

***CULTURAL DIVERSITY, GROUPS AND PSYCHOTHERAPY
AROUND THE WORLD, UR. MARCIA HONIG I CRISTINA
MARTINEZ TABOADA (ILLINOIS: INTERNATIONAL
ASSOCIATION FOR GROUP PSYCHOTHERAPY AND GROUP
PROCESSES, 2022)***

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Una Bauer

Prema zadnjem popisu stanovništva, u Hrvatskoj živi 91,63 posto Hrvata te 78,97 posto katolika. Hrvatska je i dalje u ogromnom postotku mononacionalna i monovjerska država, a povijest života u multinacionalnoj, multikulturalnoj i multivjerskoj Jugoslaviji kulminirala je krvavim sukobom koji još uvijek pomalo tinja. Dominantan je doživljaj da je takva multikulturalnost bila neprirodno nametnuta i izaziva uglavnom negativne asocijacije. U takvoj situaciji, nije neobično da su u hrvatskom kontekstu teme transkulturalnosti pomalo izvan fokusa i/ili uzrokuju dodatnu nelagodu i strah, a osoba koja nije bijelac i njena „egzotičnost“ izaziva znatiželjne, ponekad i hostile poglede na ulici. S druge

According to the latest census, 91.63% of population in Croatia are Croatians, and 78.97% are Catholics. Croatia thus remains to a huge degree a mononational and monoreligious country. The history of life in the multinational, multicultural, and multi-religious Yugoslavia culminated in a bloody conflict, which is still simmering. The dominant experience seems to be that such Yugoslav multiculturalism was imposed and is provoking mostly negative associations. Having that in mind, it is not surprising that transculturality isn't a particularly popular subject in Croatian context, often causing discomfort and fear. A person of colour and its "exoticism" provokes surprised, sometimes even hostile glances in the street. Transculturalism is, on the other hand, the reality in which even Croatia,



strane, transkulturalnost jest realnost u kojoj živimo - broj radnika iz drugih kultura i nacija, s drugih kontinenata, sve je veći, osobito u ugostiteljstvu i građevini. Hrvatskoj se otvaraju nove prilike za suočavanje sa dubokim strahovima i traumama u kontaktu s onim što se percipira kao Drugo i Drugačije. U tom smislu smatram da je digitalna publikacija *Cultural Diversity, Groups and Psychotherapy around the World* u izdanju Međunarodnog udruženja za grupnu psihoterapiju i grupne procese / International Association for Group Psychotherapy and Group Processes (IAGP), koja je ujedno i prva takva transkulturalna publikacija, posebno vrijedna za naš lokalni kontekst, i obrnuto - u njoj je objavljen tekst Ivana Urlića, „The Experiences of Group Analyst in the Multicultural and Transcultural Aspects of Group Psychotherapy“. U njemu je ujedno, za kraj, formulirano i ključno pitanje: kako u susretu velikih kulturnih različitosti povući granicu između „normalnog“ ponašanja i onog koje odstupa od norme? Publikaciju su uredile Marcia Honig i Cristina Martinez-Taboada Kutz, bivša i sadašnja voditeljica Transkulturalne sekcije IAGP. Podijeljena je u tri glavna dijela. Prvi, znatno kraći, funkcionira kao serija uvodnika, nižući promišljanja urednika publikacije, sadašnjeg i prošlih predsjednika IAGP-a na njihov položaj i dinamike unutar njihovih Upravnih

monocultural as it is, already lives or is about to: the number of workers coming from other cultures and nations as well as different continents is growing, especially in food services and construction (not to mention refugees and asylum seekers). Croatia needs to open itself up towards new opportunities to face its deep fears and traumas in contact with what is perceived as the Other. In this regard, I consider the digital publication *Cultural Diversity, Groups and Psychotherapy around the World* published by International Association for Group Psychotherapy and Group Processes (IAGP), which is also the first such transcultural publication, particularly valuable for our local context, and vice versa - it also holds Ivan Urlić's contribution *The Experiences of Group Analyst in the Multicultural and Transcultural Aspects of Psychotherapy*. Urlić's article emphasizes a key question: how does one draw the line between "normal" conduct and the one that departs from the norms when it comes to an encounter between significantly different cultures? Publication was edited by Marcia Honig and Cristina Martinez-Taboada Kutz, former and current head of the Transcultural section of IAGP. It is divided into three main sections. The first, significantly shorter, works as a series of editorials, lining up the reflections of its editors, current and former presidents of the IAGP on their position and dynamics within their Boards. It is particularly interesting to read those reflections which attempted to be honest and critical in relation to

