

A Group Relations Event at the Nexus of the New Now
The AKRI Annual Conference in partnership with GRI



AUTHORITY
LEADERSHIP
IDENTITY &
VIRTUALITY
EXPERIENCE



Beyond the
SINGLE STORY

Embrace the
**AUTHORITY
TO LEAD**

A “**New Now**” Dawns... Together

JULY 7-11, 2021

via Zoom

akri the a.k. rice institute
for the study of social systems®

 **GROUP
RELATIONS
INTERNATIONAL**
Creating a better world - together

In this pandemic year, so many of us have struggled with the social chaos and irrationality emerging around race and identity. Is America a country with one political story, or is our increasing diversity developing multiple narratives around shared values? Who will tell the stories, who will listen, what will be the nature of emerging leadership and authority? This conference is a space to explore these questions.

The post-pandemic period will be filled with volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. While we appear to be entering a “new now,” the contours are not yet known. Yet, its shape will inevitably be filled with political challenges, racial strife, economic disparity, and global tensions. ALIVE offers a space to explore this emerging context beyond the chatter of sound bites, social media posts, and echo chambers.

Group Relations Tradition

The **Authority, Leadership, Identity, and Virtuality Experience (ALIVE)** is the A.K. Rice Institute Annual Conference and is jointly sponsored by Group Relations International.

This Zoom-based learning opportunity will seek to approximate some of the rich elements of the group relations tradition in a primarily virtual context. As such, our focus will be on the exercise of authority, the emergence of leadership, and the unconscious dynamics inherent in the study of groups and social systems. Direct attention will also be given to how social identity accompanies and influences the study of authority and leadership as well as the impact of the virtual context on learning.

“Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world's grief. Do justly now, love mercy now, walk humbly now. You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it.”

Let us become **ALIVE**
to this new now and learn... together.

Hybrid Option

While there is an ambition for there to be hybrid elements of this experience where the potential for face-to-face interaction may be explored, the event-as-a-whole is planned for full virtual access and participation.

Vaccine administration numbers, local infection rates, public health and safety protocols, personal discretion, and space access for gatherings are but a few of the considerations that determine what, if any, elements of ALIVE will be live and in-person.

Primary Task

The primary task of this experiential event is to study conscious and unconscious dynamics arising in the exercise of authority and emergence of leadership as related to the diverse expressions of identity in a shared virtual space. We will study the unconscious dynamics as they emerge in the “here-and-now” through the roles we find, make and take up in a temporary institution of a social ecosystem.

Purpose

The purpose of this experiential event is to create opportunities for all participants, members and staff, to gain a better understanding of factors that influence our choices and behaviors in groups — especially related to the hybrid reality and uncertainty of a post-pandemic “new now.” While our focal purpose is on creating learning opportunities, the potential for experiences that increase our readiness and capacity for personal, organizational, and societal transformation may also be the subject of study.

Events

ALIVE is designed to be experienced as a whole, in its entirety. What follows are brief descriptions of the component events that make up this whole:

Small Study Groups

Each participant is to be in a Small Study Group consisting of about 8-10 participants and 1-2 consultants. The task of the Small Study Group is to explore the emergence of leadership and exercise authority as it unfolds in the here-and-now as related to expressions of identity. The Small Study Group is a setting that allows face-to-face (virtual) interchange.

Large Study Group

The Large Study Group is composed of all conference participants and 2-4 staff consultants. The task of the Large Study Group is the same as that of the Small Study Group in a setting that makes (virtual) face-to-face interaction difficult due to the challenges often to see all participants on a single screen and through varying views. As such, it highlights dynamics that may occur in communities and large organizations or gatherings, where personal interactions are limited and virtuality is increasingly commonplace.

Review and Application Groups / NOW

Nexus of Ongoing Work

Participants are assigned to a group of 5-6 people and a consultant. The RAG provides members with the opportunity to review their experiences and the roles they have taken in the event as a whole. Particular attention is given to what and how individual members are learning. Participants will also have an opportunity to explore the application of learning from their experiences, first to other parts of the overall event. Later in the experience, attention shifts to examine parallels between roles taken up in ALIVE and those played out in groups, communities, and organizations in everyday life.

Conference Reflection Discussion

In this reflection event, participants and staff have an opportunity to collaborate in reviewing and analyzing their learning in the ALIVE experience as a whole. Members and staff may have taken up several roles and encountered various ways of relating to one another in the course of the experience. The Reflection Discussion centers on the opportunity to recognize and discuss feelings, attitudes, and behaviors that have emerged and to perhaps discover patterns of meaning and potential action. An invitation to consider collectively the deeper levels of significance with implications and application to our outside communities and organizations may be explored.

