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"THE GROUP TURN" IN PSYCHOANALYSIS: A PROPOSAL FOR INCLUDING GROUP WORK IN PSYCHOANALYTIC TRAINING

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In this paper, I propose integrating group theory into relational psychoanalytic training to create structural change within psychoanalytic institutes. I argue that candidates should undergo mandatory experiential participation in small, medium, and large group settings to enhance clinical competence and institutional awareness. Drawing from my experience directing the Institute for Relational and Group Psychotherapy, in Athens, Greece, I highlight how group dynamics—particularly within large groups—can deconstruct hierarchical idealizations and foster more authentic, horizontal relationships among trainees and faculty. I suggest rotating group supervision models and shared leadership structures as institutional mechanisms to promote democratic participation and reduce abuses of authority, so that candidates are equipped to recognize and work with both sibling and institutional transferences. By embedding group theory into the heart of psychoanalytic pedagogy, I contend we can create more ethically responsive, inclusive, and resilient training environments.

Keywords: relational psychoanalysis, group dynamics, psychoanalytic training, institutional hierarchy, large group

Introduction

My institute, the Institute of Relational and Group Psychotherapy, based in Athens, Greece, is a private psychoanalytic training institute for relational psychoanalysis and group psychotherapy. In this paper, I argue, based on my experience as director, that enrichment and innovation in psychoanalytic technique cannot occur without simultaneous structural change in the institutes that train candidates in psychoanalytic theory. I lay out my thinking on the structural changes needed to incorporate group theory into the training curriculum, as well as how clinical supervision and education are enhanced by the model I propose. Along the lines of much contemporary relational thinking (Ashuach, 2019; Ashuach & Berman, 2022), I also contend that institutes' training must be more fully integrated with

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their local communities, national identities, transnational participation, intergenerational historicity and constituent identity.

In a recently published article in *Psychoanalytic Perspectives* (Charalambides, 2024), I describe how the relational psychoanalytic view is theoretically and clinically enhanced by the introduction of group dynamics and large group theories, proposing a model in which the analytic dyad is conceived not just as a two-person construct, but as a large "group," with two multi-objectified/subjectivized representatives. I also argue for the need to train contemporary psychoanalysts in theories of group dynamics, and at the same time enrich their personal analyses with mandatory experiential participation in small, medium and large groups, detailing the many ways that group experience impacts clinical theory and technique. Here, in this companion piece, I argue further that psychoanalytic institutes need to include group psychotherapy as part of their curricula. While changes to the form and content of psychoanalytic training appear in the psychoanalytic literature from time to time and are discussed frequently at the individual institute level, relational psychoanalytic writers have rarely addressed this issue in detail (Berman, 2013a, 2000a, 2000b). My work therefore contributes both to the general problematization of the dynamics of psychoanalytic educational organizations, and fills a gap that exists in the relational psychoanalytic literature.

Three Historically Dominant Psychoanalytic Training Structural Models

There have been, historically, three basic psychoanalytic training models. The Eitingon Model (Ylander, 2024) originated from the writings of Max Eitingon, one of Freud's close colleagues, and is considered the benchmark model for training psychoanalysts, particularly in institutes affiliated with the International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA). The Eitingon Model follows a tripartite structure, which consists of three essential components: personal training analysis, supervised clinical work, and theoretical and clinical seminars. An alternative training model is the French model, described by Boué-Widawsky (2024); unlike the Eitingon model, where training analysis is a formal requirement, this model views personal analysis as a private matter between the candidate and their chosen analyst, with a focus on the analyst's personal development rather than formal institutional control. Supervision is less rigidly structured, and there is more room for individualized training paths, as well as no formal graduation process; analysts gradually integrate into the psychoanalytic community and are recognized based on their engagement, publications, and clinical work.

A third paradigm is the Uruguayan model of psychoanalytic training (Bernardi & de Litvan, 2018), a unique approach developed within the

Uruguayan Psychoanalytic Association (APU), which is affiliated with the International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA). The Uruguayan model allows candidates to choose their analyst freely, so that institutional control over the selection process is minimized, if not eliminated completely. There is no strict requirement to work with a specific number of training cases; instead, progress is assessed based on clinical competence rather than by fulfilling a quota. The training integrates both classical and contemporary psychoanalytic thought with a focus on real-world clinical applications. Instead of a small elite group of training analysts controlling the process, training is overseen by a larger community of analysts who participate in decision-making, and candidates are evaluated based on their clinical work, theoretical understanding, and participation in the psychoanalytic community.