odбора. Zanimljivo je čitati osobito one osvrtne koji se trude biti iskreni i kritični u odnosu na grupne dinamike, probleme i poteškoće s kojima su se suočavali predsjednici, na vlastitoj koži doživljavajući ono što uobičajeno gledaju u svom terapijskom radu. Christer Sandahl, primjerice, adresira pitanje moći vezano uz uporabu engleskog i kolonijalno naslijeđe, probleme birokratizacije i otvoreno progovara o svojoj naivnosti u razmišljanju da će poboljšanje i uspostava određenih procedura i pozornost posvećena raznim detaljima funkcioniranja IAGP jednom za svagda riješiti problem. No ubrzo je došlo do nove krize koja je opet rezultirala radikalnom promjenom procedura. Frances Bond White piše o univerzalnim pitanjima zavisti, moći i roda na IAGP Upravnom odboru sastavljenom od stručnjaka različitih teorijskih orijentacija, opisuje zanimljivu konkretnu situaciju, te eksplicira da se u Upravnom odboru radi o ljudima koji su navikli biti vođe, što je ponekad u sukobu s njihovom ulogom kao dio *teama*.

Druga grupa tekstova organizirana je oko interpersonalnog dijaloga u grupi, a treća se sastoji od tekstova organiziranih oko intergrupnog dijaloga. U drugoj grupi prikazani su slučajevi grupe imigrantica tinejdžerki u Izraelu; sirijskih imigrantica u Turskoj; marginalnih grupa u Indiji s velikim proble-

group dynamics, problems and difficulties faced by Presidents and their Boards, who experienced first-hand what they normally handle as therapists in their professional practice. Christer Sandahl, for example, addressed the issue of power related to the use of English as a dominant language together with its colonial heritage, the problems of bureaucratisation, and spoke openly about his naivety in thinking that the improvement and establishment of certain procedures, the attention dedicated to the various details of the functioning of the IAGP will once and for all solve most of its issues, while what happened was that a new crisis soon arrived and resulted in yet another radical change in procedures. Frances Bond White writes about universal issues of envy, power, and gender within IAGP Management Board consisting of experts from various theoretical schools, describing an interesting specific situation, and speculates that the Management Board consists of people who are used to being leaders, which is sometimes in conflict with their role as members of a team. The second section is organised around the interpersonal dialogue in the group, and the third is composed of texts dealing with intergroup dialogue. The second section presents cases of migrant women in Israel; Syrian immigrants in Turkey; marginal groups in India dealing with major issues of caste system; post-Soviet heritage with its mixture of ethnic differences in Armenians, Germans, Jews, Koreans, Poles, Tatars...; online transcultural intervention groups; Danish supervision of



mima kasta; slučaj supervizije grupnih terapeuta u Gvatemali nekoliko godina nakon završetka rata; post-sovjetskog nasljeđa s mješavinom etničkih razlika Armenaca, Nijemaca, Židova, Korejaca, Poljaka, Tatara...; online transkulturalne intervizijske grupe; danske supervizije čeških kolega u post-komunističkom društvu i danske supervizije kineskih kolega; latinoameričkih (Bolivija, Kolumbija, Peru, Venezuela) imigrantica u Brazilu. Treća grupa tekstova bavi se sub-saharskim ženama (Cape Verde, Ekvatorska Gvineja i Mozambik) i matrilinarnim latinskim nasljeđem odsutnih očeva; prilagodbom grupne terapije azijskim kulturama (Indonezija, Kina, Japan); prikazom terapeutskog spiralnog modela u edukativnim grupama u Indiji; portugalskim imigrantima u Švicarskoj ozljeđenima na radu; neuropsihološkim pristupom traumi migracije i psihoterapeutskom procesu; radom sa grupom Židova i Palestinaca koju vode dvije voditeljice - Židovka i Palestinka s naglaskom na temi roda u kombinaciji male i velike grupe; upotrebom matriksa društvenih snova (*social dreaming matrix - SDM*) kod rada s migranatima u Italiji; kulturne razlike u grupnom radu u Egiptu; grupni rad u Estoniji, Vojvodini, Litvi... Čini mi se da je publikacija osobito uspješna tamo gdje autori vrlo konkretno i detaljno prikazuju direktan utjecaj određenih kulturološki uvjeta-

