

Interview with Our Conference Presenters,  
Shemika Brooks, PsyD, CGP and Jackie Darby, PsyD, CGP  
by Raquel Willerman, PhD, LCSW, CGP

**R: The title of the conference is *Passing the Torch: Viewing Intergenerational Dynamics in Group*. How did each of you get interested in this topic?**

**J:** It seems like I've always been interested. I remember how hard it was for me to start calling my supervisor by her first name, even when she asked me to, because this person hadn't supervised me in years. It made me think of my changing relationships, from supervisee, to peer, to becoming someone else's supervisor. These dynamics are alive in our groups, because you could be in a group with your supervisor or former supervisor, but we don't talk about the dynamics of that, and we therapists talk about everything else under the sun. So I asked Shemika whether she noticed this too and she did, so we decided to look more closely at it.

**S:** Before we go further, I want to add to Jackie's response, because she will never tell you this herself, but her interest in generational dynamics goes further back. She edited a book called *Black Millennials*. (**R: Indeed, I see the book on her shelf in the office: *Black Millennials: Identity, Ambition and Activism* published in 2020 and edited by Jacquelin Darby. Wow!**) Jackie has collected work on and studied extensively at least one generation. As for me, I come to this topic with an interest in power dynamics, which are definitely played out generationally. I remember trying to speak with a supervisor about a conflict between what they were saying and what I had been taught, and the supervisor conveyed to me that because they had been doing this decades longer, I was not allowed to question them. So, from the beginning, I have felt one unspoken rule is: "Hey, you're new (or young) and this is why you don't get to push back," as opposed to anyone interacting with me based on the merit of my idea. "This is how we've done it seems to supersede the newer directions that are happening now." In some spaces, we are still holding on to what was introduced decades ago, in part, I believe, because of these intergenerational dynamics. As a field, we have a hard time discussing this. So Jackie and I think this will be a great topic to discuss at a conference.

**R: I am aware in myself of unsettling thoughts and feelings that come up around age, seniority, and the power dynamics of student/peer/supervisor roles in our field. So, thank you for creating this opportunity to explore and learn. What has been the most surprising (or frustrating?) thing you've learned or experienced when looking at age and how it interacts with power and authority in groups?**

**S:** Well the first thing that comes to mind is that there is nothing written on the topic! A general search of public access journals and popular databases has gotten me zero results. It doesn't seem to matter which angle I approach it from. Our field has researched groups from so many different angles, why not this one? I would have expected that someone would have delved into the literature about generations, supervision and group dynamics and put it all together, but it hasn't been done and we aren't talking about it. Race, gender, sex, ability, those are all there. But not age. I think it's a sign of western, American civilization in that age in general is a taboo subject.

**J:** As therapists, we talk about it ALL but age is where we draw the line? Why is it so difficult to look at our own biases when it comes to generations?

**R: It feels like age and power is a topic that will draw experiences of intersectionality with race, gender, ability, and sexual orientation. So much to talk about! Is that something you plan on addressing?**

**J:** Absolutely. You can't talk about an aspect of identity without talking about other aspects. How does me being a millennial impact my identity as a black woman, who is able bodied? It all affects the work I do. For instance, when I work with adolescent boys, I could get a rapport that my black male counterpart might not because I look like a sister, an aunt, or a cousin. Because of this, I might be able to go places with a client that a more senior therapist could not. I think it's helpful to talk about it because I need to know how to use it to my clinical advantage. Another example. No one expects me to be a doctor. Is it because I appear young? Or is it being black or a woman? At the conference we will have an entire section where we engage in dialogue about intersectionality. I think that's the part I am most excited about.

**S:** I read a book called *Get over, 'I Got It'* by Elaine Fluker. She talks about how millennials are wanting different things from their workplaces than previous generations. They won't tolerate, "Do this because I said so." They want context and want to know the "why." It's complex because different generations want different things. If we are not talking about this in our group conferences we will be missing a big piece in how we provide support to different generations which might not look the same. Also, intersectionality is definitely a part of this. Not everyone has had the same access to psychology based on their identities. Or what happens when a person who is early career is in their 50s and being supervised by a younger person, maybe the same age as their kid, who is mid or later career? It's not just chronological age. How does this all show up? We want to talk about it.

**R: What do you hope MAGPS members will take away from this conference?**

**J:** I think this conference will stir up some things for people and just a reminder to stay curious and open. MAGPS is changing generationally. Our Board is changing. Thinking about the title, *Passing the Torch*, we want to understand how that is happening right now for us.

**S:** Even if we have same torch and carry the same fire, there's a different air that is feeding that fire. We want to talk about generations of group therapists as they are shifting. We want to understand where we are coming from and where this is going. How are we the same and how are we different? And if there are any researchers present, I want someone to build some practice-based evidence on this topic!

**J:** You're such a nerd.

**S:** Yeah, a little bit.

[Click here to register for the conference!](#)

*Infinite.*

*So, with the others napping on this dank and rainy late afternoon, and you, my friend*

*Laying up more logs, lighting lamps against the lapsing light,*

*Are we as close to heaven as this life permits?*

*Now and again it happens.*

*Days may pass, the island remains.*

*Barry Weisman*

### **Glady's Kraft, MSW**



*Written and delivered at the 2022 AGPA Memorial by George Salger*

Glady's Kraft was among an illustrious list of my mentors, the faculty of the Group Psychotherapy Training Program at the Washington School of Psychiatry. She was on the faculty there for several decades. In those years, faculty meetings sometimes became a war of testosterone – the combatants of those wars have already been memorialized by AGPA in years gone by. Gladys was a singularly calming and reorienting voice then. As Carolyn Angelo, a former president of MAGPS, reminded the Washington School community when Gladys died (she was, at age 98, vacationing with her entire family in Chincoteague on the Virginia shore on Christmas Day), "All of us who knew her were privileged to experience her unwavering ability to speak the truth and to hold the other accountable to do the same. She did that for our faculty."

