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ABSTRACT

In this article, the authors introduce the term *transgenerational professional trauma* and discuss aspects of its existence and transmission in the transactional analysis community. They first define the terms and describe the theory they use in understanding the transmission of transgenerational professional trauma. They make a historical diagnosis following three generations of professional parents: Sigmund Freud, Eric Berne, and Jacqui Schiff. Based on their lived experience, the authors make a phenomenological diagnosis of the echo that this trauma has left within them as a subsequent generation. A case illustration regarding the Romanian TA community is offered. Following that analysis, the authors notice certain patterns emerging that, in their understanding, contain significant information about "that which was impossible to fully permit and impossible to completely forget" (Gerson, 2016, p. 202). In the end, the authors attempt to find meaning for the transgenerational professional trauma in their community. Their goal is to open a space for discussion, inviting the witnessing function of the community.

Drawing a Theoretical Framework

In this article we address the notion of *transgenerational trauma* from a particular angle, namely, the meaning it acquires in relation to the professional community it inhabits. Our starting point in the territory of trauma theory is the definition articulated by Pearlman and Saakvitne (1995, p. 60), who described it as being the unique individual experience of an event or enduring conditions in which the individual's ability to integrate emotional experience is overwhelmed or the individual experiences (subjectively) a threat to life, bodily integrity, or sanity.

Building on this core concept, we understand the term transgenerational trauma as inferring two aspects. The first is that there is a particular movement—a transfer—that takes place in the space between generations. The second is that this movement is stripped of a meaningful narrative so that affect is devoid of any psychological resonance, thus preserving its traumatic quality. Here, "in these places of no meaning, shame, and loss, ghosts thrive" (Kraemer & Steinberg, 2016, p. 152).

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On the Phenomenology of Transgenerational Trauma

Descriptions of transgenerational trauma in the literature evoke the nature of this intergenerational space inhabited by trauma as belonging to *ghosts* or *phantoms* (Abraham, 1994) that generate an "enduring presence of an absence" (Gerson, 2016, p. 1344) in our mind. Apprey (2014) captured a similar quality when he wrote about *transgenerational haunting,* stating that what haunts us are not the dead but those gaps left within us by the secrets of others. What resides in the realm of those eerie presences might be described as difficult to grasp. Such raw material seeks for ways to become embodied and, ultimately, to be communicated. It is as if such communications take place and are yet to be seen or heard (Apprey, 2016).

Some authors have looked at this breach in communication through the lens of the "other." Benjamin (2011) wrote about the "failed witness" (p. 212), witnessing being a function of the world community to recognize that which is unbearable and overwhelming. When this witnessing function is not carried out, what ensues is a perpetuation of the trauma at the level of relationships and the surrounding community.

Gerson (2009) also wrote about the situation in which the absence of the witness leads to the unimaginable trauma being continuously reenacted. He named this lack of recognition *the dead third* and described it as "a human world so absorbed with its own losses, fears, and needs that it remains silent and unmoved by the plight of the victim" (p. 1347).

However, when appropriate recognition becomes possible, what emerges is a sense that there is a way back into a lawful world (Benjamin, 2011) and a movement of ghosts into ancestors (Loewald, 1960), each generation appropriating its own slice of time and space in history.

Mechanisms Involved in the Transmission of Transgenerational Trauma

We will examine the mechanisms involved in the transmission of transgenerational trauma from a psychoanalytically informed perspective—the transgenerational object relations theory (Apprey, 2014)—as well as from a viewpoint rooted in transactional analysis—the theory of transgenerational script transmission (Guglielmotti, 1996; Noriega Gayol, 2004).

For Apprey, this process of transmission implies that there is something being injected from an anterior source. That something is stored in a hospitable space for an indeterminate time and remains suspended. It brings with it an errand, a mandate that the subject needs to carry out for one of its internal objects with a sense of urgency and personal will (the mandate is received by the subject in a voluntary way), thereby returning that something to a public space and enacting it when the context becomes suitable. What Apprey called the *anterior source* may belong to a particular generation (what we call the first generation), whereas what he called the *subject* may be a member of a subsequent generation (which we refer to as the second or third generation).

