

# IDENTITY and AUTHORITY in ORGANIZATIONAL LIFE TODAY

January 18-22, 2010

Connors Family Retreat & Conference Center  
Dover, Massachusetts

A Group Relations Conference in the Tavistock Tradition Sponsored by  
The Center for the Study of Groups and Social Systems  
&  
The A.K. Rice Institute for the Study of Social Systems



[www.csgss.org](http://www.csgss.org)

Kmw/09

## Administrative Staff:

**Conference Director: Gerard Fromm**, Ph.D., Director, Erikson Institute for Education and Research, Austen Riggs Center; Faculty, Massachusetts Institute for Psychoanalysis; Past President, CSGSS; Member, AKRI, ISPSO.

**Associate Conference Director: Anat Hornung Ziff**, M.A., Management and Organizational Consultant. Cooperative Partner of INNOVA, Barcelona (Spain); Founding Member of Be'sod Siach, Israel, also Founding Member of Innovaccion, Peru. Member CSGSS, and AKRI.

**Associate Director for Administration: Kevin M. Wilson**, MEd, HPT, CPT, Poudre Fire Authority Division Chief and Fire Marshal; Member, National Fire Protection Association and International Fire Marshal's Association; Member, ASTD, ISPI, ODN, ASQ; CSGSS Board Member, and AKRI.

**Assistant Director for Administration: Natalie Thomas**, Ph.D., M.S.W., M.A.Ed. Co-Superintendent, Riverview Gardens School District, Instructor, Webster University School of Business and School of Education, and Member AKRI.

## Consulting Staff:

**Gerard Fromm**, Ph.D.

**Thomas Golebiewski**, Ph.D. Chair, New Trier High School Social Work Department, Winnetka, IL; Adjunct Faculty, Loyola University, School of Social Work, Chicago, Ill; Adjunct Faculty, Northwestern University, School of Education and Social Policy, Evanston, Ill; Member, CSGSS, CCSGO, AKRI, ISPSO.

**Samar Habl**, M.D. Staff Psychiatrist, Executive Coach at IMD, Lausanne, Switzerland; CSGSS Board Member.

**James Krantz**, Ph.D. Principal, WorkLab Consulting; Fellow, AKRI; Past President, International Society for the Psychoanalytic Study of Organizations; Member, OPUS; Faculty, Universidad de Santiago, Chile.

**Michael A. Lindsay**, Ph.D., Clinical and Consulting Psychologist, Private Practice; Instructor, Chapman University; Teacher, Bikram Yoga College of India; Member, AKRI, San Diego Psychological Association.

**Julia Moore**, Organization Consultant; Student, Boston Graduate School of Psychoanalysis; Member: ISPSO, AKRI, CSGSS.

**Janice K. Wagner**, LICSW Psychotherapist, Harvard Vanguard Medical Associates & Private Practice, Boston, MA; Faculty Field Advisor, Boston University School of Social Work; Past-President, Center for the Study of Groups and Social System, Boston, MA; Associate, A.K. Rice Institute.

**Anat Hornung Ziff**, M.A.

## Conference Schedule:

- **Registration/Check In: Noon – 1 pm, Monday, January 18**
- **Conference Events: 1:15 pm Monday, January 18 through 1:00 pm Friday, January 22.**
- **Check out: By 2 pm, Friday, January 22**
- **A more detailed schedule will be provided when you register for the conference.**

## Conference Fees (Fee covers tuition, room and board):

**\$1450.00 fee, postmarked on or before December 13, 2009**

**\$1600.00 fee, postmarked after December 13, 2009 and by January 11, 2010**

**\$100 reduction for members of A.K. Rice Institute Affiliates (specify center) or associates of AKRI**

**\$100 reduction for attendees of the 2009 Leadership Institute sponsored by the A.K. Rice Institute (Bryn Mawr, PA)**

**\$50 additional reduction for CSGSS members**

**\$50 reduction for three or more persons applying as a group from the same institution**

**\$200 non-refundable deposit to reserve a space (balance due in full by January 11, 2010)**

**Participants with limited resources may apply for tuition reductions by submitting a letter stating the reasons for the request. The letter must be postmarked by December 13, 2009 and must be accompanied by a completed application and a \$200.00 refundable deposit. A limited number of commuter spaces are available for the conference fee minus room cost.**

**Please use attached registration form to register . You may download a registration form from [www.csgss.org](http://www.csgss.org), or contact the Associate Director for Administration at the address below .**

Please direct all questions concerning registration and participation in the conference to:

**Kevin M. Wilson** MEd, HPT, CPT  
Associate Director for Administration  
102 Remington Street  
Fort Collins, CO 80524  
Phone: 970.631.6807  
E-mail: [kmw@wholeelephant.com](mailto:kmw@wholeelephant.com)

Theme

Both organizations and individuals have *identities* - a sense of stability and continuity over time and a fit between how we see ourselves and how others see us. With rapid change, identity may be seriously strained in individuals and in organizations. Who are we in this unfamiliar new world? How do we know ourselves in our work roles if we no longer can do things the way we used to? What about how we do things can change and what can't? What is the relationship between the identities of individuals in the organization and that of the organization itself? How does leadership shape organizational identity, especially during times of major change?

