ICP Symposium Presentation:

Community Psychoanalysis: An Introduction to a Paradigm Shift?

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Zen saying: “To see the fish one must look at the water.” (Levenson, 2001, p.239).

“…mind is a field phenomenon, a network, a web. To paraphrase Winnicott’s famous “there is no such thing as a baby”—implying that the mother-child dyad is the indivisible unit—I would say that there is no such thing as a mind. It takes others to extend that network and the extension maybe, in itself, restorative.” (Levenson, 2001, P.).

“When the unthought known is surfaced in an organization it always makes a difference to its life and work because it can no longer be denied. It is what everyone knows, but has never thought of and articulated.” (Gordon Lawrence, cited in Mersky, 2012, p.).


Introduction:

Can psychoanalysis expand beyond the couch and the consulting room? Can psychoanalysis truly engage community and social problems? Twemlow and others (Twemlow & Parens, 2006; Rudden & Twemlow, 2013 ) assert that this proposition is the future of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis has a long tradition of extending and “applying” psychoanalytic principles and techniques outside of the traditional consulting room. For example, the development of Freud’s Free Clinics (Danto, 2005) heralded a social justice ethic that many early European psychoanalysts shared—indeed many of the early psychoanalysts shared a Marxist critique of capitalism and sought integration of psychoanalysis with Marxism (Fenichel, 1967). Erich Fromm (Fromm, 1956; 1962) is
probably the most recognizable exemplar of that tradition. However, psychoanalytic practice (despite often quite sophisticated theorizing and conceptualization—see Erich Fromm’s concept of the “marketing personality” generated by a capitalism-saturated culture that required “narcissistic” personalities) remained focused on the individual and lacked theory and practice that expanded the scope of psychoanalysis to large groups, entire organizations, and communities.

Psychoanalysis was “applied” in non-traditional contexts with principles largely derived from the individual level and intrapsychic perspective. It was only with the work of Wilfred Bion (1946;1961) that psychoanalysis developed a core set of ideas that were about group level processes (“group as a whole basic assumptions”), and subsequently led to applications of “systems psychodynamics” theories and techniques to organizations and communities (“socio-analysis” at the Tavistock Institute in London). The most recent developments in that tradition are a series of papers by Stuart Twemlow and collaborators (Twemlow & Parens, 2006; Rudden & Twemlow, 2013), promoting a psychoanalysis of the community as opposed to a psychoanalysis in the community. Another psychoanalyst (Volkan, 1998) has developed theories and practices regarding very large groups (nations and ethnic communities) with which he seeks to understand and reduce ethnic and inter-nation tensions—which he hopes will lead to reduction in inter-ethnic violence.

In this paper I’d like to provide a brief sketch of the “socio-analysis” tradition (Bion,1946;1961; Jaques,1955); an overview of Twemlow’s theory and practice of “Community Psychoanalysis”; Volkan’s (1998) psychoanalytic theory and practice with large groups and ethnic conflict; and finally my own evolving views of Community Psychoanalysis, which include a critique of the concept of “applied psychoanalysis,” and an emergent repertoire of contemporary methods for interventions with large systems, informed by intersubjectivity (Benjamin,2004; Stolorow,1997; Stolorow & Atwood, 1992); psychoanalytic complexity theory (Coburn, 2014); and Twemlow’s Mode III concepts (Rudden & Twemlow, 2013): Communal/Social Dreaming (Lawrence, 2003; Bermudez, 2013); Open Space (Owen, 1997); and Future Search (Weisbord, 1995).

“Socio-analysis”, defined as the psychoanalysis of groups, organizations, and global systems, is a synthesis of psychoanalysis and open systems theory (Bain, 1999). The roots of socio-analysis lie in the work of Wilfred Bion, who developed a seminal theory of group level dynamics (Bion, 1946; 1961). Bion’s activities at the Tavistock Institute in London led to the development of “Group Relations Conferences” which focus on the exploration of the unconscious dynamics of groups and organizations (Fraher, 2005). Two other early, highly influential contributors to the theory and practice of socio-analysis were Elliot Jaques (1955) and Isabel Menzies (1960), both proposing
that organizational cultures may serve as “defenses against depressive and persecutory anxiety.”

Bion (1961), although influenced by the Kleinian school of psychoanalysis, developed a theory of group functioning that went beyond the one body and two body psychologies of his day. He posited an emergent group process that had a life of its own above the individual psychologies of its members, although individuals contributed to this emergent, self-organized dynamic. Bion developed several concepts in order to understand “group-as-a-whole” behavior: group mentality, protomental phenomena, basic assumptions, and sophisticated (work) group, and valency (Bion, 1961; Rioch, 1970, 1971).

Bion hypothesized that a group mentality existed which represented the collective will of the group. Individual members contributed unconsciously to this group mentality. Moreover, Bion felt that the group behaves as if it had met to fulfill functions which have little to do with the manifest task of the group. These as if functions are termed basic assumptions. Bion delineated three basic functions. Thus, the group acts as if it had met to (a) depend on one individual to provide all security and nourishment (dependency assumption) or (b) reproduce itself (pairing assumptions) or (c) preserve itself through attacking or running away from someone or something (fight/flight assumption). Bion held that all basic assumptions existed in potential or prototypical form in a protomental dimension of group life. (This protomental level bears much resemblance to Freud’s id/unconscious sector of the personality which has a somatic/phylogenetic matrix and to and from which many elements of psychic life are either relegated or called forth.) Although contribution and participation cannot be avoided by members of the group, individuals are said to have a valency for a particular basic assumption if their personality structure disposes them to one or the other basic assumption.

Bion has been criticized for supposedly constructing a theory that sets up a false dischotomy between the group’s emotional life and adaptive processes, with the implication being that emotional processes are viewed as exclusively irrational, hence pathological (Edelson, 1970). This appears to be a misreading of Bion. Basic assumptions may become pathological in Bion’s view and disrupt the work (adaptive task) of the group. Adaptive tasks, when successful, however, are always supported by a basic assumption: the implication, of course, is that the emotional life of the group provides the fuel for task performance. There is never direct conflict between basic assumptions (Rice, 1951). Emotions of the basic assumptions are, however, mutually exclusive: the existence of one basic assumption excludes and controls the emotional state of the other assumptions. Tension created by conflicts from three sources produces changes in dominant basic assumptions which flow one into the other: (1) the prevailing basic assumption is in conflict with individual member needs; (2) the sophisticated group
versus the basic assumption groups; and (3) the sophisticated group supported by one basic assumption is in conflict with other basic assumptions in protomental systems (Rice, 1951; 1969). The one sure way to maintain a sophisticated work-level is to utilize emotions of one basic assumption to support the task and control emotions of the two other basic assumptions.