VIBE

This event has the task of studying and giving meaning to the experience as an emerging institution. These sessions will be primarily virtual but will be one portion of the overall experience where face-to-face options can be explored; synchronously and asynchronously within a broad time boundary.

In the VIBE, participants form their groups. The focus of this event is for groups to study issues of (virtual) formation, membership, and representation. Particular attention will be given to the “in-between” of boundary interactions, of virtual and face-to-face efforts at connection, and of exchanges with other groups and the staff group.

The groups of the participant members and staff as the management group of the event will be charged with examining the emerging institution as a system and work to give meaning to the conscious and unconscious “vibe” of unfolding shared learning. Relatedness of what emerges in the VIBE to the overall ALIVE experiences and in-between larger societal contextual trends of the given moment may be explored. The staff management group works in public and provides consultation to the participant member groups upon request.

This online encounter over one hour explores our perceptions and projections. These sessions invite reflection on how we see ourselves, how we see each other, and how we see the group as a whole. Beginning with silent self-reflection then moving to pairs, then larger clusters that are “randomly” generated by Zoom, participant members gain an opportunity in HERE to hear how they are showing up and what they may represent in ALIVE.

The event continues through the use of an online tool such as Jamboard, participant members will have a digital platform that serves as a repository for ongoing themes, images, insights. There will be dedicated moments when NOW contributions will be invited but the portal to the platform will remain open asynchronously until the closing time boundary each day, except the final day when the HERE will end with the beginning of the Conference Reflection Discussion. What appears in HERE may be explored at any point in ALIVE to enhance learning.

HERE

Hybrid **E**merging
Reflection **E**vent

Opportunities for Learning

In this experience, the members and staff will have opportunities to:

- Study the dynamics of authority, leadership, and organizational life in relationship to diverse expressions of identity in a virtual context.
- Learn about both covert and overt group processes through participating in groups that vary in size, structure, and task.
- Identify underlying patterns of group interaction by forming groups, establishing leadership structures, and relating with other groups and the institution as a whole.

- Explore how we collectively and individually take up roles, negotiate authority, accomplish tasks, manage boundaries, and reflect on learning in “real-time”.
- Examine the fluidity of roles, identities, tasks, and boundaries in response to an emergent context.
- Understand the difference between the stated task of a group and the varied unconscious ways of becoming off task.
- Learn how varied aspects and perceptions of individual identity such as race, class, gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and education level are used by groups with and without the conscious awareness of the individuals involved.
- Discover aspects of group life that create vitality and goal fulfillment and those which lead to resistance, complacency, inertia, and decline.
- Work with competition, collaboration, conflict, coalition-building, envy, delegation, and love.
- Understand the relatedness of self and system, and the relatedness of part and whole.
- Experiment with familiar and unfamiliar roles and with various social behaviors including isolation, autonomy, affiliation, collaboration, and coalition building.
- Deepen awareness of one’s capacity and responsibility to lead or advocate in home organizations and social contexts.
- Apply what has been learned and experienced to choices in community, organizational and social contexts

Staff

Staff manage the experience as a whole and take up consulting roles during its various parts. As managers, staff manage the boundary conditions of the experience, particularly about time, task, and territory. As consultants, staff offer interpretations, observations, working hypotheses and reflections that explore the conscious and unconscious aspects of organizational life in the system as it emerges. The focus of the study is primarily on group-level dynamics rather than on the individual, except where an individual may represent a dynamic for the whole.

The staff does not manage the participant members or their behavior. Instead, members are free to engage in the primary task and purpose as they choose and as they authorize themselves and each other to do.

The staff may include others not listed here.



Zachary Green, Ph.D.
Conference Director

Dr. Zachary Green, is a professor of Practice, Leadership Studies and Director of Leadership Development, Nonprofit Institute at the University of San Diego; Co-founder, IMAGO Global Grassroots; Founding Lead Faculty, RISE San Diego Urban Leadership Fellows Program; Associate, Washington-Baltimore Center; Fellow, AK Rice Institute; Founding Circle and Board, Group Relations International.

Dr. Sarah Brazaitis is an Associate Professor of Practice and Program Director, Social-Organizational Psychology MA Program at Teachers College, Columbia University; Faculty Director, Principles and Practices of Organization Development (PPOD), Executive Education in Change and Consultation, Teachers College, Columbia University; Consulting Psychologist in Independent Practice; Associate, The New York Center for the Study of Social Systems, Fellow, A.K. Rice Institute.



Sarah Brazaitis, Ph.D.
Associate Director

Stacey Williams, MA - Associate Director, The Commons, University of San Diego (USD); Instructor, Department of Leadership, USD; Co-Creator, Group Relations International; Consultant Candidate, A.K. Rice Institute for the Study of Social Systems; Board Member, GREX.