Czech colleagues in post-communist society and Danish supervisions of Chinese colleagues; Latin American (Bolivia, Colombia, Peru) immigrants in Brazil. The third group of texts deals with sub-Saharan women (Cape Verde, Equatorial Guinea and Mozambique) and the matrilineal Latin heritage of absent fathers; the adaptation of group therapy to Asian cultures (Indonesia, China, Japan); the study of the therapeutic spiral model in educational groups in India; Portuguese immigrants in Switzerland who experienced work related injury; neuropsychological approach to the trauma of migration and psychotherapeutic process; work with a group of Jews and Palestinians (co-therapists: a Palestinian and a Jewish therapist) with a focus on the topic of gender; use of social dreaming matrix - SDM in therapy with migrant women in Italy; cultural differences in group work in Egypt; group work in Estonia, Vojvodina, Lithuania...

It seems to me that the publication is particularly successful where its authors are engaged with a very specific and detailed presentation of the direct influence of certain cultural patterns of feeling and behaviour (for instance the pain and social exclusion of parents of gay people in India who cannot participate in the elaborate system of mutual invitations to marriage ceremony and gift sharing, which results in them self-isolating) and where cultural differences are directly related to the ways in which a group or a specific therapeutic technique works

vanih obrazaca osjećanja i ponašanja (primjerice bol i socijalnu isključenost roditelja gej osoba u Indiji koji ne mogu sudjelovati u elaboriranom sustavu međusobnih poziva na vjenčanje i dijeljenja darova, pa se samoizoliraju i prestaju sudjelovati u tom važnom rituelu zajednice) i tamo gdje su kulturne razlike direktno dovedene u vezu sa načinom na koji grupa ili određena terapijska tehnika funkcionira (nesklonost dijela azijskih kultura eksplicitnijem izražavanju emocija, izbjegavanje konflikta, odnos prema brizi za sebe koja se u nekim kulturama smatra „sebičnijim“ konceptom nego u drugima, jasnija privrženost hijerarhijskom redu i držanju voditelja u „povlaštenom“ položaju u suprotnosti sa egalitarnijim promišljanjem grupnih procesa; nužnost dva stolca umjesto jednog kako bi se roditelj mogao istodobno pohvaliti i pokuditi, jer je inače osjećaj krivnje prejak; jak utjecaj kasta na grupnu dinamiku grupa u Indiji što utječe na to tko „smije“ govoriti na grupi; različito značenje „tišine“ u različitim kulturnim kontekstima).

Kroz cijelu publikaciju provlači se uglavnom ne-tematizirani aksiom da je psihoterapija nastala na Zapadu, i u samim svojim temeljima počiva na određenim kulturnim pretpostavkama - do određene ju je mjere nemoguće u potpunosti „neutralizirati“ od njenog primarnog kulturnog konteksta, što

(the reluctance of a part of Asian cultures towards a more explicit expression of emotions; avoidance of conflict; the understanding of self-care which is in some cultures perceived as a more selfish concept than in others; a clear preference towards a hierarchy and privileged position of the conductor unlike an egalitarian approach towards group processes; the need for two chairs rather than one so that the parent can be simultaneously praised and criticised in order to be able to bear the feeling of guilt; a strong influence on group dynamics of caste system in India, which heavily influences who is allowed to speak in the group, different meaning of silence in different cultural contexts and alike).