*Action Research, and Social Defense*

The Tavistock School has an action research perspective. Theorists and researchers in this tradition see their analyses and theories as evolving from and impacting upon practical organizational interventions (Clark, 1976). These interventions are simultaneously conceptualized as experiment and research. Jacques (1978) has argued that given the anxieties of group life, pointed to by the work of Bion, Klein, and others, defenses against the powerful psychotic-level anxieties become permanent structures in organizations. Such social defense systems assert enormous resistance to change. The social structure of an organization both fosters particular social defenses and is used via projection by members to support both their individual and group defenses. Thus, the Church promotes an emotional climate of dependency; the Army, fight-flight basic assumptions; and the family, a pairing assumption.

Subsequent to Bion’s formulations concerning the three basic assumptions (or “organizing principles” in contemporary psychoanalytic language), two other basic assumptions have been proposed: basic assumption “Fusion” or “oneness” by Pierre Turquet (Turquet, 1971) and basic assumption “Me” or “Moi” conceived by Gordon Lawrence, Alastair Bain, and Lawrence Gould (Lawrence, Bain, and Gould, 1996). In addition, there are several contemporary critiques and updates of the foundational Kleinian-inspired theoretical approaches to “group-as-whole” phenomena and “social defense” theory (Long, 2006; Rizzole, 2011; Whittaker, 2011). These contributions see value in these early formulations, but critique them in the light of contemporary psychoanalytic theory: for example, both Long (2006) and Rizzole (2011) seek to apply contemporary theories of intersubjectivity to explain emergent group processes. In addition, Long (2006) proposes that Jaques’ organizational defense theory should be expanded and applied to community dynamics and cultural processes. Long (2006) laments in her thoughtful discussion that despite Jaques game-changing contribution, traditional interpretive, awareness-eliciting practices do not produce lasting, deep-structural change in destructive patterns in groups, organizations, or societies:

“We can now see in many of these cases the social defences operating in a destructive way, but finding alternatives cannot be simply or quickly accomplished. If we have come to see and articulate the problem, we have not yet found long-term solutions.” (p. 286).
Long is concerned about achieving change not just awareness. This is where the interventions this paper is proposing can make a contribution: future psychoanalytic effectiveness with large systems change may lie in a sustained integrative approach as Mersky (2012) suggests. Perhaps a two phase process would be optimally efficacious: sequential combination of an awareness-raising initial intervention phase, followed by a change (action-focused) intervention phase.

I anticipate that some will suggest that the interventions outlined in this paper (particularly, Open Space and Future Search) are not psychoanalytic. I believe that criticism derives from outmoded psychoanalytic ideas, and propose that these large group interventions for complex systems change rely on contemporary ideas such as psychoanalytic complexity theory (Coburn, 2014); implicit processes (procedural, non-conscious, emotional, enactive); movement from unformulated enactment to explicit (symbolic/narrative) processes; intersubjectivity in both contemporary senses: as focusing on intersubjectivity as a universal interpersonal field phenomenon (Stolorow, 1997; 1998) and as specific “doer-done to” dynamics (split complementarity; Benjamin, 2004). In addition, these interventions address contemporary psychoanalytic concerns, such as the context-dependent nature of subjective experience and identity; and the profound need for mutual recognition in human relationships. Also see Wachtel (2009) for a critique of psychoanalysis’ overvaluing the “inner world”, and consequent undervaluing of the external world and human action: Wachtel persuasively argues that we need both perspectives, complementing each other, and together providing a more comprehensive and effective approach for understanding and change. Wachtel notes that Harry Stack Sullivan was an exception to this traditional psychoanalytic attitude, attending to actual interaction, and presaging the contemporary focus on enactment.

In a related expansion of psychoanalysis to large systems, Stuart Twemlow and his collaborators in a series of papers have begun to outline a theory and practice of “Community Psychoanalysis” (Twemlow and Paren, 2006; Twemlow and Wilkinson, 2004; Twemlow, Fonagy, and Sacco, 2004;): addressing bullying and violence in schools; and dysfunctional authority in municipalities. Twemlow (Rudden & Twemlow, 2013) proposes that the movement from psychoanalysis in the community to psychoanalysis of the community suggests the need to differentiate three different yet overlapping psychoanalytic mind-sets: Type I Therapeutic Mind characterizes that of the analyst within his consulting room; Type II Therapeutic Mind, that of the analyst who works in the community with individuals, be they members of a traumatized or symptomatic community group….The Type III Social/Therapeutic Mind, within this typology, would refer to those analysts who work within an affected community as a system demonstrating powerful and symptomatic group unconscious forces “ (pp. 199-200). Rudden and Twemlow (2013) build their version of socio-analysis on familiar foundations: Bion and the Tavistock Institute tradition briefly outlined earlier in this
paper. In addition, they find support in the work of Kaes (2007) and Volkan (1998; 2004): both psychoanalytic theorists and practitioners who propose common group and community fantasies and identifications which form a “second skin” for individuals, providing a “sense of coherence and balance in the world. When groups become disrupted, their need for the common becomes intensified. This can result in the ascendance of fundamentalist, conservative values that try to fix what is essential to a group’s identity and to expunge that which seems threatening or foreign to it.” (Rudden and Twemlow, p. 202). Volkan (2004) furthermore suggests that narcissistic leaders can manipulate a larger group (ethnic or national entity), which faces contemporary stresses, challenges or traumas, by making symbolic associations to a “chosen trauma” in the group’s history. The “chosen trauma” is an historical event when the group experienced humiliation or defeat at the hands of an enemy. Volkan (1998) also proposes that large group trauma leads to a “group as a whole” “biosocial degeneration,” which can provoke a breakdown in society-wide institutional structures and processes (including the family).

A final theoretical contribution that Rudden and Twemlow (2013) make has implications for the proposals I’d like to make regarding potential “community psychoanalytic”/socio-analytic interventions (“Social” or “Communal Dreaming”; “Open Space” and “Future Search”), approaches closely allied to the principles of psychoanalytic complexity theory (Coburn, 2014). Rudden and Twemlow aver that our species has evolved because of our evolutionary heritage as primates who have developed “crucial structures for conflict resolution, for mutual caring and for creating clear dominance hierarchies” (p.203)-- a “social intelligence” that enables humans to read others; understand human systems; and navigate social life. This seems analogous to the “systems intelligence” proposed by Martela and Saarinen (2008;2013), and explicitly linked to Intersubjective Systems Theory (IST) (Stolorow et al., 2002; Stolorow, 2004):

“Systems intelligence is conceptualized as the subject’s ability to act constructively and productively within an emergent whole as it unfolds even while lacking objectival knowledge, models, or codes… It accounts for ‘an individual’s non-rational, non-propositional and non-cognitive capabilities, such as instinctual awareness, touch, feel, and sensibilities at large, as capabilities that relate the subject intelligently to a system’… People prereflectively read situations as systems and are able to act intelligently based on that prerational knowledge.” (Martela & Saarinen, 2008, p.189).