Apprey (2014) emphasized that what remains central in this process of transgenerational transmission is that it relies on an early ego that remains infused with parental and ancestral influences. It is our understanding that what he described is a primal

relational experience, one that can be conceptualized in terms of *protocol formation* (Berne, 1963/1975). Cornell and Landaiche (2007) argued that this level of organization is deeply held in the body, and in the process of exploring it, we are granted "access to our sense of self with others" (p. 260).

In an article about parents who are orphans, Guglielmotti (1996) captured a significant quality of the process by which transgenerational trauma is transmitted. He wrote that the orphan-mother and the newborn jointly experience anxiety, anguish, and/or fear of catastrophe or the mother's sudden death. This creates "an apparently insoluble bond" (p. 134), a fusion between them that is experienced at a deeply implicit level. It can be argued that this pertains to the realm of protocol. We think this fusion between what can be described as the parent's generation and that of the child is an important component in the transmission of transgenerational trauma, an idea we will develop further in this article.

Our intention is to find ways to account for the fundamental, yet unsymbolized, dimension of transgenerational trauma transmission. In this endeavor, we use Berne's (1963/1975) historical and phenomenological diagnoses as our main tools together with an analysis of the collected data. It is our view that in this way we stand more chances of engaging with its complexity, thus witnessing what was once overwhelming and making meaning in those territories inhabited by ghostly presences.

Professional Communities and the Legacies They Carry

The lens through which we will look into the theory of transgenerational trauma transmission is one intimately related to community life. In this section we will capture a few key traits of what this entails.

Berne (1963/1975) elaborated a complex theory of group structures and dynamics. He defined the group as "any social aggregation that has an external boundary and at least one internal boundary" (p. 54). In his system of understanding, the external boundary separates the internal space from the external one, differentiating between group members and nonmembers. The internal boundary divides the internal space into the area belonging to members and that belonging to the leadership, thereby distinguishing between these individuals in a group.

In the recent transactional analysis literature, Krausz (2013) referred to specific elements that transform social aggregations into groups. From her perspective, a group is "a collection of interacting individuals who have some common purpose that facilitates, creates, or induces a sense of unity and identification" (p. 367). Significant ingredients—such as interaction, unity, and identification—are explained. Krausz defined professional groups as secondary groups, with relative instability and temporality. Such instability contributes to individuals interacting less personally and more in relation to a set of prescribed roles and functions. External boundaries, which facilitate members entering and exiting the group, are supposed to be more flexible, but there are some conditions to be met either for joining or exiting the group. In spite of the temporality of ties between members, loyalty and identification may create problems, meaning that individuals who belonged to a professional community for a long time may find it difficult to function without that familiar source of identification. Therefore,

it is only fair to assume that separating from one's own professional group may be a significant event in one's life and may influence one's sense of identity.

In Berne's (1963/1975) view, the survival of any group is highly dependent on its "canon" (p. 108), which includes the naming of the group, a statement concerning its identity, a structure, and a set of regulatory processes. When threatened, we suggest that these components often become ossified. It is our understanding that the group canon is the very flesh and tissue that the group is made of, so it can be conceptualized in terms of a group protocol experience that remains embodied in the collective history. Berne wrote that the "first canon is made by the primal leader, who through his authority is able to establish a tradition of behavior … different from what the members are accustomed to outside the group" (p. 108). This canon preserves its importance for the members of later generations and is a way in which the leader exerts authority on the posterity of the group.

In the context of this strong tie between a group and its primal leader, we may begin to wonder how one can meaningfully capture the traces that a group leader leaves behind. Are there ways in which one can imagine and articulate aspects of the group's protocol experience? We suggest that the ghostly presences described previously represent gateways into exploring such questions. Put differently, we wonder if and how a primal leader's traumatic experiences reverberate in the group.