The unspoken and mostly un-thematized axiom of the entire publication is that psychotherapy was born in the West, and that it is based on certain cultural assumptions. It seems impossible to fully “neutralise” it from its primary cultural context, which, of course, does not mean that the work in that direction is futile. The only text which explicitly addresses this issue is Haim Weinberg's which invokes Said and his *Orientalism* and refers back to a colonial assumption that the West is passing the light of knowledge to the East. A lot of work is necessary, even after poststructuralism, to really open up towards the question of whether “our” truth is universal truth.

Some texts would have been more comprehensible had they included a more detailed cultural introductions in their



naravno ne znači da se na tome ne bi trebalo raditi. Jedini tekst koji to eksplicitno adresira je onaj Haima Weinberga koji priziva Saida i njegov *Orientalizam* i osvrće se na kolonijalnu pretpostavku da Zapad pronosi svjetlo znanja Istoku. Puno je rada potrebno, i nakon poststrukturalizma, da bi se uistinu otvorilo prema pitanju je li „naša“ istina univerzalna istina.

Neki bi tekstovi bili razumljiviji sa detaljnijim kulturološkim uvodima u vlastitu izabranu problematiku, osobito ako se bave grupacijama koje su slabije internacionalno reprezentirane kroz kulturnu produkciju - poput sub-saharskih žena koje su manje prisutne u međunarodnoj globalnoj kulturi nego, primjerice, tipične i puno puta konceptualizirane generalne razlike na liniji SAD - Kina. Ali to je pitanje više za urednike nego za same autore.

Kad je riječ o uredničkom poslu na publikaciji, čini se da je propuštena prilika za kompaktnijom i promišljenijom strukturom, te za pedantnijim i posvećenijim radom na tekstovima. (To je neobično s obzirom da je tekst jedne od urednica, Marcie Honig, „*Expressive Arts Therapy for Teen Immigrants: a Case Study*“ jedan od najboljih tekstova u zborniku, ali uredničke i autorske kompetencije ne preklapaju se u potpunosti.) Drugačije i „sitnije“ grupiranje tekstova moglo bi omogućiti

own chosen subjects, especially if they were dealing with groups that are less internationally present through cultural production - such as sub-Saharan women who are less visible in international global culture than, for example, typical and many times conceptualized generalized differences between US and China. But that comment should be directed more towards the editors than authors themselves.

Where it comes to the editorial work on this publication, it seems that an opportunity has been missed for a more compact and thought-through structure and for a more meticulous and dedicated work on different contributions. (This is unusual given that the text of one of the editors, Marcie Honig, *Expressive Arts Therapy for Teen Immigrants: A Case Study* is one of the best texts in the publication, yet editorial and authorial competencies do not fully overlap.) The organization into smaller sections could have enabled the articles to connect more between each other which would enable the reader to find its way through this edited collection more easily. It is possible to imagine the difficulties of dealing with cultural differences, both in a substantive and formal sense, and the reluctance to intervene excessively in texts, either structurally, linguistically or methodologically is understandable. The editors were probably trying to avoid establishing the dominance of a particular type of academic and practical discourse over the other (and those

njihovo bolje povezivanje i snalaženje čitatelja. Moguće je predvidjeti poteškoće bavljenja kulturalnim razlikama i u sadržajnom i u formalnom smislu i želja da se ne intervenira pretjerano u tekstove, ni strukturno ni jezično ni metodološki, kako se ne bi uspostavila dominacija određenog tipa akademsko-praktičnog diskursa nad drugim (a znamo da su i oni naravno kulturalno uvjetovani). Međutim, doima se da su ovdje autori bili previše prepušteni sami sebi, bez konstruktivnih intervencija koje bi njihove tekstove učinile jezično jasnijima, bolje organiziranim te ih stavile u direktan i artikuliran odnos jednih s drugima. Čini se da je pristup bio: jedan uvaženi autor - jedan tekst, pa su onda neki autori cijeli niz svojih iskustava pokušali ugraditi u isti tekst, nasilno pokušavajući povezati situacije i kontekste koje je teško povezati osim s vrlo generalnim (i samim time praznim) zaključkom: „ljudi su posvuda isti, a opet različiti“. Publikacija ostavlja dojam da bi se smatralo profesionalno neprihvatljivim reći uvaženom kolegi druge nacionalnosti da mora poraditi na svom tekstu i ponuditi mu komentare kako ga poboljšati, jer bi ga to „ponizilo“ ili „problematiziralo“ njegovu stručnost, a riječ je o tehničkoj stvari rada na tekstu kako bi on bio više *user-friendly* (naravno grupna psihoanaliza inzistira na tome da nikad nije posrijedi samo