“Intersubjective systems theory (IST) of Stolorow, Atwood, and Orange provides an insightful articulation of such systems. In this chapter we suggest that IST yields remarkable support for the systems abstract intelligence approach.” (p. 189).

Rudden and Twemlow call this a “social procedural unconscious” and assert that community psychoanalysts provide interventions that enhance the “mentalizing
“capacities” of communities and hence develop what they refer to as the capacity for “social intelligence”, or as I prefer, “systems intelligence.”

In the remainder of this paper I will propose three approaches (“Communal Dreaming”; “Open Space Dialogues”; and “Future Search”) as additions to the repertoire of community psychoanalytic interventions. My proposal is influenced by the work of Mersky (2012), who summarized three “contemporary methodologies to surface and act on unconscious dynamics in organizations…”, one of which was “Social Dreaming”, a method developed by Gordon Lawrence at the Tavistock (Lawrence, 1982; 2003). I’ve developed a variation on Social Dreaming, tentatively called Communal Dreaming, which unlike Lawrence’s open-ended approach, focuses participants on a theme or issue, and has demonstrated potential to heal collective or community-level shared trauma (Bermudez, 2015). I will also propose that the former approaches (informed by intersubjectivity theory, psychoanalytic complexity theory, and other contemporary psychoanalytic concepts), in addition to addressing group level unconscious dynamics, enhance the “systems intelligence” of participants. I draw out implications for the training of psychoanalysts and the enhanced development of “systems intelligence” among the next generation of psychoanalytic candidates.

A Note on the Concept of “Applied Psychoanalysis”:

There is a core assumption that is foundational in the approach suggested in this paper: all of psychoanalysis is “applied psychoanalysis!” I take issue with the idea that the dyadic relationship is real psychoanalysis and all the rest (small group and large group psychodynamics; organizational, community, and social psychoanalysis) is “applied psychoanalysis”, a kind of second-rate knowledge, while the real gold and foundational knowledge is derived from the classical psychoanalytic arrangement (analyst and analysand on the couch). My view is that all psychoanalytic propositions are applied in the sense that all theory is birthed in a particular context and “applied” to a context, including, of course, the traditional psychoanalytic framework. The notion of “applied psychoanalysis” devalues theory and practice in other human contexts: large groups, organizations, ethnic groups, communities, culture, societies, nations—in short, most of social life, which is life. The latter are human contexts that profoundly shape the psyche, which, however, we have neglected and relegated to the bin of “applied psychoanalysis”. I believe this hegemonic practice has rendered invisible dimensions of our unconscious (cultural and social unconscious) for most of the history of psychoanalysis. It represents the remnants of a psychoanalysis based on instinctual drives and an intrapsychic
perspective. Here is Freud (1921), despite his over-valuing instincts and the individual, giving a nod to the value of what he called "social psychology":

“The contrast between individual psychology and social or group psychology .. loses a great deal of its sharpness when it is examined more closely. It is true that individual psychology is concerned with the individual man and explores the paths by which he seeks to find satisfaction for his instinctual impulses; but only rarely and under certain exceptional conditions is individual psychology in a position to disregard the relations of the individual to others. In the individual’s mental life someone else is invariably involved, as a model, as an object, as a helper, as an opponent; and so from the very first individual psychology...is at the same time social psychology as well” (Freud, 1921, p.69).

Further on, he goes on to say even more strongly:

“...the group mind is capable of creative genius in the field of intelligence, as is shown above all by language itself, as well as by folksong, folklore, and the like. It remains an open question, moreover, how much the individual thinker or writer owes to the stimulation of the group in which he lives, and whether he does more than perfect a mental work in which the others have had a simultaneous share” (1921, p. 83).

Compare the latter ambivalent statement of Freud’s concerning the tension between individual and group psychology and Stephen Mitchell’s (Mitchell. 2000) paradigm-shifting commitment to a relational psyche:

“To argue that we need a concept of drive to describe what the individual seeks in interactions with other people presumes that the individual qua individual is the most appropriate unit of study. It assumes that the individual, in his or her natural state, is essentially alone, and then is drawn into interaction for some purpose or need. I believe that Fairbairn, like Sullivan (1953) was struggling toward a different way of understanding the nature of human beings, as fundamentally social, not as drawn into interaction, but as embedded in an interactive matrix with others as his or her natural state.” (2000, p. 105).

This reading and contrast of Freud with Mitchell has been influenced by the work of Aron & Starr (2013), whose penetrating analysis of Freud’s binaries and ambivalences concerning individual and group, race, autonomy, gender, etc., has been extremely illuminating. The good news is that recent theorizing and practice have begun to address that gap in psychoanalytic theory and practice, with concepts such as “thirdness”
Introduction to Social Dreaming:

In a roundtable discussion focused on the challenges of integrating a socio-political perspective into psychoanalysis, Jessica Benjamin (Altman et al, 2006) tells an anecdote concerning a group consultation in Germany which involved analysis of a dream containing an “obvious reference” to the Nazi regime and wartime activities. To her shock the audience engages (despite Benjamin's interpretation) in a “blanketing denial” of the reference to Nazi murderous actions during World War II. Benjamin goes on to say that her experience in this context suggested a “kind of collective unconscious setup…that we carry an awful lot of things that are not individual, that are what you might call ‘transpersonal’ in our political unconscious” (p. 182). Furthermore, she argues that psychoanalysis has colluded in an institutional blindness (similar to that group of German therapists)—a taboo—a “denial of historical forces…” (p.182). It seems that Benjamin is groping to conceptualize two essential ideas that we introduce in this paper: Kohut's "group self", a "psychological configuration" representing the collective "which is analogous to the self of the individual" (Kohut, 1976); and Gordon Lawrence's "social dreaming", an approach to understanding dreams that provides access to the unconscious of the "group self" (Lawrence, 2003a, 2003b).