I knew Gladys in another context, too.. She and I were part of a monthly study group which examined creative writing to better understand our aging patients. We read novels, plays, poems, memoirs. Gladys was about 70 when we started—which seemed pretty old to me back then. Thirty years later, she actively participated in our December 2021 meeting when we discussed Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*. You do the math. Her eyes had already given out—her daughter Miriam had to read the novel to her. Her brain, though, had not decayed—her contributions were on the mark.

I owe her much, and miss her so much. She encouraged me, lo, those decades ago, to confront my anxiety and join the group therapy faculty at the Washington School. She encouraged me in recent years to submit my own creative writing to our study group for discussion. She teased me, called me "a yeshivah boy" because, whenever I wrote, I had to follow an idea or a clinical observation back to its roots, looking up sources and then the sources of those sources. Technically she was wrong. I had never stepped foot in a yeshivah. But, as usual, she was right. It is how I think, for better or for worse. And she let me feel good about my bent in that direction.

Finally, let me add that I also knew her as a generous caregiver when her beloved husband Steve was dying several years ago. Her devotion to Steve was inspiring—her ability to do what is so hard: to care for herself while caring for him, during those trying months, was admirable.

Goodbye, Gladys. Know that you left your mark on those who knew you.

## **Looking Back: Reflections on the Fall 2021 Conference**

Our Fall Conference featured Dr. Kathleen Isaac, who presented *Creating Connection through Empathy: Working with the Intersection of Identities in the Group Process*. Three discussants responded to Dr. Isaac's plenaries followed by moderated questions and conversation (see below for a the names of all the participants). The event took place virtually, the third of our conferences to be held this way. As a result, we benefitted from the work of other conference chairs and the guidance of our technology consultants, DC Multimedia. Although there are drawbacks to not meeting in person, our community profited greatly from our ability to engage experienced group therapists to lead the small group experience. We were also fortunate that many people who are not in the DMV area were able to attend. By reaching out beyond the borders of geography and relying solely on MAGPS members to lead groups, we put into action the topic of our program.

Dr. Isaac and her discussants provided MAGPS with an extraordinary opportunity to engage with a complex topic in a digestible format. We had time for a larger group discussion at the end of the conference that highlighted the level of engagement throughout the weekend. Please check out the interview between Ms. Margaret Wilmot-Francis and Dr. Kathleen Isaacs by clicking [HERE](#).

Discussants: Dr. Jackie Darby, Dr. Shemika Brooks and Dr. Kevin Gillette

Small Group Leaders: Dr. Kevin Gillette, Dr. Michael Wannon, Dr. Sonia Kahn, Ms. Lisa Kays, Mr. Marvin Evans, Dr. Joshua DeSilva, Dr. Aziza Belcher-Platt, Dr. Erica Gardner-Schuster

Be sure to join us for the upcoming Fall Conference featuring Dr. Jackie Darby and Dr. Shemika Brooks, two of the Spring Conference discussants, as they present on Intergenerational Dynamics in group.

Jackie Darby, PsyD, CGP and Alison Howard, PsyD, M.Ed., CGP  
Conference Co-Chairs



### **Feedback from Scholarship Recipients**

My name is Daneisha Johnson, a MSW student attending University of Maryland, Baltimore. I had the great opportunity to take part in joining the Mid-Atlantic Group Psychotherapy Society for this conference that targeted intersectionality in group therapy and processing. During this conference, I was able to learn more about how each individual identity of a person can affect the interactions that may occur within groups. Topics like possessing radical empathy, recognizing microaggressions, and establishing a brave group setting were all presented by Dr. Kathleen Isaac. Each topic helped to shape the discussions that were experienced in small process group settings. Having small groups allowed for the conference to become more intimate in diving deeper into how to approach such issues in our professional lives and even for our personal lives. I gained insight on how identity is not a surface level concept. It encompasses so many layers and aspects that should be taken into consideration as I enter the world of therapy. I appreciate the lessons I have received and look forward to implementing them in my career.

Respectfully,

**Daneisha Johnson**

I didn't know what to expect for my first group psychotherapy conference. After more than a year of Zoom meetings and classes where I did not feel present, I was jolted into vibrant reality as soon as I logged in to the MAGPS conference. I was swept away and transported to the collective minds of the most feeling, articulate people I have ever had the privilege to meet.

**Anna**

I just wanted to express my gratitude this morning for the inspiring weekend you afforded me with this scholarship. I was deeply moved to tears by both keynote presentation and small group work. I'm bringing all of this good material to my work with adults in chemical dependency and excited to join MAGPS as a student member in January. Once I am a credentialed social worker I will be sure to continue to learn from and contribute to this organization.

Thank you so much,

**Ashia**

When I participated in the fall 2021 conference was my first time attending an event of this nature, not to mention my first time participating in a group myself. I found the experience enlightening, educational, and it's something I still reflect on six months later. I would recommend this experience to any trainee who wants to better understand group dynamics as well as anyone who wants to learn more about themselves.

**Hannah**

The MAGPS conference was one of my first conferences ever as a new professional—I felt enveloped by the warmth, humanness, and openness with which existing members welcomed me into their network and process. I came away a more vulnerable and connected individual. Not only was the topic incredibly moving and timely, but the direct application of it (radical empathy) and engagement with it, particularly from my small group members, emboldened my sense of myself as a clinician. I am grateful to have been part of this experience!

**Rachel**

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