The Proposed Relational Psychoanalytic Model

The training model at the Institute of Relational and Group Psychotherapy in Athens integrates foundational components of traditional psychoanalytic education—such as individual supervision, personal therapy, theoretical seminars, and thesis writing—with a distinct emphasis on group-relational processes. It is designed to maintain clinical rigor while embedding the candidate in a living institutional matrix that foregrounds mutuality, pluralism, and reflective authority. All faculty members are required to be trained both in relational psychoanalysis and group psychotherapy, cultivating a dual lens that privileges both intersubjective and group-as-a-whole dynamics in theory and practice.

While the model draws on established frameworks such as the Eitingon tradition, it reconfigures the role of senior analysts. Rather than reinforcing top-down authority, these experienced figures serve as relational anchors and collaborative guides. Their function is to transmit psychoanalytic values while also modeling non-authoritarian forms of leadership. One core criterion for faculty appointment is demonstrable competence in both analytic modalities, ensuring that the institute's educational ethos is deeply rooted in both dyadic and group-based understandings of the analytic field.

Inspired by the French and Uruguayan models, the training paradigm de-emphasizes individual academic performance as the sole metric of readiness. Instead, graduation is based on sustained community engagement, collegial participation, and the candidate's embodied capacity to contribute meaningfully to the institute's organizational life. Through collaborative projects, institutional dialogue, and peer reflection, candidates internalize psychoanalysis not only as a clinical method but as a socially responsive, ethically grounded practice.

Curricular content includes intensive engagement with theories of the social unconscious, institutional transference and countertransference, and

the intersection of vertical and horizontal axes across familial, organizational, and societal dimensions. Trainees analyze cultural artifacts such as theatrical performances in public dialogue with clinicians and lay audiences, and are encouraged to attend seminars across institutional boundaries. This transdisciplinary openness fosters a diversified analytic culture attuned to both clinical nuance and socio-political context.

Alongside the relational psychoanalytic track, the institute offers a Yalomian group psychotherapy route. A key tenet of this model is that competent practitioners should be fluent in both modalities—or, at a minimum, that relational analysts must possess advanced literacy in group dynamics. This position counters the prevailing institutional dichotomy, where training programs often silo psychoanalysis and group psychotherapy. In our model, both individual and group therapy are integral to personal development. In many cases, the same therapist may conduct both modalities, allowing transferential material from one setting to be worked through in the other, thus deepening clinical insight and institutional awareness.

Supervision is principally conducted in weekly group formats. Individual supervision is available, but remains optional and supplemental. Supervisors rotate regularly, offering candidates access to a multiplicity of clinical perspectives. This pluralism undermines dependency on singular authority figures and fosters critical synthesis. By encountering diverse supervisory voices, candidates are encouraged to develop autonomous analytic judgment. Inter-modality seminars—held bi-monthly—bring together trainees from both the relational psychoanalytic and group psychotherapy tracks to foster shared learning, enhance cross-theoretical fluency, and promote collegial dialogue.

Large group meetings, also held bimonthly, include faculty, alumni, trainees, patients, and external guests. All participants engage as equals, with the aim of examining the institutional unconscious and exploring contemporary enactments of authority, belonging, and exclusion. These groups offer a reflective mirror for the institute itself, revealing how institutional culture replicates and transforms family and societal dynamics. Communication among members is further sustained through an online Viber platform that enables both formal coordination and informal dialogue, strengthening community ties and promoting transparency.

This model represents a deliberate departure from classical vertical training hierarchies, offering instead an applied, ethically attuned, and structurally innovative framework for analytic formation. It affirms that clinical expertise is inseparable from institutional awareness, and that analytic authority must be continually reexamined in light of group processes, social dynamics, and communal accountability. In doing so, it positions psychoanalytic training as not merely a pedagogical endeavor, but as a lived and evolving relational practice.

The Large Group at the Institute of Relational and Group Psychotherapy

Our institute operates as a private, single-owner entity, with the director holding final decision-making authority, supported by a council of regular and probationary members that meets bi-monthly in an advisory capacity. The large group, a mandatory part of the relational psychoanalytic training program, plays a key role in analyzing complex institutional structures. Held bi-monthly in a hybrid format, it is co-facilitated by three leaders—the director and two female psychoanalytic group therapists—promoting balanced authority, open discussion, and challenging idealization of leadership figures.