It is noteworthy that a dream that is the focus of her consultation and anecdote—a dream that contains reference to a social reality that is being disavowed, denied, dissociated. Benjamin is describing her emerging awareness that she and other contemporary analysts have been in collusion with a psychoanalytic establishment whose “denial of historical forces is very much embedded in our early history, and the way that we failed to reorganize ourselves around that has had a very powerful influence, even for those of us who departed from Freudian tradition” (p. 182). Benjamin and other contemporary analysts have been unconsciously organized by a traumatized psychoanalytic "group self" (see the recent work of Kuriloff, 2014, who chronicles the constricting impact on psychoanalytic theory of the intergenerational transmission of trauma by the generation of analysts who were survivors of the Holocaust).
Lynne Layton (2006), on the other hand, seems more clearly aware of the power of the “cultural third,” and describes her conflict and struggle to feel “authorized” to analyze the socio-political unconscious as a psychoanalyst. Remarkably, like Benjamin, Layton, during the course of an analysis, confronts the “cultural third” or "group self" also through the medium of an analysand’s dream! The patient’s dream generates a dilemma for her—whether to address what seems an explicit reference in the manifest content to a political stance her patient is grappling with, or to adhere to the narrower confines of the traditional focus on the dreamer’s more intimate interpersonal circumference. In the process, Layton discovers her own unconscious conflict: is she straying from being an “authentic “ analyst if she permits or encourages exploration that leads away from intrapsychic, private dimensions to a “political psyche” (Samuels, 1993, 2004)? Or is she colluding unconsciously with her “own resistance to linking the psychic and the social” (p. 110)? Layton arrives at the view that she has been in collusion with a culture ("group self") that decontextualizes and de-historicizes—a powerful unconscious demand to dissociate individuals from their social context:

“Cultural norms erect barriers to what can be thought, felt, and articulated, in speech. Because…they share the same dominant middle-class culture, therapists and their clients often adhere, consciously and unconsciously, to some of the same cultural norms. These norms…created dynamic unconscious conflicts as well…can generate particular kinds of clinical enactments…. Normative unconscious processes result from narcissistic wounding inflicted by sexist, racist, and other power hierarchies whose norms mark one group as inferior to other groups” (Layton, 2006, p. 107).

These cultural norms, serving as cultural organizing principles that require de-linking the psyche from its social context, inform the traditional perspective on the clinical use of dreams, focusing on the private, personal experiences of the dreamer, and retaining the lingering assumptions of the pre-relational and pre-intersubjective paradigm of the “isolated mind.” (Stolorow, 1992). “Social dreaming” (Lawrence & Daniel, 1982; Lawrence, 2003) practice and interpretation represent the emergence of a truly relational and intersubjectivist perspective: social dreaming for a social mind, or in Kohut's terms, a "group self". Furthermore, this renewed valuation of dreams in itself represents an engagement with what Lippmann (2000) refers to as psychoanalysis’ “unacknowledged ambivalence” towards dreams, deriving from cultural and systemic factors: he proposes that analysts display analytic arrogance in our struggle with “unknowingness,” uncertainty, and the puzzling nature of dreams and the unconscious by imposing meaning using a preferred theory. The “Social Dreaming” perspective and method may be an antidote to these institutional, "group self", projections, using a democratic group dialogue that generates multiple interpretive narratives and encourages tolerance for ambiguity.
A Brief History and Description of Social Dreaming:

Paul Lippmann eloquently describes the social character of dreams in an article, "The Nature of Dreams" (Lippmann, 1998):

"The varied experiences in dreams may be thought of as continuously exploring, portraying, rehearsing, commenting upon, criticizing, adding to, varying, and improvising on aspects of the socially shared characteristics of a people…in the deepest privacy of dreaming, the culture's ways are being developed, tested, explored, and reinforced" (Lippmann, 1998, pp. 203-204).

Lawrence (1982; 2003), the originator of social dreaming, provides a description of the “social dreaming matrix” (SDM): a process involving a group of participants who share dreams and associations to those dreams, relying on the working hypothesis that the dreams shared reflect a collective cultural product, a social unconscious comprised of dissociated social, political, and cultural experience. A major hypothesis is that the initial dream shared is a fractal of all subsequently narrated dreams, that is, the initial dream provides a pattern which is replicated in subsequent dreams. Our experiments with social dreaming appear to confirm this hypothesis, as we will describe in a later section.

There are several other foundational assumptions: the dreams generated in SDM are metaphors for unconscious, disavowed, dissociated cultural and community experience—the unconscious of the "group self"; the dreams in SDM are the shared property of the dreaming community; focus must be on the dream, not the dreamer, which facilitates development of a safe “mental space,” an intersubjective/relational third (Winnicott, 1971; Ogden, 1994; Benjamin, 2004; Gerson, 2004); ascertaining dream meaning should be approached with the attitude of a working hypothesis; the content and meaning is unpacked through three psychoanalytic methods: associations (Freud), amplification (Jung), and animation (Bromberg, 2000, 2003; Bosnak, 2004). Jung’s method of image amplification, encouraging cultural and archetypal associations, attempts to go beyond Freud’s linear and private associations; because relying solely on verbal associations may distance us from the non-verbal, unformulated dimension of the dream and the unconscious (Blechner, 2001, 2011), Bosnak’s strategy of animation (enactment/embodifying of the dream’s imagery and non-verbal narrative) tries to circumvent being trapped in the “verbal associational network” (Lippmann, 2000) by enabling access to a procedurally organized implicit knowing.
In developing the radical paradigm of “social dreaming” and the “social dreaming matrix” (SDM), Gordon Lawrence (1982; 2003), was influenced by several perspectives:

- Wilfred Bion’s (1970) theory of dreaming (Bion conceptualized dreaming as a fundamental and continuous mental process by which we make wholeness, synthesis, and meaning from our fragmented emotional experience.);

- Charlotte Beradt’s (1968) *Third Reich of Dreams* (a book reporting the dreams of ordinary German citizens during the period of 1933-1939—dreams reflecting their intuitive, dissociated, unconscious knowledge and foreknowledge of the Nazi regime’s intentions);

- and an anthropological narrative (Stewart, 1951) concerning the Senoi, a Malaysian tribe who interpreted their dreams as part of their daily communal lives.

**Social Dreaming and Contemporary Psychoanalysis: Challenges and Linkages:**

Contemporary psychoanalysis has opened up new vistas for understanding the psyche, the unconscious, and dreams: the emerging paradigm is pluralistic, transcending the polarity of intrapsychic vs. interpersonal, and developing an epistemology that encourages self-reflexivity (Rubin, 1998). However, as Gonzalez (2009) eloquently states there “is a pressing need for contemporary psychoanalysis “ to articulate an “…intersection of the personal and the social…. a place of linkage between the axes of intrapsychic fantasy and social categories…” (p. 57). He argues that psychoanalysis must enlarge its project, moving beyond the dyadic, widening its scope to the social context:

“The psychoanalytic project has been conventionally understood as a conversation behind closed doors, the private contract between suffering patient and soul doctor, but increasingly we are called as analysts to make sense of the broader context in which that conversation takes place…. We can no longer practice in a hermetically sealed chamber and hope to remain relevant” (p. 57).

I agree with this challenge, and propose that two contemporary psychoanalytic concepts, "thirdness" and the "group self", have enormous relevance for and applicability to the conceptualization and practice of a socially-oriented psychoanalysis. “Thirdness” was first introduced by Winnicott (1971), with his formulation of an “intermediate area of experience,” and expanded by Ogden (1994), Britton (2004), Benjamin (2004), and Gerson (2004). The "group self" concept was first formulated by Kohut in an essay entitled "Creativeness, Charisma, Group Psychology: Reflections on the Self-Analysis of
Freud"(1976), asserting that a group's core ambitions and ideals (analogous to their function in the individual psyche) inexorably shape a group's actions. The "group self" and "thirdness" provide a theoretical foundation and scaffolding for the emergent theory and practice of "community psychoanalysis" (Twemlow & Parens, 2006), a theory and practice that seeks to expand psychoanalytic thinking and interventions to venues beyond the confines of the traditional dyadic setup: to larger systems, neighborhoods, communities. I view "social dreaming" as an exploratory method and intervention to be added to the repertoire of "community psychoanalysis."