discourses are, of course, culturally conditioned too). However, it seems that the authors were excessively left to their own devices, without constructive interventions which would make their texts linguistically clearer, better organised, and put them in a direct and articulate relation with each other. The approach seems to have been: one prominent author – one text, which then resulted in some authors trying to squeeze a whole range of their experiences into the same text, violently trying to connect situations and contexts that are difficult to link, except with a very general (and thus empty) conclusion: “People are the same everywhere, yet different.” The publication gives the impression that it would have been considered professional unacceptable to tell a respected colleague of another nationality that he needs to work on his text and to offer him comments on how to improve it, as it would “humiliate him” or “question” his expertise. Yet, it is more of a technical question of working on the text in order to make it more user-friendly (of course group psychoanalysis insists on the idea that we are never dealing only with a technical nature of a situation). Fortunately, most of the texts are both linguistically and content-wise very solid and dealing with topical issues. The sheer volume, extent, diversity of texts, methodologies and approaches of people who are, obviously, great experts in their field with many direct experiences and engagement in IAGP guarantees a valuable publication. One reading instruction may be that you



tehnička priroda neke situacije). Na svu sreću, većina tekstova je i jezično i sadržajno vrlo solidna, iznimno aktualne tematike. Sama količina, opseg, raznovrsnost tekstova, metodologija i pristupa ljudi koji su, očito je, veliki stručnjaci sa puno direktnih iskustava i angažmana u IAGP-u garantira vrijednu publikaciju. Uputstvo za čitanje bi možda moglo biti da je ne čitate cijelu odjednom jer će vas „pojести“, i pojedini tekstovi neće uspjeti doći do izražaja. S druge strane, možda je taj moj osjećaj preplavljenosti zapravo duboko povezan sa samim sadržajem publikacije i budućnošću suživota na Zemlji. U svakom slučaju, takva je (nježno rečeno) *razbarušenost*, dobrodošlo osvježenje u moru publikacija multinacionalnih izdavačkih kuća (Routledge, Palgrave McMillan itd.) koje „peglažu“ tekstove do neprepoznatljivosti i do gubitka individualnih obilježja stila pojedinih autora dovodeći do određene mekdonaldizacije (akademske) produkcije. Moramo imati i na umu da se radi o publikaciji koju nije produciralo profesionalno izdavačko tijelo, tako da je vjerojatno i to igralo ulogu (primjerice, ISBN uopće nije naveden u publikaciji, što je iznimno bizarno, da ne kažem potpuno neprofesionalno). Međutim, u ovoj se publikaciji sasvim sigurno jasno „čuju“ različiti glasovi, i stilski i jezično i sadržajno (osviješteno nesa-

vršeni) i to ima svoju veliku vrijednost.

do not read it all at once because it will “eat you,” and certain rewarding texts might not stand out. On the other hand, perhaps the feeling that I have of being overwhelmed is deeply connected with the content of the publication and the future cohabitation of life on Earth. In any case, such (softly put) *messy* collection is a welcome refreshment in the sea of publications by multinational publishing houses (Routledge, Palgrave McMillan, etc.) which “iron” texts to the point where they lose any individual character leading to a kind of McDonaldization of (academic) production. This publication has not been produced by a professional publishing company, so it is likely that this played a role (for example, ISBN is not even listed in the publication, which is extremely bizarre, not to say completely unprofessional). However, this publication certainly clearly encourages different voices, which are stylistically, linguistically and content-wise (consciously) imperfect, and that is of great value.