Insights from candidates and graduates highlight the benefits of the large group in psychoanalytic training. Jessica, a candidate relational psychoanalytic psychotherapist, recently wrote (personal communication) that the experience fosters understanding of internalized beliefs about power, hierarchy, diversity, personal responsibility, and self-representation, helping members respond maturely and empathetically to conflict and diversity. Dimitrios, a graduate relational psychoanalytic psychotherapist, similarly wrote (personal communication) that the plenary format empowers interns to direct discussions, granting them initiatives typically unavailable in traditional classes. Democratic processes within the large group promote diverse perspectives and reduce hierarchy. Candidates, interns, and senior members interact as equals, encouraging self-awareness, professional autonomy, and constructive engagement with authority. Interns learn that their opinions are welcomed, and disagreements—whether among candidates or between candidates and senior members—are tolerated and explored. This realism fosters autonomy and curbs idealized projections onto teachers, supervisors, and psychotherapists. Educators recognize their own transparency, and candidates who initially resist authority eventually achieve autonomy without destructive rebellion.

Having three co-facilitators challenges the traditional assumption that one or two group leaders symbolize parental figures in a group setting. The triadic structure fosters horizontal transference, focusing attention on present dynamics ("here and now") rather than regressing to past parental transference ("there and then"). It also situates the group within broader societal contexts, such as relationships with the local community, national identity, and transnational interactions. This arrangement aligns with Earl Hopper's tripartite model of social systems, which distinguishes between the foundation matrix of contextual society, the dynamic matrix of the group, and the personal/organismic matrices of participants (Hopper, 2020, p. 27). Three co-facilitators fit well with this model, distributing the mental load across facilitators and reducing fatigue.

The Primacy of Group Psychotherapy in the Analysis of Sibling Transferences

Group psychotherapy is essential for recognizing and working through sibling transferences, especially when analysts lack training in group dynamics. Psychoanalysts should consider not only individual dynamics but also group, institutional, and sibling transferences. As I suggest (Charalambides, 2024, p. 54), analysts should introduce group perspective questions even in individual work, focusing on how others respond to an individual's adaptations, and revealing internal "groups" within the psyche. Other group-trained relational psychoanalysts support this approach (Ashuach, 2023; Ashuach & Berman, 2022; Berman, 2013b, 2019; Berman & Ofer, 2024), emphasizing that intrapsychic life is shaped by horizontal relational dynamics, including sibling, peer, and group-level transferences. Their work supports the view that a shift from a dyadic to a multi-person psychology allows for a deeper understanding of how individuals internalize and reenact group configurations in both individual and group psychotherapy.

In an earlier work (Charalambides, 2017), I argued that Fairbairn and Winnicott, in their analyses of Guntrip, overlooked sibling transference due to an ideological focus on parental transferences. Analysts without group training often fear sibling issues, sometimes viewing them as contaminating. Kernberg (1984, p. 33) observes that group processes can activate primitive dynamics that challenge an analyst's boundary control; group training helps manage this risk.

Institutional transferences and countertransferences are rarely addressed in case studies. Yet without group therapy training, analysts often miss crucial group dynamics in complex settings like training institutes. I critique this tendency to overemphasize Oedipal transference while neglecting sibling dynamics. Ashuach (2019, p. 85) emphasizes that a group is the appropriate setting for addressing sibling relationships. A relational psychoanalytic approach that incorporates group dynamics and the social unconscious offers a fuller understanding of the multi-layered psyche. Fraternal transference, more visible in large groups, should therefore be as integral to psychoanalysis as maternal and paternal transferences, helping analysts better navigate clinical and institutional challenges.

Challenges Arising from Hierarchical Structures: The Conflation of Horizontal and Vertical Axes of Transference in Psychoanalytic Training and Supervision

The educational relationship in psychoanalytic institutes involves two key associations. The vertical axis connects trainees with teachers, supervisors, psychoanalysts, and group therapists (as in our Athens institute). The horizontal axis reflects peer interactions among candidates, often marked by rivalry, similar to sibling dynamics in families. Competition and emotional injuries can arise when candidates deny

rivalry, expecting only positive relations with peers. Mandatory group therapy helps trainees process these dynamics, preventing premature dropout. Integrating group theory into psychoanalytic training is essential to access transferential and countertransferential processes that remain hidden in dyadic frames, especially those tied to hierarchies and sibling-like relations.