While Britton (2004) delineates thirdness as a developmental achievement (involving the evolution of Oedipal consciousness of the exclusionary pair), Ogden (1994), Benjamin (2004), and Gerson (2004) emphasize thirdness as emergent intersubjective/relational processes and mental space. However, it is Gerson, carefully distinguishing among three dimensions of thirdness (developmental, relational, and cultural), who with his notion of cultural thirdness (Gerson, 2004, 2009) provides a contemporary psychoanalytic foundation for social dreaming and community psychoanalysis. He defines the cultural third as a form of thirdness that "envelops, intrudes upon, and shapes interactions...as well as the subjectivities..." (p. 70). Gerson provides as examples: the "incest taboo, language, and professional standards" (p. 70). I would (and believe Benjamin and Layton would also) expand the latter to include the "political unconscious" (Samuel, 1993, 2004), the socio-political dimension of human experience (Layton et al, 2006), and the Jungian "cultural complex" (Singer & Kimbles, 2004). The "social dreaming matrix" and the dissociated social dimension of all dreams provide us access to the unconscious organizing principles of the group self.

There are several other conceptual developments in contemporary psychoanalysis that have further relevance for "social dreaming": Self Psychology (Kohut, 1976, 1977, 1984), Intersubjective Systems Theory (IST) (Stolorow, 1997; Stolorow & Atwood, 2002; Livingston, 2009), and Relational Psychoanalysis (Ullman, 2006; Stern, 2009). Psychoanalytic Self Psychology has contributed to the psychoanalytic theory of dreams by proposing "self-state dreams" (although foreshadowed in the work of Fairbairn, from an internal Object Relations theoretical perspective) which provide a snapshot/x-ray of the current status of the individual self: we propose that the social dreaming matrix (SDM) generates "social state dreams," which provide metaphors expressing the authentic, but dissociated, state of the community. Intersubjective Systems Theory (IST) has three principles which can be fruitfully applied to social dreaming: the idea of an intersubjective field emerging from the interaction of multiple subjectivities (analogous to Gerson’s cultural third and Ogden’s and Benjamin’s intersubjective third); the concept of the developmental dimension of transference ("leading edge" or "forward
edge”); and the conflict between accessing dissociated affective experience and maintaining vital object ties. All three show promise in enhancing our understanding of SDM phenomena, particularly the “forward edge” process (also outlined in the work of Fosshage (1989), who maintains dreams have the primary function of maintaining and restoring the organization of the self), which focuses our attention on the intuitive, developmental imagination of the group expressed through social dreams. Livingston (2009) refers to this dimension as the emergence of “embryonic new organizing principles.” The need to maintain vital object ties deepens our understanding of the enthrallement of groups to authority and powerful institutions: recall in this regard, Benjamin’s allusions to the psychoanalytic community’s taboos regarding socio-political and historical forces. Examples of these (the forward edge process in social dreaming and the collectively shared disavowal because of group-wide attachments to authority) will be provided from our SDM experiments/applications. Finally, we would like to provide an argument for the inclusion of “witnessing” (another emerging concept in contemporary psychoanalysis) as an essential form of intervention in psychoanalysis, along with traditional interpretation (Freud), holding (Winnicott), and containment (Bion), as proposed by a number of psychoanalytic writers (Poland, 2000; Ullman, 2006; Stern, 2009). Furthermore, as we believe that “social dreaming” is an emancipatory practice, representing a socially engaged community psychoanalysis, its practice is a form of “moral witnessing” (Margalit, 2002; Ullman, 2006; Boulanger, 2012), urging all dreamers and SDM participants to provide testimony to collectively and collusively dissociated human suffering and inviting psychoanalysts to an “active commitment to social justice and human rights” (Boulanger, 2012). Following Gerson (2009), we will provide in a later section a description of some of the defenses (denial, disavowal, intellectualization, projection, etc.) mobilized against “moral witnessing” during SDMs.

Kohut’s Relevance for Social Dreaming and Community Psychoanalysis:

As Wolf (1988) suggests, Kohut's "group self" configuration has enormous potential to illuminate the psychology of groups and their relationships to leaders as well as the psychology of inter-group relations. According to Wolf (1988), charismatic leaders can help repair and reinspire a group's damaged ambitions (Winston Churchill, for example), and a messianic leader (such as Ghandi) through the restoration of ideals can "instill the needed cohesion into the fragmented group self of his people" (Wolf, 1988, p. 48).
Furthermore, Wolf avers that inter-group dynamics of jockeying for power may generate powerlessness in a group self, fueling narcissistic rage which in turn generates violence. (Our SDM on Whiteness confirms this assertion: the emergent dream images and dialogues provided a startling x-ray of the relationship between Blacks and Whites in America, with many persecutory dream images, some reparative images, an emergent sense of anxiety and search for something lost, and many allusions to "black rage", which is equivalent to "narcissistic rage."). Karterud and Stone (2003), developing Kohut's "group self" concept, propose that a fundamental attribute of the "group self", generating the supra-individual qualities of groups, is that group members share a "collective project" (p. 12). This formulation of a shared, collective project allows us to give intentionality to an emergent group self--an intentionality that is difficulty to attribute to a "cultural third" or an "intersubjective field".

" The project consists of certain ambitions, ideals, and resources embedded in a specific history (similar to the individual self), and the project can be carried out on all levels of sophistication" (Karterud and Stone, 2003, p. 12).

I've proposed (Bermudez, 2013) that the "American Dream" is such a project for Americans, with numerous unconscious functions and motivations, which include defenses against death anxiety and mourning.

The following are some Social Dreaming experiments and planned applications:

- Exploration of American Xenophobia (SDM held in July, 2011, which I summarized in earlier paper: Bermudez & Silverstein, 2013): I will provide some highlights in a later section of this paper;

- Successfully introduced the SDM as an experiential exercise in teaching introduction to psychoanalytic theory;

- Planned to experimentally apply the SDM at the Occupy Movement (Los Angeles), relying on the “forward edge” function to facilitate more conscious formulation, articulation, and actualization of a future strategic agenda. I visited both the New York City and Los Angeles Occupy Movement sites. However, after several collaborative conversations, just as we were going to implement, the Los Angeles site was closed down by the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD).

