member, American Group Psychotherapy Association. Editor, E-therapy: Case Studies, Guiding Principles, and the Clinical Potential of the Internet (Norton, 2002). Founder, Psycho-Babble online peer support group.



Associate Director of Researcher Seth Harkins, EdD

(he/him/his) Principal, Harkins Educational Consulting and Advocacy. Adjunct Professor, National Louis University, Chicago, IL. Associate and Board of Directors, AKRI. Past President and Member, Chicago Center for the Study of Groups and Organizations. Vice President and Board Member, Midwest Group Relations Center. Board Member, Illinois Community and Residential Services Authority. Board of Directors, Chicago Virtual Charter School. Executive Director and Board Member, Serenity Academy Chicago. Founding Board Member, China-American Society for the Study of Groups and Organizations. 35 years in public and private school administration. More than 30 years of Group Relations experience.



Additional Consultant Staff

Jeanine Baillie, PsyD

(she/they), Senior Staff Psychologist and Interim Group Program Coordinator, Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), UC Berkeley. Co-chair, Justice, Inclusion and Community Committee, University Health Services, UC Berkeley. Member, Association of Postdoctoral and Psychology Internship Centers (APPIC) Diversity Committee. Graduate of William James College, Massachusetts.



Justin Brogden, JD

(he/him/his) Title IX Investigator, Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Principal at Brogden Legal. Private Attorney for the Committee for Public Counsel Services Children and Family Law Division. B.A., Oberlin College. JD, Boston College Law School.



Alan Ruiz, MFA

(he, him, his) Visiting Associate Professor, Pratt Institute; Lecturer, Visual Studies, the New School; Lecturer, School of Constructed Environments, Parsons; Executive Committee, the New York Center for the Study of Groups, Organizations & Social Systems; Member, A.K. Rice Institute for the Study of Social Systems, Co-Creator, Group Relations International.



Tyrone Smith, MA

(he/him/his) Business Innovation Strategist, Internal Board Member, A. K. Rice Institute for the Study of Social Systems

Amber Williams, MA

(they/them; she/her) Area Coordinator for Residence Management, Villanova University. B.A. dual degree in Elementary and Special Education, Arcadia University. M.A. in Higher Education Leadership, University of San Diego. Trained facilitator in Intergroup Dialogue and Restorative Justice. Equity and Diversity workshop facilitator specializing in race relations and LGBTQ identities. Co-creator with Group Relations International. AKRI Member.



Attendance

A diverse membership creates the possibility for rich learning. All who are interested are encouraged to apply and join. The conference is designed to be a single integrated educational experience. 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.

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 demanding as well. Thus, applicants who are ill or experiencing significant personal difficulties should forgo participating at this time.

Continuing Education

The conference has been approved for 18.5 Social Work Continuing Education hours for re-licensure, in accordance with 258 CMR. NASW-MA Chapter CE Approving Program, Authorization Number D 81339.

Please email Annysa Polanco at GRleastGRC@gmail.com no later than March 1 if you are seeking credit.

Conference Dates and Times

Date: March 11-14, 2021

Times:

Thursday, March 11

3:00 PM to 7:15 PM (EST)

Friday and Saturday, March 12-13

10:00 AM to 5:15 PM (EST)

Sunday, March 14

10:00 AM to 4:00 PM (EST)

Please note: All dates and times are in New York Time (EST)

Conference Fee: \$375

To apply for membership to Intersectionality Online, click

[REGISTER](#)



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