A candidate, newly promoted to prospective faculty, repeatedly arrived late to his therapeutic group but was punctual in individual therapy. As group leader, I confronted his behavior. Gradually, his lateness revealed symbolic communication about his conflicted position within the institute's hierarchy. After a tense session, he reflected: "In the group, I carry not only the envy directed at me but also envy projected onto others. What becomes unbearable is being a silent witness to invisible injustices."

This recognition likely would not have emerged in individual analysis alone. It was the group analytic field—what I describe as a large group process with two representatives (Charalambides, 2024)—that enabled projection, containment, and working through of unconscious sibling rivalries and institutional anxieties. In a subsequent session, I interpreted his struggle as arising from his ambivalent position: prestigious enough to attract envy yet vulnerable to idealization and attack. I emphasized that his developmental task was to bear the psychic pain of being envied —not for material possessions, but for his symbolic capital within the institutional hierarchy. Within the group matrix, where vertical and horizontal transferences intersect, he began mourning his position. His lateness symbolized resistance not to the group per se, but to the painful visibility of hierarchical inequality made vivid through peer identifications. The group served as a transitional space where his narcissistic injury and moral conflict could be symbolized, shared, and metabolized.

This vignette supports a broader argument central for a group turn in relational psychoanalysis: the dyad alone cannot capture the complexity of psychic life as it unfolds in institutional and social spaces. Fraternal transferences, peer triangulations, and moral conflicts about injustice are only fully analyzable through a group-as-a-whole perspective. Traumatic configurations rooted in early sibling dynamics or peer-based exclusions emerge more vividly and rapidly within groups. The group is not just a container of such processes but their catalyst. Therefore, the inclusion of group psychotherapy and group supervision in psychoanalytic training is not merely beneficial but structurally necessary; without them, analytic work risks remaining blind to the peer-based, institutionally-mediated sibling unconscious-one of the most potent vectors of psychic suffering and growth.

The Psychoanalytic Institute as an Entity That Transcends Familial Analogy

Psychoanalytic institutes are frequently conceptualized as familial environments for candidates in training. However, as Mitchell (2013) observes, it is

not solely the parent-child dynamic that shapes the social world of the family; sibling relationships also play a vital and interactive role. This insight suggests the need to move beyond Freud's emphasis on parental authority (as seen in *Totem and Taboo,* 2012) to include the complex peer dynamics that operate among candidates. Yet Mitchell's formulation, while valuable, does not sufficiently account for the complexity of these horizontal dynamics within training institutes. In contrast to families, institutes often lack the mechanisms to contain unconscious processes such as rivalry, envy, and eroticized fantasies between peers, which can remain unacknowledged yet exert considerable influence on institutional culture.

One important area where these dynamics appear is in the way junior and senior candidates relate to each other. Just as older and younger siblings in families can experience tension, in training institutes, age and experience differences create informal hierarchies among candidates. Senior candidates often take on more influence or symbolic authority, even without formal titles, affecting who is heard and who leads in group settings. These unofficial power structures surface particularly during conflicts about teaching or supervision. They show that peer relationships are not purely "horizontal" and egalitarian but shaped by subtle gradients of seniority and perceived closeness to institutional authority.

Another layer often overlooked is the division between faculty and trainees as two separate "sibling groups" within the institute. Faculty members, as a senior cohort, share authority and institutional responsibility, while candidates form a junior group with less power. Unconscious dynamics—such as rivalry, idealization, and competition—occur both within and between these groups and are just as significant as traditional top-down (parental) dynamics. Although authors such as Bolognini (2004), Hinshelwood (2001), and Gabbard (2005) have examined the vertical structures of institutes, they have largely missed how important these fraternal group dynamics are. In my view, if psychoanalytic education is to evolve, it must integrate a deeper understanding of these horizontal processes. As one example, a graduate I supervised underestimated the impact of relationships between faculty and candidates when setting up a new institute, believing that minimal contact would solve potential problems. I pointed out that unconscious group dynamics persist regardless of how little or how much formal contact there is.