- Exploration of "Whiteness and the American Group Self" (SDM held at Antioch University in June 2013) and Exploration of the Social Unconscious of Whiteness (SDM held at the Institute of Contemporary Psychoanalysis Los Angeles, April, 2014): The emergent social dreaming narrative from these events provided an opportunity to apply the "group self"
concept and discover the potential of the SDM to provide an approach to collective healing of trauma, a sense of belonging, and thus a communal home for unmourned intergenerational trauma.

I hope to organize future social dreaming matrices at an International Forum for Psychoanalytic Education (IFPE) Conference and at ICP with a focus on articulation of potentially generative future lines of organizational development, in addition to assessing the present “social state” of the organizations and their social-ecological worlds.

A Social Dreaming Matrix: American Xenophobia:

My first formal experiment with the SDM was a daylong workshop held at Antioch University in July 2011. The theme was on American xenophobia, with the goal of interrogating the American communal unconscious with regard to xenophobia. Participants (about 30) included mental health professionals; students in Antioch’s Masters in Clinical Psychology program; journalists; artists; two high school seniors, a substantial sub-group self-identifying as gay or lesbian; a Catholic priest and a nun; and a couple of early childhood educators. The schedule included 3 SDM segments and a final dialogue. My personal experience as facilitator was complex: I was both challenged (puzzled by some participants “resistance”) and awed by the process and the outpouring of unconscious symbolization. For days and weeks afterward I felt emotionally haunted by the evocative dream images and the affect they contained. After several weeks I was able to begin to impose some meaning onto the experience, having received feedback from some participants.

Initially, I was puzzled regarding the participants’ difficulty in following the guidelines provided. This puzzlement was resolved by the realization that this “difficulty” represented what Gerson (2009) has referred to as defenses against moral witnessing and Layton (2006) defines as attacks on social linking—a refusal to connect with the other and his or her suffering and an active defense of de-contextualizing. Examples of these “defenses” abounded: some chose to interpret dream images as representing individual, private concerns of the dreamer; others intellectualized by applying the jargon of academic deconstructionism, emptying images of either personal or social meaning, or affective resonance.
After much reflection, I’ve come to the view that the core issue the Xenophobia SDM grappled with was witnessing and acknowledging collusion with destructiveness or evil (represented by hope-filled encounters with a shaman-like former President George W. Bush in the desert, who offers the wandering dreamer “tea—actually peyote … human contact … warm feeling” that promises to relieve the loneliness and disconnection evoked by the desert imagery) and struggling to find efficacy and goodness (often represented by images of angels, particularly a striking image of an angel with enormous wings which were useless—“stalled”). However, I’ve also come to understand that the participants were struggling to make sense of their feelings about America, a social melancholia (Bermudez, 2013), but, astonishingly, were unable to reflect consciously on the implications of the persistent desert and invasion imagery for the SDM theme of xenophobia and immigrants:

• A dreamer describes an alien invasion in the desert with plans to colonize our planet—it’s a recurrent dream where “there is no safety. I’m caught between a sense of beauty and destruction. Reminds me of ‘Star Wars Missile Defense’ proposed by Reagan.” This is followed by associations and attempts at interpretation: “…reminds me of current state of America…the desert represents our depression. The wings are grounded, stalled. America has what it takes to move through this transition…we can transcend. Lots of movement: trains, ships, wings—sometimes not moving.”

• Two dreams are narrated involving encounters with former President George W. Bush, who seems to initially offer hope to dreamers wandering in the desert, and then turns out to be a shaman-like “trickster.”

• First Bush dream: “I’m wandering in the desert feeling alone. I finally arrive at a hut. George Bush is inside dressed as Carlos Casteneda’s Don Juan. He never speaks, hands me tea—actually peyote. I’m walking to east coast to meet my mother. I asked lots of questions of Bush but he never responds.”

• Second dream: “I have George Bush dreams too…always silent, giving me Kool-Aid to drink.” This is followed by the following association: “Shamans used to dress as your worst nightmare…what in him scares me?…how am I like him?…how sociopathic?...”
Lawrence’s prediction of a fractal-like progression in the dreams of an SDM seems borne out in this sequence: encounters with entities connected to other realities with promise of hope, safety, human contact, but resulting in disappointment. Even the alien invasion is associated with beauty and imagined military defense (“star wars missile defense” system).

A remarkable development occurred during the Dialogue segment of the SDM workshop: as the participants focused on reflection and meaning creation, there was the emergence of an inchoate longing to counter the Tea Party political movement with a progressive counter-movement (recall the foreshadowing of this in the “tea—peyote” image in the first George Bush dream). It seems to me in retrospect that the SDM Dialogue’s inchoate longing foreshadowed in embryonic form the development of the Occupy Wall Street Movement—which emerged two months later! This emergent longing appears to be an example of a “social dreaming forward edge process” that we hypothesized: The SDM process gives birth to innovative future directions (shared projects in Karderud and Stone's view and shared ambitions and ideals in Kohut's and Wolf's perspective) for the dreaming community—the "group self". This assumption, a developmental process active in social dreaming, has guided us in applying SDM to curricular development at Antioch University.

A Social Dreaming Matrix: Whiteness and the American “Group Self”:

In June 2013 I organized a two day Social Dreaming event focused on Whiteness and the American Group Self. I invited members of the academic community of Antioch University Los Angeles (faculty, students, administrators) and members of surrounding community. My hope was that there would be a mix of Black and White participants; however, only a handful of Whites participated—the majority of the 35-40 participants were Black, with a tiny sprinkling of Latinos and Asian-Americans. This lack of White participation on a campus which is predominantly White, with faculty and students who pride themselves on their commitment to social justice, was both startling and completely understandable: the persecutory anxiety in the White “group self” in relationship to issues of race and Whiteness has been amply documented (Altman, 2006).

Despite this disappointing socio-psychoanalytic reality, the emergent process was extraordinarily moving and healing. At some point (second day) the realization crystallized for me that the Whiteness SDM had created a matrix with the emergent properties of a “communal home” for healing a traumatized “group self” – primarily a Black American
“group self” suffering from both inter-generationally transmitted trauma (with many allusions to the “Jim Crow” South) (Gorden, 2011; Volkan, 2003) and more contemporary racial micro-aggressions and assaults directed at Black Americans. The Black “group self” through its “social dreams” initially displayed, what I would call, a reparative ambivalence: dreams of nurturing, healing actions were followed by dreams images and narratives of persecution, terror, loss, and dissociation. Here is a representative sample:

- A Black woman dreams that she is caring for a baby (changing diapers, etc.) which is not hers. She happily chooses to do so.

- This is followed by another Black woman sharing a dream with images of assaultive seven-foot tall White women.

- Then a Black male narrates a dream in which he teaches meditation to a White client who is dying of cancer.

- This is followed by a Black woman (who later reveals that she was raised by a mother who was very active in the Black Power Movement of the Sixties and Seventies and that she has tried all her life to put Black resentment and rage behind her). She describes a dream in which something is hidden, there is something she has to do…but can’t quite find the clarity.

