

Editorial: Many Members of One Body

Greg Johanson

This is a double issue of the *Hakomi Forum*, because when I was working on issue 28 in 2015, I had an accident. The story—complete with pictures—of teaching in Hong Kong and Japan, taking an eighteen hour flight home, falling asleep while driving, hitting a truck, and then going through surgery and extensive rehab can be found in the gracious website report set up by some former students: <https://www.gofundme.com/ilovegregjohanson>

Thank you again, to all who were so understanding and generous with me, and helped me come through the experience with many unexpected benefits.

In 2015, the Hakomi Institute was also busy working with the publication of important new 2015 books: *Hakomi Mindfulness-Centered Somatic Psychotherapy* published by Norton (Weiss, Johanson, & Monda, Eds.); *The Handbook of Body Psychotherapy & Somatic Psychology* published in an English edition (originally German) by North Atlantic Press (Marlock and Weiss, Eds.); and *8 Keys to Practicing Mindfulness* published by Norton (Manuela Mischke Reeds, Author).

I'm happy that this edition has evolved with a theme related to diversity, cross-cultural issues, and underserved populations, issues that our faculty has struggled with over a number of decades. Thanks to Hakomi Trainer Shai Lavie for making a special effort to reach out to his students and colleagues, and encourage them to contribute. In Lavie's introduction to "Hakomi and the Underserved" there are a number of references to previous Hakomi efforts to address such issues in past years.

Dealing with cross-cultural issues is notoriously tricky. When I started doing clinical work in the late sixties, multi-cultural issues were barely acknowledged, let alone addressed. Too often therapeutic approaches were taught as if one size fits all. Feminist thought had not yet impacted masculine models. Hopefully, it is more clear today that all psychotherapy is value-based and value-directed, consciously or unconsciously, though it is alarming that a number of therapists still blithely assume they can suspend their values at will to be with any variety of others. Therapists must know that psychotherapy cannot be value-free, because values are implicit in all preferences followed, and explicit in all processes used. Too many think that they can be sensitive to those of other cultures simply by being nice, listening, and not overtly imposing themselves.

On a deeper level, we know that assumed, mainly unconscious values must be brought into awareness, assessed, and often redirected. For example, much Western-influenced psychotherapy promotes unthinkingly the values of clear thinking, openness to feelings, responsible choosing, effective communicating, and courageous acting. There are basic values implicit in each of these stances that may be assumed without question, especially if one has not lived in another culture long enough to realize one's own is only one among many. David Augsburger, in his ground breaking book, *Pastoral Counseling Across Cultures*, points out:

*If we reward clear and critical thinking, we are valuing rationality.
But this may be incongruent with a culture's core values.*

*If we support openness to feelings, we are valuing intuition and emotion.
But which feelings, in a setting where face is primary?*

*If we invite moral reasoning, we are valuing equality and justice.
But a culture may prize harmony and unity more than these.*

*If we suggest freedom of choice, we are valuing autonomy and independence.
But dependence and solidarity may be core values.*

*If we reinforce divergent perceiving and thinking, we are valuing creativity.
But repetition and conformity may be preferred.*

*If we advocate conflict mediation, we are valuing mutuality and equality.
But conflict suppression may be the cultural norm.*

So, things are definitely messy and complicated enough to evoke some humility. In his 1990 book, *The Dilemma of Psychology: A Psychologist Looks at His Troubled Profession*, Larry LeShan alerted the community to being sensitive to the importance of diversity and differences on many levels.

Human nature differs to a very considerable extent from place to place and time to time. A Hopi shepherd, a knight of the First Crusade, a 1980 Wall Street broker, and laboratory psychologist live in different worlds with different definitions of space, time, and honor, different life goals, different views of love and the meaning of death. . . . (LeShan, 1990, p. 60)

[Certainly,] we need different languages for different realms. . . . The “energies” in an electrical battery, a painting by Picasso, an angry crowd, and my hopes for the future are entirely different kinds of meanings and terms. The same word, used in different realms of experience, means something entirely different. (LeShan, 1990, p. 93)

Just think of practicing in America alone. What diversities between us might be found if we were working with an Eastern Oregon cowboy; a Native American living off or on a reservation; a Native American from a different tribe; a beautician from Houston; an African-American youth from the south side of Chicago; a white, middle-class doctoral student in Boston; a factory worker in Detroit; a street person in Atlanta; a Syrian immigrant in Minnesota; a small business owner in Kansas; an illegal immigrant dish washer from Honduras living in South Carolina, a retired retail worker in Tennessee living in a rural area or a large town; a ten-year-old who has already lived in seven foster homes; a poor woman without means who has been raped; a well-educated woman who has been passed over for promotions; a veteran who has been shot, a transgendered person in the military, plus _____?