Our hypothesis is that, in the absence of an appropriate living witness, these echoes of trauma are passed down from one generation to the next. They may be conceptualized as fragments of implicit relational knowledge, which we will refer to throughout this article as *transgenerational professional trauma.* In our understanding this refers to:

- The psychological traces of the trauma endured by a leader in the community he or she establishes
- The way in which the community assimilates the trauma from the leader and communicates it by acting it out

The question that then emerges is how transgenerational trauma may lend itself to being known and potentially transformed into a meaningful narrative by later generations. Our response to this musing begins with a historical exploration.

A Historical Examination

Our search for a new narrative starts with a necessary visit to the past. The following section conveys the subtle yet strong thread that connects Sigmund Freud, Eric Berne, and Jacqui Schiff. Each one was a symbol of his or her generation, and their biographies have been almost completely assimilated into the theory they helped develop.

In line with the aim of this article, the narrative will focus on two areas of vulnerability:

1. Early relationships and personal trauma: Freud, Berne, and Schiff each had strong, idealized parental figures who instilled in their child a sense of being destined for

greatness, although all three were isolated from their peers (Berne, 2010/2016; Gay, 2006; Schiff, 1970/1972). These factors seemed to shape their personalities and their ways of coping with rejection and abandonment. This is in line with Apprey's (2014) description of an early ego, as quoted earlier.

2. Professional trauma: When the hurt of exclusion remains unprocessed, one might unconsciously exclude others or resist change for self-protection. This is fertile ground for the transmission of transgenerational trauma. In this article we look into how experiences of exclusion lived out by Sigmund Freud may have had echoes in subsequent generations represented by Eric Berne and, later, Jacqui Schiff.

Lineage

In considering Freud, Berne, and Schiff, we have chosen these "professional parents" as representatives of what we see as three generations. Each one was directly or indirectly mentored by the previous one and later became a theorist and group leader in his or her own right.

- *First generation:* The community that Sigmund Freud founded survived anti-Semitism, war, and internal conflict. To serve the aim of this article, we recognize him as the root of the psychotherapy family tree, a representative of the first generation.
- *Second generation:* Fifty-four years after Freud's birth, Eric Berne was born into a Jewish community in Montreal, Canada. In his autobiography, Berne (2010/2016) noted his predecessor's impact on his own life. Was Berne aware of the subtle connection between his complicated relationship with the American psychoanalysis community and the ghosts that many immigrant psychoanalysts carried with them from a society traumatized by war?
- *Third generation:* We know next to nothing about Jacqui Schiff's childhood. This seems significant in a community that we think has largely not yet given appropriate recognition to one of its most important traumas. The absence of biographical information can lead to an almost mythical feel. Or is the TA community's apparent tendency to forget Schiff a way of expressing shame and a sign of unprocessed trauma?

Early relationships and personal trauma. Amalia Freud intensely idealized her son Sigmund (Gay, 2006). Similarly, Eric and Jacqui both had fathers who helped shape in them the sense of being special. David Berne was an enormous figure in the eyes of his young son, Eric (Berne, 2010/2016). Unlike other doctors of that time and place, he kept children alive in the community (p. 58). This loving, self-sacrificing, and authoritarian father took Eric along on his rounds, something that made the young boy stand out as special among his peers (p. 17). The person who helped define Jacqui was her mother's second husband. He was a juvenile detention center officer, and Jacqui was "impressed with the fact that he was very authoritarian, a strict disciplinarian, yet he earned and kept the boys' affection and respect" (Schiff, 1970/1972, p. 20). The most

important message he left was, "You're a damn smart kid. You can do anything you want to do!"

Another theme that emerges from these stories of personal trauma is that of loss and abandonment. The death of Freud's father is considered by historians (Gay, 2006) to be an important loss that led to his most important work, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (Freud, 1899/2010). When David Berne died, as Eric described it, "the end came" (Berne, 2010/2016, p. 62). David left 10-year-old Eric an important yet impossible task: "A little boy should take good care of his mother and sister" (p. 95). The hero-creator disappeared long before his son had a chance to mature (a theme we return to later). Again, little is known about Jacqui's early-life experiences. We do know from her own account that she was "very eager to have children" and that it was "very frightening when I thought I might not be able to" (Schiff, 1970/1972, p. 22). We wonder if this eagerness might also be linked with undocumented early-life events. Out of her seven pregnancies, there were only three living children: "When my first baby … suffered a lung collapse and died three months after her birth, I got pregnant as soon as possible" (p. 22).