On the second day, apparently feeling safer with the emergence of an intersubjective field which I call a “communal home” (serving a self-object function) for the collective trauma of the Black “group self”), participants began to associate more freely, with fewer dreams shared, and more narratives and memories concerning the search for safety, desires for resolution of “Black Rage”, and integration of lost parts of the self. (Karterud and Stone, 2003, call this emergent self-object function of groups, a “discoursive self-object function”: “We contend that when people feel strengthened after a group session, this is partly due to participating in a kind of discourse, rich in cognitive and affective perspectives and nuances…It is a supraindividual discourse event.;p.12.)

- A Black woman reveals that during the first day of dream sharing she felt nauseous and wanted to run to the bathroom. (This seems to be a psychosomatic metaphor for the unwell, damaged, perhaps poisoned, Black “group self”.)

- A Black male, who says that he is often characterized in group contexts as the “Angry Black Man”, avers that the anger—the “Black Rage” (substitute Kohut’s “narcissistic rage”)—is destructive to Black people. “Black rage is killing young Black men.” He further states that he does not want his
daughter to carry this anger, and is grateful for this “social dreaming” process which has created a safe place.

Two Black women seek to recover, re-integrate dissociated Blackness and also resolve anger:

- Black woman, who had earlier shared dream of searching for something hidden, now reveals that she was raised by an angry mother engaged in the Black Power Movement, and that she wants to put her anger behind her. She reports finding the SDM process thought-provoking, and asks rhetorically, “How do we get over it?”, alluding to the intergenerationally transmitted trauma of racial oppression.

- A young Black woman, who had been adopted by a White family and raised in a White community begins to cry: she has not been feeling Black, she is ignorant of Black history and culture. She does not understand and fears Black anger.

**Implications and Future Directions:**

Encouraged by our experiments with the SDM method, theory, and perspective; I propose several potential avenues for continued explorative application:

- Development of a refinement or variant of “social dreaming”, tentatively called “communal dreaming” which aims for the creation of a "communal home" serving a self-object function for community-level processing and mourning of collective trauma (either man-made or caused by natural disaster).

- SDM workshops at Psychoanalytic Institutes in order to avoid the trap of institutionally blinkered perspectives, integrate the collectively disavowed, and create self-reflective space for emergent, previously unformulated insights regarding the institute’s organizational unconscious (Levinson, 1994).

- Experiential training in the understanding and clinical application of dreams for psychoanalytic candidates. Blechner (2011), using Ullman’s (1996) approach to group dream interpretation as well as occasional application of Lawrence’s (1982; 2003) social dreaming matrix, suggests that in addition to the training benefits, “group dream interpretation” may facilitate resolution of dyadic impasses and enhance the analysis of dreams in individual dream work.
• Continue to apply in academic settings to provide a “social state” reading of the academic community and discover innovative paths for future curricular development, responsive to the emergent needs of all stakeholders (students, faculty, the society it serves, etc.).

Introduction to “Open Space” and “Future Search”:

In her review of large group interventions for surfacing and acting on unconscious dynamics in organizations (organizational role analysis, social dreaming, and social dream-drawing; although she suggests that there are at least seven methods currently available), Mersky (2012) concludes that she values these methods “when implemented and used thoughtfully—as helping organizations increase their capacity to think about the difficult realities they are facing, rather than suppressing them or allowing them to be acted out in parts of the system—and to take actions and make decisions based on these insights.” (p. 35)

Further on, Mersky adds that through these methods “the unthought known arises, through the associations and amplifications…it reflects…the collective anxieties of the group and the problems underlying these anxieties. In addition, the unconscious is also a deep source of other affects of group life—creativity, hope, desire, and love—which can then have their own voice in the system… thus, accessing the unconscious aspects leads to a better ability to think in a realistic way, to contain this frustration and later to act.” (p. 37)

The methods Mersky summarizes share three characteristics that she feels are essential for success:

• They promote the emergence of the collective “unthought known,” either through direct dream sharing or associations and amplifications;

• They include two activities Bion postulated were essential for productive thinking and action: 1. Generation of thoughts, associations, feelings, etc. and 2. A process for productively coping with the emergent “unthought known.” (A capacity for reflection and mentalizing.)

• They focus the intervention via a theme; however, Mersky cautions that although a theme is critical for a sense of direction and as a stimulus for unconscious thinking, it must not promote a position, or discourage creativity or encourage splits in the group.
Mersky indicates that social dreaming when it includes time for reflection meets these three criteria. I’d like to propose that two other large group interventions “(Open Space Technology” and “Future Search”), although birthed outside of psychoanalytic circles, share these essential characteristics, and are thus powerful methods for accessing unconscious, collective, unthought known dynamics and providing a process for conscious formulation and productive action. In addition to meeting Mercy’s criteria, Open Space and Future Search, align exquisitely well with Twemlow’s focus on a psychoanalysis of the community and the enhancement of “social intelligence” (or “systems intelligence”): both approaches focus on whole systems and provide both explicit and implicit learning about “systems psychodynamics,” thus enhancing social or systems intelligence. Moreover, the two models are designed with open systems ideas and complexity theory in mind and, I argue, are inevitable extensions of psychoanalytic complexity theory (Coburn 2014).

Coburn (2014) avers that for a system to know itself (because of the complexity principle of irreducibility/incompressibility) the whole system to survive, adapt, and thrive it must be an open system that is able to exchange resources and information with its ecology (which includes other systems, sometimes larger systems); and a corollary to the second principle above, systems don’t change in isolation, but change in relationship to other systems. Both Open Space and Future Search adhere to these principles, requiring “the whole system in the room (all sections of the system must be represented in the room for Future Search, while Open Space concretely includes the entire system, which space being the only constraint although cyberspace may resolve that; striving to include essential parts of the ecology of the target large system (FS requires potential ecological partners to fully participate as an essential initial condition for success); and promoting interaction and co-evolution among sub-systems and large systems. One final point: there must be optimal chaos/complexity to produce creative self-organization—only far from equilibrium complexity generates self-organization which is innovative. All three methods advocated for in this paper generate that essential complexity:

- **Communal/Social Dreaming** taps into the complex non-linearity of the unconscious, casting a wide net of connections and emergent metaphors (Lawrence, 1982; 2003; Hartman, 1998);

- **Open Space** inhibits pre-planned agendas for discussion, and instead liberates the group’s free associations, forcing the system to surface all unformulated and implicit concerns, ideas, aspirations, and to self-organize into reflective/thinking spaces which will generate thoughtful recommendations and action plans;

- **Future Search (FS)** generates optimal complexity by facilitating an open system to differentiate and integrate sub-systems; using Bion’s ideas
(emergent thoughts must be discovered and then coped with productively through reflection and mentalization). FS orchestrates movement through 5 stages (Collective Discovery of Past, Discovery of Present, Discovery of Future, Discovery of Common Ground, and Discovery of Action), with alternating microphases which facilitate free associations, sub-system reflection, and whole system reflection.