These questions are intimately linked with issues of *authority*. How is our authority re-negotiated in rapidly changing situations? How do individuals and organizations find and act with authority if their practices don't seem to fit with emerging realities? What happens then to the authenticity we associate with a reliable sense of identity? What happens to authority when identity concerns lead to reactively opposing change or are simply abandoned in favor of what others may temporarily want?

The *Primary Task* of the conference is to provide opportunities to experience and explore identity within organizations, and the inevitable authority questions that arise in relation to it, in such a fast-changing world.

Method

A primary working assumption is that the conference is a temporary organization, the processes of which, conscious and unconscious, mirror those of organizations in the larger world. Members and staff co-create a social system and a work culture with its own dynamics, emotional undertones and evolving ways of going about its task. Learning from the conference does not come about through teaching, but rather through engagement, experimentation, reflection and action within the unfolding, lived experience of participants in the "here-and-now". The conference focuses on groups as systems, not on the individuals that constitute them, though powerful personal learning may indeed occur. Enrollment in the conference is seen as the first act of authority exercised by members.

Staff Roles

During the conference, staff fulfill two primary roles. Together they act as the *management* group, responsible for the design and running of the conference as a whole, including its administration. Staff members also work as *consultants* within the different events (with the exception of the Open Systems Event), offering their observations, experiences and reflections on what they see happening, for the purpose of encouraging and supporting members' awareness and understanding of emerging conference dynamics. The consultants' dedicated focus on group phenomena rather than individual behavior may seem unusual at first to those who have not yet experienced it. Throughout the conference, the roles that staff take, and how they exercise them, are open to examination and reflection in the service of conference learning.

Learning opportunities include experiencing and reflecting on:

- ◆ **Groups** – their dynamics, formation, interactions with other groups, vitality, and variability depending on size, structure and goals.
- ◆ **Identity** - how various aspects of individual identity are elicited, interpreted and used by groups with and without the conscious consent of the individuals involved.
- ◆ **Authority** – how one understands, exercises and relates to it in oneself and others.
- ◆ **Roles** - both formal and informal, both chosen by the individual and assigned by the group.
- ◆ **Leadership** – what it means and how it develops within the conference in relation to members and staff.
- ◆ **Task** – how a group's stated task and what it actually seems to be doing might differ dramatically.
- ◆ **Management** – how resources are deployed and the inter-relatedness of learning and action.
- ◆ **Transformation** – how one effects change in role and in the dynamic of a group.
- ◆ **Application** - how conference learning can powerfully inform work life in one's back-home organizations.

Tradition and Sponsorship

This model for learning about organizational life evolved from the work of Wilfred Bion, A. K. Rice, and others associated with the Tavistock Institute for the Study of Human Relations in London in the 1950's. Their ideas for how to learn about leadership, authority and the human dynamics of organizational life, as well as a considerable body of theory and application developed since, have been received positively in Europe, Israel, India, Australia and other parts of the world. In the United States, the primary sponsors of the "Tavistock" or "group relations" work have been the A. K. Rice Institute for the Study of Social Systems and its affiliate centers, of which the Boston Center, formally known as the Center for the Study of Groups and Social Systems, is one. CSGSS is the sponsor of this conference; it has formally authorized the conference Director to design and lead this systems learning experience.

Conference Structure

The conference moves through a series of events, which will begin and end on time.

Plenary Sessions

There are two plenary sessions for all members and staff, one at the beginning and one toward the end of the conference. The Opening Plenary (OP) introduces the conference and provides an opportunity for members and staff to reflect on their experiences of crossing the boundary into the and staff to reflect on their experiences of crossing the boundary into the conference as a temporary organization. The Closing Plenary (CP) on the last day is an opportunity to reflect on experiences of the conference as a whole and its different parts, in the context of ending.

Small Study Group (SSG)

The Small Study Group consists of up to 12 members with one consultant. The primary task is to explore experience and behavior in the "here and now" of the Small Study Group, in the context of the conference task.

Large Study Group (LSG)

The Large Study Group includes all conference members with a number of consultants. The primary task is to explore experience and behavior in the "here and now" of the Large Study Group, in the context of the conference task.

Institutional Event (IE)

The primary task of the IE is to experience and explore the institution co-constructed in the "here-and-now" of this event, with particular attention to inter-group and member-management relations. All members and staff participate in this event, which opens and closes with a plenary.

Open Systems Event (OSE)

The primary task of this event is to generate and offer events for and with others that will further learning about identity and authority in organizational life today. It provides opportunities to explore the interaction between reflection and action in relation to the primary task of the conference. Both members and staff (except for the two members of the administrative team) are members of the Open Systems Event.

Review and Application Groups (RAG)

Review and Application Groups are reflective rather than experiential events. Their primary task is to provide opportunities to examine conference experiences, particularly with regard to roles taken and given, and then to apply conference learning to members' back-home roles and organizations. Review and Application Groups consist of up to 8 members with 1 or 2 staff consultants.



Connors Family Retreat & Conference Center

Located in Dover Massachusetts, 30 minutes from Boston, the conference facility is situated on 80 acres of land. The site was developed between 1902-1909. The center has 70 bedrooms, conference rooms, a dining hall, library, formal living room, and chapel. Guests may also roam the grounds and walk a pathway to the Charles River.

Please note that the facility does not provide an elevator; climbing of stairs is required.