Professional exclusion. Freud left Nazi-occupied Vienna on 4 June 1938. A still young psychoanalytic community had been decimated throughout Europe. Many made their way to the United States (Makari, 2008) where they fought to preserve their identity by maintaining a strict Freudian orthodoxy. Consequently, the American Psychoanalytic Association "transformed … into a central power that policed standards throughout the country" (Makari, 2008, p. 483). We understand this rigidity as a symptom of transgenerational trauma.

These are the men and women Eric Berne encountered as he started his formal training in psychoanalysis. By the time the psychoanalytic world was celebrating the centenary of Freud's birth, Eric had been asked to discontinue his training, against his requests (Windholz, 1953). The Education Committee believed that Eric had difficulty in "carrying out the technique of classical psychoanalysis" (p. 1) despite his "gift in understanding the patient's unconscious" (p. 1). When he was 12, little Eric had been rejected by a different community of Jewish descent: His confirmation failed when the Rabbi declared "Wrong tune!" because his religious teacher had belonged to a different sect (Berne, 2010/2016). This time Eric made his own tune. He gathered a strong community around him and became its leader.

Like Freud before him, Berne's image is polarized. Both were seen either as geniuses or as frauds by the people they encountered professionally (Cornell, 2007; Levin, 2007). Similarly, Schiff is described as anywhere between a brilliant visionary and a totalitarian ruler (Jacobs, 1994; Lankford, 1998). Berne, the failed psychoanalyst, and Schiff (1970/1972), a mourning mother, both turned their losses into opportunity—just as their parents had projected they would—but at the cost of belonging. It seems that neither related to others from a peer position. Instead, they each gathered people around them and maintained a leadership role, without relinquishing power (Cornell, 2007; Jacobs, 1994).

Like Freud and Berne before her, Schiff developed her theory and methods during a time of great social, political, and cultural change in the United States and the world. Questioning authority was becoming the norm. Some of her patients were required by the reparenting method to question their parents' authority and,

paradoxically, to accept Jacqui's authority in order to be cured (Schiff, 1970/1972). This meant decathecting a toxic Parent introject and replacing it with a new one in an authoritarian manner (Cornell, de Graaf, Newton, & Thunnissen, 2016). Ethics and legal charges against Jacqui and members of the Cathexis Institute were raised. Many of these included assault and battery (Cornell et al., 2016). In 1978, the ITAA Board of Trustees required Jacqui to accept professional supervision in order to remain a member of the association. She refused. By then, one of her patients had died after being restrained and put in a hot water tub (p. 179).

It is still not clear to us what had happened during that time of confusion after Schiff's disappearance. What we know is that those who loved her could not reconcile with those who feared or criticized her. The Cathexis School and its silent followers remain to this day on the fringes of the TA community. We are not aware of any systematic reevaluation of its theory or methodology from within the Cathexis professional community.

We believe that the gaps left by the exclusion and denial of the traumatic significance of the events just described in relation to Freud, Berne, and Schiff are mechanisms involved in transmitting the trauma of abandonment and exclusion from generation to generation, throughout different cultures and times.

Case Example: A Group Experience of the Romanian TA Community

The transgenerational professional trauma just described influenced the Romanian TA community as a subsequent generation in the genealogy of transactional analysis. We, as members of this community, can see its lingering echoes in the difficulty in differentiating, creating, and encouraging leadership among its members. Because we have been involved in the leadership of the community, our view is biased: We write as members of a small group in a fragmented community, and we present a personal experience. Therefore, we do not write from an ethical perspective but from one that is consistent with transgenerational professional trauma theory. For the purpose of capturing the phenomenological dimension of this process, parts of this section are written in the first person singular, which stands for the lived experience of one of us.

Psychotherapists were persecuted throughout the communist era in Romania and accused of being against the regime. Therefore, the beginnings of transactional analysis in Romania—around the year 2000—brought many hopes of freedom, competency, and individual expression. At that time in Romania, most of those leading psychotherapy training had not been trained as psychotherapists. Facing this reality, I chose transactional analysis as my mode of training because it was the only school that provided training at European standards.