Unprocessed Institutional Transferences: Lessons from Failed Institutes

In conversations with three experienced psychoanalysts who had been invited to our institute to teach—each of whom had founded and run psychoanalytic institutes that ultimately failed within a decade—I had the opportunity to refine my ideas about the importance of group work in psychoanalytic training. One

was a female Israeli psycho-dramatist, another a classically-trained American male psychoanalyst who had moved toward a relational model, and the third a female Latin American psychiatrist trained in self-psychology. All three attributed the closure of their institutes to a challenging competitive climate with other psychoanalytic institutes, as well as to the personal fatigue they experienced from managing the institutes alongside their clinical work. These are real issues, of course, but I also noticed the lack of focus on the transference and countertransference dynamics in their explanations; despite being highly trained, they did not seem to fully process or recognize the emotional dynamics that could have been at play between themselves, their institutions, and their trainees, which a group perspective might have helped to explain. Introducing theories of group dynamics and experiential participation in small, medium and large groups as integral parts of the training of practicing psychoanalysts greatly assists analysts in being able to better understand their patients, but perhaps also helps in the discernment of institutional issues and dynamics as well.

The Idealization of the Authority of Training Analysts

Group therapy can also address another critical issue in psychoanalytic training: the idealization of educational analysts and its impact on candidates' openness to new ideas. Skolnikoff (2004, p. 88) observes that unresolved idealization in training analysis stems from dependent transference needs and analysts' narcissistic reinforcement, leading candidates to prefer unquestioned theories over critical thinking; Greenacre (1966) similarly notes the difficulty in resolving these dependencies. These authors highlight candidates' vulnerability as they form their professional identities, and the subtle power structures that can shape theoretical allegiance. Recognizing these unconscious dependencies encourages educators to foster critical thinking, flexibility, and identity development. Shaw (2006) further illuminates how narcissistic authoritarianism within psychoanalytic institutions perpetuates these power imbalances, influencing both training dynamics and candidates' professional development.

Maria, one of our candidate relational psychoanalytic psychotherapists, observes: "Within psychoanalytic institutes, it seems that one easily falls into the trap of becoming the beloved student on the one hand and the wholesome and mysterious educational analyst on the other" (personal communication). Auchincloss and Michels (2003, p. 396) question whether structural reforms alone can dismantle authoritarianism in psychoanalytic education. Maria's reflection suggests that unconscious processes like idealization and splitting perpetuate these asymmetries, even in institutes committed to progressive or relational paradigms. Her insights show how cultural and experiential

interventions are essential alongside structural reforms to address these enduring dynamics.

An illustrative example comes from a conservative psychoanalytic school in Athens, where candidates avoided greeting teaching analysts in elevators to maintain hierarchical boundaries. Such idealization, in my view, hinders candidates' growth. Group supervision offers a space where de-idealization processes can emerge more visibly. In a recent group supervision session at our institute, a candidate addressed me in the plural (formal) form, while her peers used the singular. When asked about this, she explained that formality preserved respect and avoided perceived disrespect. Her response revealed transference rooted in idealization and authority anxiety; I emphasized that respect should arise from authentic dialogue rather than institutional status. This exchange opened a group discussion on the relational meanings of formality, authority, and emotional contact. The group's ability to contain and reflect on these dynamics illuminated unconscious transference patterns that would likely remain hidden in a purely hierarchical setting. Such shared reflections help dismantle idealizations and foster authentic relational development.

The Large Group as a Basic Tool for Psychoanalytic Training

What structural mechanisms can a psychoanalytic institute use so that the de-idealization of training analysts becomes part of its culture, and is not left to a good-enough analysis' randomness? What kind of psychoanalytic training do prospective analysts and future candidate analysts need to adequately understand that idealization creates issues of abuse of power and infantilization of prospective psychoanalysts? I suggest that a key is teaching basic theories of the large group and social unconscious, as well as offering experiential participation in large groups. By large group, I mean a group of at least 40 people for a predetermined amount of time, without a specific theme and usually under the coordination of one to three co-facilitators, lasting for one and a half to three hours; this is the form that groups at our institute take, and they offer many opportunities for learning.

As Bion (1961) and Klein (1946) propose, group processes evoke primitive defenses such as projective identification, with the facilitator often becoming a container for unmetabolized anxieties. The large group, by virtue of its size, fluidity, and simultaneous engagement across horizontal and vertical institutional axes, collapses traditional analytic boundaries (Gkioka, 2025) and renders the analyst unavoidably visible; subjectivity becomes both projectively and intersubjectively activated. Armstrong's (1998) "organization-in-the-mind," Hopper's (2003) concept of "annihilation anxiety," and Stiers and Dluhy's (2008) work on the large group and organizational unconscious illuminate how analysts become

symbolic figures embodying institutional authority or deficiency. In large groups, the analyst's position is saturated with meaning—gendered, historicized, and socio-culturally contextualized (Charalambides, 2025; Samuels, 1997). As groups navigate loss, rivalry, and transformation, the facilitator's subjectivity becomes a medium for institutional narratives and repressed emotional truths. Far from being an obstacle, the analyst's felt presence and emotional responses constitute critical data in decoding group and organizational unconscious processes. The analyst does not simply observe these dynamics—they inhabit and co-construct them, making subjectivity a necessary and ethically charged analytic tool.