“…complexity theory has been employed primarily for the purposes of trying to explain and account for the underlying fluidity, dynamism, and unpredictability of human systems, of trying to understand how things really work. It has been essentially a descriptive tool, a device for retrospective explanation…but a vital question follows: In what way might this sensibility shape our understanding of our patients prospectively, inform what we might do in the present and the future for our patients?” (Coburn, 2014, p. xvi).

While I agree with Coburn wholeheartedly that we must apply complexity theory prospectively, I also believe that our psychoanalytic complexity focus and sensibility must be expanded and applied productively to human systems larger than the analytic dyad. It has enormous potential for community psychoanalysis.

Descriptions of Open Space and Future Search Processes:

The notion of “open space” is familiar to psychoanalysts with formulations of psychoanalytic space such as Ogden’s “analytic third” (shared reverie and dreaming); Winnicott’s “transitional space” (mother and child and analyst and analysand both create and discover reality); and Bion’s “analytic space” (capacity to generate ideas and expand the sense of self). In addition, Stern and the Boston Change Group (Stern et al, 1998; Stern, 2004) have developed the idea of an “open space” in which new interpersonal representations and schemas are birthed after implicit relational learning in a “moment of meeting”. Lichtenberg et al (2011) summarize this view of change:

“…how do repetitive pathological expectations become reorganized? The Stern group’s view is that implicit relational procedures that unconsciously governed enactive forms of ‘being with a person’ become destabilized. An open space allows for ‘creative disorder and internal flux’ during which the deconstructed enactive representations can be co-constructed into more adaptive but equally complex new ways of being.” (p.117).
One psychoanalyst has described it as “open space for thinking and knowing and discovering, symbolic reverie and organic, feeling based, and reflective space…” (Wiebe, 2008). Wiebe (2008) summarizes: “…these are all metaphors for in-between areas that are conceptualized as the spaciousness, space, or psychic space that is required of thought, feeling, imagination, and rapport for both psychoanalyst and analysand.” (p.74). I will suggest that a similar concept concerning open space for creative disorder and reflection can be and should be used for a psychoanalytic theory of change in large groups.

Open Space as an intervention for large group and systems (or Open Space Technology; I prefer Open Space Dialogues) was developed by an anthropologist, Harrison Owen (Owen, 1997) who had become disappointed with the traditional ways of organizing conferences and workshops: a series of presenters and breakout groups, followed by tentative recommendations. In the Open Space format all participants (the entire organizational system is invited to participate and no one is turned away) begin in a circle without an agenda. The facilitator provides a few guidelines, invites everyone and anyone present to propose a topic they care about for discussion (no topic is denied), and then the topic proposer invites others to join in that discussion. The proposer/convener, who does not have to be an expert or provide a presentation, can designate anytime and anywhere to meet during the conference, and participants can sign up for as many group discussions as they have an interest in. (However, no one is required to attend any discussion group, there are no time constraints on any emergent discussion, but you are required to exit a group discussion you find you are not contributing to or learning from.) The convener has only one responsibility: produce a short written report of the discussion. These reports are then distributed to all participants, and then the issues raised are ranked by the participants, so that the whole system can focus and develop concrete next steps on the salient, “hot issues” which require heightened attention. This simple technique has proved enormously successful (cross-culturally, with groups as small as five and as large as five hundred): it facilitates a radically democratic, non-linear “free associations” and “group associations” process which encourages the emergence of unconsciously censored and unformulated issues (“unthought known”) to be articulated and solutions formulated through self-organizing collaboration.

Future Search (FS) developed by Marvin Weisbord (1995), promotes an organization’s or community’s ability to resolve the struggle between old patterns and new paths, helping the participants tolerate uncertainty, empowering participants to co-create the new path by formulating/discovering common ground, thus moving the group into a new future. The process does not allow conflict and “unresolved differences” (Weisbord, 1995), whether enacted or symbolized, to maintain stuckness or generate
regression. The model attempts to gather in one space a representative sample of the entire system and essential partners from its ecology (an open “whole system in the room” principle). The stakeholders/participants represent all sectors of the organization or community and include potential partners from the surrounding ecology of the organization or community, thereby encouraging the inflow of new information and resources, potentially generating novel perspectives, ideas, projects, with the intentional of facilitating optimal complexity. moves the participants through five stages, which in many ways mimic the psychoanalytic method of revisiting the past to see how organizing principles provide a sense of identity and shape present and future choices, but also respects the power of of the present context and the imagined future. Participants begin in small homogenous groups of sub-system stakeholders (all the current members of the Board, for example; or all supervisors, for example), but as the process develops organize into mixed groups—thus generating a process of differentiation and integration, bringing together disparate sectors of the network to interact in complex ways. The schedule (sixteen hours of sustained work over three days) requires two nights of sleep so that the unconscious through dreaming can emotionally work over, synthesize, and generate new solutions and commitments. This process relies on the well-known “Zeigarnik Effect”, which compels the mind-body-self to continue to work on unfinished tasks and projects.

The Five phases are:

- Discovery of the Past (participants provide memories of who they were 10, 20, 30 years ago at multiple levels: individual, organizational, and global contexts): this provides a common framework/narrative for understanding the organizing principles of the entire system;

- Discovery of the Present (participants free associate and develop a collective “mind map” of the contemporary “external world”—events and trends; and then assess how they are coping with that world);

- Discovery of the Future (participants in small mixed groups imagine a future together and “enact” for the whole system, using iconic (implicit and procedural), enactive (implicit and procedural), and symbolic/narrative means of representation);

- Discovery of Common Ground (the whole system dialogues and collaboratively discovers the “common ground” that has emerged from the group’s unformulated unconscious);

- Discovery of Future Action (participants self-organize into small groups who then develop concrete action steps derived from the “common ground” and publicly declare their commitment to implementation).
Community Psychoanalysis will benefit enormously from the inclusion of these methods in its emergent repertoire. In addition, all psychoanalysts and communities would enhance their “systems intelligence” through participation and learning about these developments in psychoanalysis.

Conclusion:

In this paper, I have provided a brief sketch concerning the origins of socio-psychoanalysis and summarized the theory and principles undergirding a related contemporary approach, Community Psychoanalysis (distinguishing among Therapeutic Modes I, II, and III). In addition, I provided a brief critique concerning the traditional concept of “applied psychoanalysis”, arguing that it is, in part, a remnant of Freud’s emphasis on instincts and an individualistic psychology. Finally, I introduced and described three emergent interventions for a psychoanalysis of the community—interventions for large groups building on contemporary psychoanalytic concepts (relational/social unconscious; group self; intersubjectivity and intersubjective systems theory; psychoanalytic complexity theory; and systems intelligence).
References