During the first 10-15 years, I think the training had two levels. On an overt, declarative level, autonomy was promoted as Eric Berne's main legacy. On a psychological level, the ghost of the Cathexis school was haunting: Regression, dependency, and symbiosis were embedded in the teaching style. In a conflictual situation, the trainer would often ask, "What do you need from me?" This question contains an invitation toward both autonomy and symbiosis. The invitation toward autonomy is

included in the implicit affirmation that there are two persons involved and that they will start negotiating a contract. At the same time, the word "need" encourages symbiosis, implying that the trainee's needs will be fulfilled by the trainer.

Another double message sent by the trainer was "No answer is not an option." If a question was raised by the trainer to the group, each member would have to answer. On the one hand, this message was an invitation to dialogue with the leader, which was something revolutionary in our culture. On the other, when having difficulties answering, one would find oneself cornered. My experience was one of being threatened. I felt that, in the absence of an answer, I was being judged, seen as inferior and needing a good deal of personal work to reach the level that was required of me.

In Romanian culture, strongly influenced by 45 years of communism (1945-1989), differentiation is hard to imagine in group life. Under oppressive and dictatorial authority, it was dangerous both for the individual and his or her family to express a different view from that promoted by the regime. Consequences were experienced on all levels: political, social, professional, personal, and spiritual. This culture combined with the above-mentioned training characteristics led to poor differentiation in our TA community. Consequently, we witnessed the difficulty and fear of Romanian trainers and leaders to assume authority. As for myself, being one of the former Romanian leaders and now a trainer, I am aware that sometimes I am afraid of being dictatorial and, as a consequence, of being "shot" by members of the community. In a consultation context, I received feedback that the community acts like a group that relates to a fearful, threatened authority.

In our country, the fall of the communist regime in 1989 was followed by the execution of the totalitarian leader, Nicolae Ceausescu, and his wife. The nation was confronted with the sudden disappearance of its leader. The Romanian people were left angry and split: those who regretted the loss of the old times versus the rest who welcomed the change.

A similar process in which the leader disappeared before the group had reached the maturity to manage the loss occurred between the first TA trainer here and the Romanian TA community. The trainer committed to supporting trainees to become Certified Transactional Analysts, became a community leader, and did things that for us emphasized strong ties to the group. This raised many hopes for professional competency, and the leader was appreciated, criticized, but mostly highly idealized. A good deal of training and therapy was offered but very little supervision. This impinged on the process of certification, leading to an absence of professional recognition and poor differentiation. We understand these implications as echoes of transgenerational trauma, bringing the issue of professional exclusion more poignantly into the foreground. Before the first Romanian trainee became certified, that trainer left and shortly afterward stopped organizing the only TA training available in Romania at that time. For a significant part of the group, the experience was that their leader, trainer, and therapist had vanished. There was little space for reflection, understanding, and meaning making. After this loss, as soon as a new trainer would take initiative, the community would split. This led to a growing sense of group fragmentation and many members feeling isolated.

This case example depicts one of many TA communities that might have been impacted by professional transgenerational traumas: loss of the idealized parental figure and feeling isolated from the wider TA community.

Hypothesized Patterns of Transgenerational Trauma

Reflecting on both the international and local history presented thus far, certain patterns start to emerge. These will be approached from two perspectives: first, the leader-theorist's traumatic experiences, and second, the relational dynamics between leader and group members.

Theorists' Personal and Professional Traumatic Experiences

Our understanding is that the theorist's personal life can become intimately linked with his or her professional path. Specifically, the way in which the theorists presented in this article coped with personal traumatic events had a direct influence on how they conceptualized theory and on their relationships with the communities they founded.

Reciprocally, there are professional experiences that shake the theorist's personal life. Specifically, the trauma of professional exclusion interrupted the lives of Freud (Makari, 2008), Berne (Noriega, 2010), and Schiff (Cornell et al., 2016).