After the pandemic, online and hybrid large groups showed a particular rise. Along with Ofer and Levin, I argue that:

> In contrast with older theories that described the chaotic-aggressive, near-psychosis character of the large group, recent publications underscore the creative-constructive potential of the large group and the intersubjective interweaving of the conductor and the large group. The traditional position of strict neutrality, anonymity, and abstinence, as well as the emphasis on whole-group interpretations, was replaced in our online large groups by the encouragement of dialogue and by a more open stance that does not hide the subjectivity of the conductor; instead, it makes use of it in promoting the analytic process. (Ofer et al., 2023, p. 135)

As Kuchuck writes, "Psychoanalysis has a come a long way from the days in which we were instructed to rigorously and consistently bury evidence of our subjectivity from ourselves and patients in favor of supposedly attainable abstinence and neutrality (Kuchuck, 2018, p. 271). Large group work brings the analyst's subjectivity into the mix along with, and on the same plane as, the subjectivities of the other participants.

Leaderless Large Groups

A question related to large groups in analytic training concerns the utility of leaderless groups alongside those led by experienced co-facilitators. The idea remains controversial. Haim Weinberg (personal communication), an experienced large-group analyst, expresses concerns about the absence of a moderator to contain difficult emotions. However, I consider it possible that a group, or a subgroup, could take on the role of container, distributed through shared relational processes rather than centered on a single leader. Agazarian and Carter (1993) argue that therapeutic transformation arises not only from leader interventions but also from the restructuring of communication and subgroup formation. Containment, therefore, becomes a dynamic, emergent property of the group matrix, challenging the classical leader-container binary. Periodically, a leaderless group unconsciously allocates leadership roles among members or subgroups.

In my experience, leaderless groups do sometimes struggle to contain strong emotions like hatred, anger, and envy. Yet I have also observed such groups eventually self-organize, achieving homeostasis or forming subgroups that collectively act as facilitators. Ghent (1990, p. 14) describes successful object usage as involving acts of surrender and risk-taking by both participants and facilitators; and "success" in such groups refers to the participants' ability to transcend personal prejudices and "surrender" to the plurality of voices within the group. Emotional strength and prior experience with large groups are crucial for participants, and vulnerable and younger analysts can also participate successfully as they have developed this capacity. Facilitators must relinquish control, tolerate uncertainty, and allow their subjectivity into the field, as described in ILG literature (Agazarian & Carter, 1993; Gkioka, 2025).

Without having yet experimented with leaderless groups at our institute, my comments on this idea remain speculative. Nonetheless, I find the idea promising. A leaderless group including both senior and junior members could enrich dialogue and foster horizontal collaboration across faculty and candidates. I plan to explore this structure to study the dynamics between these institutional subgroups.

Gender, Misogyny and Patriarchal Power in Large Groups

Psychoanalysis has long been accused of misogyny, rooted in a patriarchal model of practice and training initiated by Freud. Borgos (2010, p. 2) notes that Freud, though polite to women, primarily valued them as mediators for disseminating his theories. Recognizing this legacy, I realized that gender representation in institutional leadership holds both symbolic and practical significance (Dimen, 2003). At our institute, where women form the majority of candidates, graduates, and supervisors, it is important that leadership structures reflect this reality. My experience of being supported and challenged by female colleagues further influences my view on balancing gender representation in group settings.

Our leadership trio—two women and one man—is intentionally structured to counterbalance the historic male dominance in psychoanalysis (Jacobs, 1991). Beyond symbolism, diverse leadership acts as a corrective against unconscious biases and traditional hierarchies (Britton, 1998). Representation alone does not dismantle patriarchy, but signals an institutional commitment to confronting it, while encouraging attention to broader aspects of identity like race, sexuality, and gender identity (Harris, 2005; Layton, 2010).