**Stacey Williams, MA
Administrator**



**Nyacko Pearl Perry, MS
Associate Administrator**

Nyacko Pearl Perry has an MS in Organization Development with Distinction from the American University; Founder and Lead Consultant, Yin Consulting; Managing Partner, All In Consulting; Organization Development Partner, Comfort Kitchen; Advisory Board Member, ABCD (Dorchester/Roxbury Site); 500-hour Professional Level Yoga Teacher; Afro Flow Yoga® Certified Instructor. Member, Group Relations International.

CONSULTANTS

Heidi Brooks, Ph.D.

Dr. Heidi Brooks is the founder of Everyday Leadership Group; Senior Lecturer in Organizational Behavior, Yale School of Management; Co-Creator, Group Relations International.



Omowale Elson, Ph.D.

Dr. Omowale Elson is the Vice President of Elson Consulting Group; Group Relations International, Co-Creator; Baltimore Ethical Society, Board Member; AKRI, former Board Member; Washington-Baltimore Center for the Study of Group Relations, former President; and Montgomery College, Adjunct Professor, Communication; University of Maryland Global Campus, Adjunct Professor, Management & Leadership.



Suma Jacob, MD, Ph.D.

Dr. Suma Jacob is a Professor of Psychiatry, Behavioral Sciences, and Pediatrics, Co-Director of CANeurodevelopment Lab, Associate Director of the Medical Scientist Training Program at the University of Minnesota (UMN); Adjunct faculty at Mayo Clinic; Co-Creator, Group Relations International; Associate, AK Rice Institute.



Jaime Romo, Ph.D.

Dr. Jaime Romo is currently a spiritual counselor at Kaiser Permanente and a bilingual trauma incident reduction (TIR) facilitator in private practice in San Diego. His role is to help people see and solve individual and systemic problems and become transformational leaders and followers. Dr. Romo recently directed the conference, Activism as a Spiritual Practice: A Latinx Led Leadership Event, April 16-18, 2021. Member, Grex and Certified Consultant, AK Rice Institute for the Study of Social Systems.

Salina Villegas, MA, MEd

Salina Villegas, MA (University of San Diego), MEd (Harvard Graduate School of Education) is the Director of Leadership Programs, RISE San Diego; Faculty, RISE San Diego Urban Leadership Fellows Program; Fellow, Lideramos Latinx Leadership Program; Fellow, RISE Urban Leadership Fellows Program; Member, Group Relations International.



Robert Whitehouse, MA

Robert Whitehouse is the Vice President of People & Talent, MiQ Digital, New York, New York; Member, NY Center for the Study of Groups and Organizational Systems; Member, AK Rice Institute; Consultant In Training, AK Rice Institute.

Special Notes

Who's the event for?

Anyone wanting an opportunity to learn through immediate and direct experience about group dynamics and influence and about overt and covert actions involved in the exercise of authority and leadership, particularly as related to diverse expressions of identity. No particular background or experience is necessary to participate. People from a wide variety of fields, organizations, educational backgrounds, and vocations have gained valuable learning in Group Relations experiences.

Attendance Policy

Accepted participant members should plan to attend and participate in all components of the experience, as it is designed to be an integrated whole, with each component building on the previous.

Withdrawal Policy

Fees can only be refunded (less \$100 administration charge) if a written notice of cancellation (via email) is received by 6 PM PST on June 1st, 2021.

Confidentiality

Staff will not report the behavior of any individual member to anyone outside the experience.

Stress

The conference is an educational endeavor and does not provide psychotherapy or counseling. Although the experiential learning available can be stimulating and enriching, it can also be emotionally stressful and confrontational. Thus, applicants who are ill, experiencing significant personal difficulties or are easily triggered by views different from their own should forgo participating at this time.

Fees

EARLY BIRD (before 6/14/21)

- * \$495
- * \$395 (group of 3 or more)
- * \$295 (full time students / community advocates)

REGULAR FEE (deadline 7/1/21)

- * \$595
- * \$495 (group of 3 or more)
- * \$345 (full time students / community advocates)

ALIVE Conference Hours

Eastern Time (USA)

Date: July 7-11, 2021
Wednesday - Sunday

Wednesday - July 7

1:00 pm - 6:30 pm

Thursday - July 8

11:00 am - 6:30 pm

Friday - July 9

11:00 am - 6:30 pm

Saturday - July 10

11:00 am - 6:30 pm

Sunday - July 11

11:00 am - 6:30 pm

Apply online
www.alive2021.org

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