Inquiry Into the Personal

The leaders presented in this article shared biographical similarities. They all seem to have been destined for greatness. Being special became part of their identity, and we believe this had an impact on how they coped with traumatic life events. Believing one is special can lead to social and emotional isolation: The support system available to the person affects the impact a trauma will have on a person (Masse, 1995, p. 356). The pressure of achieving great things, while helping one not to shatter, may impede a healthy grieving process. Being special may become a way to cope with loss, a lens through which to view both life and trauma (death).

From a psychobiographical perspective (Atwood & Stolorow, 1993), the structure of the subjective world of the theorist is reflected in the system of personality theory that he or she creates. The traumatic experiences endured are bound to slip into the understanding of psychic functioning and developed methods of healing.

For Berne, the loss of his father at the age of 10 and anti-Semitic experiences may have shaped the creation and development of transactional analysis. Heathcote (2016) suggested that the lack of a theory of grief may be a consequence of Berne's own unresolved grief. Furthermore, creating a theory with an explicit "I'm OK, You're OK" philosophical base can be perceived as wanting to "create a fairer and more just world in which everyone would be treated with respect" (p. 238). In this context, we reflected on the possibility that placing such a great focus on Adult functioning might have been a way for Berne to protect himself against profound feelings of loss regarding his father's illness and death.

Schiff (1970/1972), in *All My Children,* offered some clues about how her upbringing, especially her father's parental messages (i.e., "You can do anything you want to do!") influenced her courage to develop and test theories with "minimal concern for tradition" (p. 21). Furthermore, her experience with Berne's San Francisco Social Psychiatry Seminars reinforced her stepfather's message of being a "bright child" (p. 23). The death of a child is considered the greatest loss a person can suffer (Holmes & Rahe, 1967). Schiff (1970/1972) documented how the loss of her child impacted her ability to work with her patient Vickey. We hypothesize that the theory she developed and how it was practiced may have been highly influenced by her father's authoritarian parental style and her own desire to be a mother while losing several pregnancies. An example of this is the model of reparenting and the way the Parent ego state was conceptualized (Schiff, 1975).

Inquiry Into the Professional

Personal experiences and traumas become embedded in theory. Some experiences can be traumatic on a professional level: The trauma of exclusion seems to have traversed historical lines.

For Berne, being rejected by the San Francisco Psychoanalytic Institute was a great loss (Heathcote, 2016), one that he never got over (English, 2007). We understand this traumatic event to have fueled his ambivalence toward psychoanalysis, which he brought into the newly emerging TA community and thus passed on the trauma of being excluded. Furthermore, Noriega (2010) suggested that the transgenerational script of transactional analysis is based on Berne's reaction to being rejected by the psychoanalytic establishment.

Schiff's exclusion followed a different pattern. If both Freud and Berne were excluded by the communities to which they belonged and then created new communities that shared their views, Schiff started by creating a community and then later broke with the ITAA (Cornell et al., 2016). Drawing on Apprey's (2014) approach to transgenerational trauma, Berne's trauma of exclusion became an "errand" that was enacted by Schiff. Because of personal and professional characteristics, she appears to have been the "suitable new object" (p. 3) for this errand. Henceforth, the errand of being rejected was carried out.

We understand the transgenerational aspect of professional rejection as starting with Freud, the first generation, being enacted by Berne, the second generation, and reaching the intensity of a third-degree game (Berne, 1964) with Schiff as the third generation.

Clearly, leaders' personal and professional traumas have influenced the development of theory and its application. The questions then become: Has the transmission stopped? How do the traumas of the creators of theories we use still impact us? How is the way we understand and manage loss in our practice influenced by our professional parents' traumatic experiences? Is feeling rejected or being excluded somehow part of our professional identity? We expect the answers to differ from one professional to another.

Leader-Group Dynamics

Since the same rejection and exclusion dynamics seem to be repeating throughout history, we understand them as echoes of transgenerational professional trauma.

Inquiry Into the Leader

As leaders, the professional parents we chose to write about were charismatic, complex personalities who developed new theories and established new professional communities. Their subjective world, script, and traumas have found their way not only into the theory created but also into the script of the emergent professional communities. Noriega (2010) described the protocol of an organization as "an emotionally loaded early scene in which the founder decides to create a new organization" (p. 199), thus emphasizing the importance of the leader's experiences.