Think of differences our European, South Pacific and Asian teams might suggest. We should also think of the differences in everyone who walks into our offices, even those from the same area or even the same family. Every person is so unique, with so many ways of integrating so many varied dispositions. Thus, psychotherapy is never boring. We never work with the same person twice. Hopefully, some of the research literature on the importance of collaboration between therapist and client, so much a part of Hakomi Therapy, can help. But, that does not amount to a formula. Even proposing mindfulness if it is pushing an agenda can be ill-conceived.

Underserved populations often suggest matters of money, resources, language, access, HMOs, prejudice, oppression, and more. On the encouraging side, when I, as an educated white guy, was doing urban agency work with poor African-Americans off the street, I found them quite amenable to doing mindful work when they figured out I was offering to help them mine the wisdom of their own experience, as opposed to telling them what to do. Plus, we have the witness of Harry Stack Sullivan who spent a career convincing his psychiatric colleagues that in terms of the deeply psychotic people they worked with, that we “are all more alike than different.”

In any case, I am very thankful to all our authors for venturing to engage in these difficult, complex, though rewarding areas with no clear guidelines, and for being willing to put their creative work in print so that we might all share and benefit from their experiences.

Steven Bindeman begins with some philosophical psychology that deals with Merleau-Ponty, the philosopher who possibly best dealt with the mind-body problem. Issues such as felt meaning, engaging the world through the lived body, and learning to sing the world are explicated, providing an intellectual base from which we can deal with any number of therapeutic matters.

Camillia Thompson also provides intellectual support from Jung and others for being aware of the cultural level or layer of the unconscious, how it manifests somatically, and how Hakomi and RCS can work with both collective and personal parts of the ego.

Belinda Siew Luan Khong deals with a hidden population that is paradoxically over and underserved, namely those who have been assigned a terminal prognosis. Do they have rights to know or not know their condition? Khong explores this question and many others in relation to Anglo-Saxon and non Anglo-Saxon cultures in this fascinating paper that interweaves her personal experience with her dying mother, and her professional exploration of the field. Khong explores new ground that deserves a wide readership in the healing world today.

In her article, Sarah Tait-Jamieson deals with Hakomi in relation to Maori culture, including the process of Maori and European cultures meeting in Aotearoa, New Zealand (land of the long white cloud).

Rebecca Lincoln reports from the context of a non-profit agency that is able to support some underserved populations, and how Hakomi Therapy has worked in that setting.

Vivianne Shands, Kamal Ahmed, Christa Toro and Micah Anderson have studied with Hakomi Trainer Shai Lavie at Sophia University. In “Hakomi and the Underserved” they offer clinical reports of working with various populations.

In her “M.E.T.A. Counseling Clinic” article, Donna Roy gives an in-depth overview of how a resident Hakomi training team has established a counseling center that not only provides space for certified Hakomi therapists to practice, but a place where interns can be supervised for both Hakomi certification and state licensure, offering affordable care to the community in the process.

Susan Shawn, as a long-time Hakomi therapist who has been assigned a terminal prognosis, offers an alive, rich, personal, and professional review of Steven Jenkinson’s book on how to die in a wise way, paradoxically without hope that would separate one from the present moment.

Johanson reviews Louise Sundararajan’s important, though not widely available, book on Chinese emotions that is a doorway to rethinking Western mainline psychology, and how it could be so much more holistic by integrating its mirror image from the East.

Once again Carol Ladas-Gaskin offers poetry that brings another dimension to our work.

I hope you enjoy and are enriched by this edition of the *Forum*, and that you might consider writing articles yourself that are congruent with Hakomi principles outlined in the “Editorial Policy” guidelines, and/or suggest further ideas for thematic issues.