

Addendum to “A Qualitative Exploration of Relational Ethical Challenges and Practices in Psychedelic Healing”

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1–2

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It is a given that interpreting the results of any qualitative study requires an understanding of the positionality of the researchers. This is crucial to the validity of the results in that it enables consumers of the research to interpret the findings in light of any potential biases that the researchers may hold. In this spirit, I (WB), the first author of “A Qualitative Examination of Relational Ethical Challenges and Practices in Psychedelic Healing,” wish to highlight an aspect of my positionality that has become very significant to the results of this study since its publication.

On September 24th, 2021, allegations against psychedelic psychotherapy teacher Aharon Grossbard were made public, accusing him of boundary violations that include sexual contact with a client. Given the direct relevance of these allegations to the topic of this article, it is essential for me to disclose that Dr. Grossbard has been a teacher to me. I was unaware of any of the allegations made against him until they were made public. I do not have access to any additional information that would enable me to confirm or deny these allegations, and nothing in the following statement should be taken as such. My hope is that by disclosing my connection to him, the results of this study can be understood and discussed within a more complete consideration of their context.

Additionally, due to the “snowball sampling” method used to anonymously recruit participants for this study, it is likely that some of the participants whose perspectives were entered into the analysis may have received mentorship from Dr. Grossbard as well. Participant anonymity was maintained at all stages of the process, and their identities were never revealed to the interviewer (WB), so this can only be stated as a likelihood, not a fact. Nonetheless, this represents another important contextual consideration for readers of this study. It suggests that the “Prescriptive Themes,” or ethical practices that participants have found helpful may represent the perspective

of practitioners who have been informed by Dr. Grossbard's perspective on boundaries. If the allegations about his boundary practices are true, this would suggest that the practices of the participants in the current study should not be accepted or adopted uncritically. Instead, the results should be evaluated more judiciously as information about practices that underground practitioners have used, devoid of any implicit claims about their efficacy in preventing transgressions that may be read into them.

However, readers should also consider that the recruitment procedure were carefully designed efforts to avoid homogeneity in the participant pool, so it is unlikely that a majority of participants were connected to Dr. Grossbard. Additionally, the considerable degree of concordance that the 23 practitioners interviewed showed on most descriptive and prescriptive themes suggests that, while it is impossible to compare the utterances of practitioners influenced by Dr. Grossbard and those who were not, the differences between these groups may have been minimal. Still, this commonality should not be taken as evidence of these practices' efficacy in preventing transgressions.

Sexual boundary transgressions remain an unacceptable dark spot on psychedelic psychotherapy and psychology as a whole. They do grave harm to clients and violate section 10.05 ("Sexual intimacies with current therapy clients/patients") of the American Psychological Association's *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct*. We, the authors, still maintain our original hope that this research will inspire a much-needed public and academic conversation about the need for greater ethical rigor in psychedelic psychotherapy in order to prevent therapist sexual abuse and other forms of relational harm. We hope that disclosing these contextual factors further facilitates this crucial conversation.