Being rejected and the subsequent search for a community seems to be the struggle that gave birth to both psychoanalysis and transactional analysis. The leader's need to belong finds a solution in the creation of a new community.

There is also an impasse between the need to belong and be among peers and the need to be unique. We understand the resolution of this impasse through the projection of the leader's uniqueness onto the new theory. Since the theory becomes unique, the theorist is free to belong to the new group, thus satisfying both needs. We hypothesize that the consequence of this resolution is the transformation of theory into certainty, unquestionable in its blind spots (Slochower, 2017). In the TA community, it supports the "isolation, arrogance, and competition" of TA theory described by Noriega (2010, p. 196).

A consequence of the aforementioned impasse is a two-level communication, each level reflecting one side of the impasse. Berne, on the one hand, encouraged differentiation, autonomy, and the development of new ideas, and, on the other, there seems to be an incentive to think like him, which was observable to us in our reading of the San Francisco Social Psychiatry Seminar transcript (Cornell & Landaiche, 2017). Similarly, the reparenting theory promoted autonomy (Schiff, 1975) while being viewed by some as encouraging symbiosis (Jacobs, 1994).

Since we experienced the same kind of communication years later in our own training, we wonder if and how it is still present in the TA community around the world today. In our understanding and experience, double messages and ulterior transactions seem to be frequent in TA teaching and are a means of script transmission (Noriega, 2010). It also encourages the fusion between the parents' generation and the children's, thereby supporting the transmission of a transgenerational trauma.

Inquiry Into the Group

The responses within the professional groups associated with the leaders discussed here also seem to follow certain patterns, that is, idealization followed by disappearance of the leader and then group fragmentation.

As the new leader emerges and develops a new theory or way of thinking, a community forms around him or her, investing in and idealizing that person. The leader becomes the "father[/mother] who is all knowing" (Nitsun, 2009, p. 328). We understand this as a natural, necessary phase in a group's development. As the group evolves, rebellion against authority is necessary for separation and individuation (Nitsun, 2009). Autocratic leadership and a leader's ulterior transactions hinder members' differentiation and may turn rebellion into revolt, which is more violent and may not have a constructive function. Responses to authority vary between subgroups or even members because of individual characteristics and may create division and fragmentation in the group.

In various professional groups, these processes differ in intensity, being influenced by local culture and significant events in the group's life. In the Romanian transactional analysis community, such an event was the leader disappearing when some members were still in an idealization phase and others were in rebellion or even revolt. The experience of the leader disappearing before the group is mature enough to manage the loss seems to repeat in the professional groups discussed in this article. While writing it, we often wondered about other communities' experiences. How have they managed similar losses? In our experience, the leader's disappearance threatens the survival of the group by deepening the preexisting divisions within and generating new fragmentation.

This also occurs in other situations, for example, if part of a group perceives the leader as abusive. In the history of transactional analysis, we witnessed this kind of group fragmentation in relation to Schiff's approach. That significant experience was also encountered in the Romanian professional community. Our cultural pattern is marked by intense reactions toward the leader, which leads to intensifying idealization, rebellion, and group splitting. Often, the idealized leader is perceived as a Rescuer, and rebellion turns into revolt and opposition, impeding growth and differentiation. In extreme cases, revolt leads to the murder of the leader (Nitsun, 2009), as happened in our nation's recent history. We imagine that in most professional communities, revolt may lead to the symbolic murder of the leader. The group splitting can become a traumatic experience in which there is no dialogue between the polarized opinions, no middle ground, no witnessing or processing of experience (Biran, 2003).

Even in nonextreme cases, attitudes toward authority seem to have a polarized quality. A predecessor's authoritarian leadership style offers new leaders a model to either love or fear. Some new leaders follow the same path, while others are scared of becoming abusive and thus unconsciously adopt a fearful leadership style. Responses to authority often fall into either idealizing the leader or perceiving the authoritarian leader as abusive, without there being much room for growth in either case. In this context, as illustrated in the case study, learning how to be a leader without abusing one's power or feeling scared by it may be a difficult process. The same holds for learning how to mature and differentiate while belonging to a community. In overcoming such difficulties, it has been our experience that witnessing the wounds of the past is a necessary step that can potentially generate a space for growth.