Our community initially considered our leadership structure as reproducing a patriarchal orientation, with leadership centered on myself and a few founding women. The model faced skepticism, but over time it gained acceptance through lived experience. A key practice we adopted was requiring

a minimum 10-minute dialogue between co-therapists before and after each large group session, ensuring alignment, containment, and mutual reflection. I am especially grateful to Alkinoi Lala, my co-therapist, who points out that our ability to survive emotional tensions deepened our bond. Many interns and graduates have expressed a desire to join us on equal footing, highlighting the aspirational impact of collaborative leadership.

However, a subgroup of men in our large groups perceived elements of misandry, suggesting that female co-conductors ostracized men. Such perceptions illustrate the complex dynamics that emerge when systemic misogyny is challenged. They show that no system can completely eliminate projections onto leadership and underscore the psychological resilience leaders must cultivate to manage negative attributions without becoming defensive or retaliatory. Effective leadership in psychoanalytic institutions requires deep understanding of group dynamics and the capacity to survive primitive and persecutory projections.

Administrative Empowerment Among Peers in Psychoanalytic Institutes

Strengthening peer relationships, and putting candidates on equal footing with more senior analysts and faculty, enables institutions to address the hierarchical imbalances typically seen in institute settings, including idealization. In our institute, idealization of senior members led to imbalances, where senior members felt entitled to more rights and fewer obligations than others. The issue was resolved when our candidates and graduates were invited to participate in the institute's decision-making, in numerous ways. In our large groups, we openly discussed issues of hierarchy and operation at the institute. Candidates were also given a role in deciding as a group on the cover art for our first and second collective volumes of psychoanalytic papers, as well as for two of my books. (I also offered drafts of my books for comments, many of which were incorporated into my texts.). Perhaps most importantly, we decided to publish a volume that consisted only of candidates' and recent graduates' papers from an international conference, for which our senior members had only a supervisory role during the writing, which made a creative difference for the whole community. By involving candidates and graduates in decision-making processes, such as voting on editorial choices and participating in institutional discussions, we promoted a more inclusive environment. Limiting senior members' public roles further reduced hierarchy. These changes fostered collaboration, creativity, and empowerment, contributing to a more balanced and dynamic community, in line with Kernberg's critique of traditional psychoanalytic training systems (Kernberg, 2010, p. 998).

A Proposed "Group turn" For Supervision

While more institutes now practice group supervision, it nevertheless remains uncommon. Yet traditional psychoanalytic supervision reinforces vertical hierarchies (Freud, 1921) and often neglects sibling-like dynamics among trainees (Mitchell, 2003)—rivalry, idealization, exclusion—central to understanding enactments in training settings. Although Fairbairn (1952) and Winnicott (1965) emphasized relational matrices, their insights are underused in supervision. Introducing group supervision creates a space to process these dynamics, drawing from Bion's (1961) group-as-a-whole concept and expanded by relational theorists like Bromberg (2006) and Yalom and Leszcz (2005).

Fromm's (2001) concept of the indivisibility between the social and individual unconscious highlights institutional blind spots. His notion of "half-awakedness" shows how unchallenged socio-political fictions limit awareness. Fromm writes: "The social and the individual unconscious are related to each other and in constant interaction … If a person in a given society is not able to see the social reality, and instead fills his mind with fictions, his capacity to see individual reality … is also limited" (p. 131).

Following Fromm, group supervision, where multiple supervisees exchange views with one supervisor, fosters pluralism and challenges obedience. Samuels (1989) emphasizes that differing viewpoints reflect the psyche's multiplicity, while shared clinical experiences reveal unified aspects of the psyche.

My training at three different training institutes—the William Alanson White Institute, the Tampa Bay Institute, and the Yalom Institute—shaped my views on supervision. Seeking pluralism, our institute uses a circular model: weekly group supervision rotates among three to six supervisors annually. Interns choose supervisors based on case types, receiving varied input. Sometimes supervisors synthesize guidance; at other times disagreements arise, emphasizing autonomy and diverse perspectives. Sustaining relationships during conflict remains central. This model relies on supervisors sharing a common institutional culture, which helps regulate inevitable transferences—competition among supervisees, between supervisors, and across groups—through distributed authority and collaborative dialogue.

Berman and Berger (2007) advocate for group supervision, noting that it shelters trainees from isolation and allows honest discussion of technical mistakes without idealizing the analyst's infallibility. Although power dynamics can surface, they are more easily recognized, verbalized, and contained in group settings. As an example supporting this contention, I recall granting a candidate five extra minutes beyond her allotted supervision time. The group immediately challenged me—a proud moment reflecting their confidence in confronting a "superior." Such transparency is rare in dyadic supervision, where closed doors and hierarchical dependency limit candidates' capacity to voice concerns.