An Invitation to Witnessing the Story of a Community

We have attempted to acknowledge and reflect on how personal loss influenced the theories we use in our practice. We noticed how exclusion has been a common experience in the professional lives of our forebears, having a multilayered impact from theory to leader and finally to group dynamics. We have seen how leaders have disappeared, leaving groups with a sense of abandonment and, in our case, its reverberation in the Romanian transactional analysis community.

The goal of writing this article is to contribute to creating a space in which thinking together becomes possible, in which the witnessing function of the community—of recognizing that which is unbearable and overwhelming—is carried out. It is our belief that when meaningful narrative and appropriate recognition become possible, we can finally experience a movement of ghosts into ancestors (Loewald, 1960).

As we attempt to help build this narrative, we can also look at the gifts that these leaders left us. They created a dynamic and complex theory and a diverse and lively community. Using these lenses, we can thus honor their resilience, which helped generate the development of this heritage.

For example, the making of our transactional analysis community was generated by Berne's resilience after being rejected by the San Francisco Psychoanalytic Institute. We view the rejection letter (Windholz, 1953) as a birth certificate for the future transactional analysis community. In Noriega's (2010) words, it is "the early scene in which the founder decides to create a new organization" (p. 199), in which the protocol of our community was shaped. In this context, it was interesting to see how difficult it was for us to find this rejection letter, which none of us had seen before (it is in the Berne Archive, see below). Thus, we see it of paramount importance that we start unveiling parts of our history that have found little space and words in the official discussions in our community.

Fortunately, we are not alone in our aim of witnessing these contents. There have been several other community members or groups who have made such efforts. Noriega (Noriega Gayol, 2004), Heathcote (2010, 2016), de Graaf and Rosseau (2015), and van Beekum (2016) all seem to witness contents of the transgenerational professional trauma of the TA community in terms of their specific areas of interests. In our understanding, they are thereby helping our community process part of the impact of the transgenerational professional trauma. Cornell (2000, 2010, 2016) has also been active in bringing together into discussion several aspects of Berne's writing and biography and also in supporting awareness about Schiff's place in our history as a community (Cornell, 2007, 2016).

However, the greatest group endeavor that has aimed to create a congruent story regarding Eric Berne as the founder of our community is the creation of the Eric Berne Archive (http://www.ericbernearchives.org), which contains many extremely valuable pieces regarding our community protocol and further history.

In a similar vein, a smaller scale project is Conversations in TA (www.conversationsinta.com), which presents interviews with the current "parents" of TA in video format so that the wider community meets the person behind the theory. In doing these, we followed through the interviewees' answers to what has become a standard ending question of these interviews: "If you were to meet Eric Berne now, what are three questions you would

ask him?" We found that there are two themes that stand out from all the answers: On the one hand, almost all interviewees found themselves curious about different aspects of Berne as a person (his life, losses, fears, resources, and meaning making); on the other, there seems to be a recurring curiosity about Berne and psychoanalysis (especially his take on the place and traces of psychoanalysis in the current TA community and theory). We understand these reemerging themes as showing traces of that which needs witnessing in our community, of our transgenerational professional trauma.

We find it significant that the vast majority of these writings and projects are recent, which we think signals a movement in our community toward linking various missing fragments and placing them in the wider context of our identity as transactional analysts. We also notice that this endeavor was taken on by theorists and leaders of the TA community who have also become a generation of significant parents of TA. We can also see their contributions as modeling the aforementioned difficult task of maturing and differentiating while integrating the past and choosing to belong, different from how Berne (1972) described himself as "a brave improviser, facing the world alone" (p. 312).

As a smaller group and a newer generation, we, the authors of this article, are also looking for a way of contributing to this process and thereby affirming our desire to belong to the community.

Disclosure statement

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