Analysts in the Polis: Embedding Psychoanalytic Training in Community, Culture, and the World

Alongside previous structural recommendations, I argue that psychoanalytic institutes must transcend traditional insularity and engage more deeply with local community dynamics, national identity, transnational dialogs, intergenerational historicity, and constituent identity. This involves moving away from Eurocentric, U.S.-focused and ahistorical models, embracing cultural specificity, dialogical engagement, and public-facing analytic practices. In parallel with other innovations, our institute organizes cultural and dialogical events that blur the boundary between clinic and polis. Patients, candidates, and faculty attend theatrical performances together, followed by analytic reflection. Open seminars host public figures from political, theatrical, and scientific arenas for shared study of psychic and societal conflict. Moreover, our candidates are not only encouraged but expected to participate in international conferences and seminars organized by the International Association for Relational Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy, the American Group Psychotherapy Association, the Group Analytic Society International, and the International Association of Group Psychotherapy and Group Processes. This engagement fosters cross-cultural competence, theoretical pluralism, and professional affiliation within global networks—essential for analysts trained to think relationally, work in diverse contexts, and engage transnationally. Through these practices, psychoanalytic education becomes a site not only of technical formation but of civic engagement and ethical individuation.

Epilogue

The "group turn" proposed throughout this paper is not a supplementary reform but a foundational reorientation of psychoanalytic training. As psychoanalytic institutes contend with increasingly complex clinical, institutional, and social demands, the incorporation of group theory and experiential group processes emerges as an ethical and structural necessity. The analytic dyad must no longer be viewed as a self-contained, insulated matrix, but as a relational node within a broader social unconscious that includes institutional dynamics, sibling transference, and cultural enactments.

By embedding large group experiences, rotational group supervision, and co-facilitated formats within training, we enable a democratization of authority and the surfacing of unconscious power dynamics that are otherwise repressed or projected onto singular figures. Horizontal axes—between candidates, between faculty and trainees, and across levels of institutional seniority—must be given analytic legitimacy alongside vertical transference configurations. Fraternal transferences, sibling

rivalries, institutional projections, and idealization of authority can be adequately recognized and worked through in the living matrix of the group.

The model I propose offers a corrective to the historical patriarchal structures of psychoanalytic education. Gender-balanced co-facilitation, shared leadership, and dialogical pedagogy replace top-down authority with reflective authority. Furthermore, pluralism is institutionally enacted—not just tolerated—through supervisor rotation, interdisciplinary openness, and collaborative editorial and administrative processes.

Equally important is the development of psychoanalytic educators who can tolerate and metabolize their own institutional countertransference. The analytic leader ceases to be the disembodied superego of the institute and instead becomes a subject among others, one who bears projection, but also participates, listens, and evolves. The large group is the primary container for this transformation, enabling institutes to study themselves in action.

I agree with Casement, who writes, "[D]o not think we can wait for committees to agree upon the more formal changes in our training, which others are recommending, much as those changes are also necessary. There is an urgency for us to attend to our own part in these processes . . . . And we need to start now and to do this constantly" (Casement, 2005, p. 1158).

Eisold similarly suggests that, "To the extent we free ourselves from our collectively elaborated defensive prejudices about training, we are more free to think about how to prepare ourselves and others for effective, lively, and interesting careers as psychoanalysts" (Eisold, 2004, p. 68). I believe, like these writers, that the need to change the structural elements of psychoanalytic training institutes is necessary and imperative. In Greece, at least, a more conservative view still prevails, in which either a regression to Freudian orthodoxy or more object-relational /Kleinian theory have created training programs and psychoanalytic organizations that lack the progressive, relational elements that I am proposing. Without wanting to idealize our institute, I think we are a shining example of our differentiation from this restraining system of psychoanalytic education. My hope is that by sharing our experience, we will help to raise awareness and encourage other institutes to experiment with group structure, while giving more confidence and power to the next generations of psychoanalysts.

Ultimately, I contend that the psychoanalytic training institute must evolve into a *relational institution*—one that is not only internally transformative but also outward-facing, accountable to its historical moment, and co-constructed by all its participants.

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Patient Anonymization Statement

Potentially personally identifying information presented in this article that relates directly or indirectly to an individual, or individuals, has been changed to disguise and safeguard the confidentiality, privacy and data protection rights of those concerned, in accordance with the journal's anonymization policy.

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