



## **ISST Diversity Survey 2022 Secretary Report**

### **Introduction**

In an effort to develop a better sense of who we are as an organization, ISST's Executive Board conducted this diversity survey to gather demographic information on both clinician ISST members and their client population.

The Board would like to thank Phillip Tchernegovski for his guidance, insights, time and efforts, and for making this project happen.

We would also like to offer our deepest gratitude to all the ISST members who spent their valuable time completing this survey.

As we were completing this report during the transition of members in the role of EB Secretary, we decided to make the report a joint project of outgoing and incoming Secretaries, to ensure that insights gained from the survey will translate into future ISST diversity building projects in areas of research, clinical technique, member recruiting, and the ongoing project of improving equity, inclusion, and justice.

We present this report to ISST membership as an invitation for everyone to consider their own relationship to the question of diversity, equity and inclusion as mental health professionals with regard to improving the openness of schema therapy training and education, and our ability to address the needs of people overlooked or undervalued in societies and cultures worldwide, including within the ISST.

### **Background**

Over the course of 2022, we designed the survey and conducted a series of email outreach efforts via the ISST listserv to invite members to take the survey. We conducted several rounds of outreach with success, leading to over 10% of the member population completing the survey.

### **Survey Questions**

In addition to demographic questions on member and client population, we attempt to gather insights into the role of diversity in the experience of ST for members as well as their clients. We also made an effort to gather more qualitative data and detail on the question of diversity in schema therapy for practitioners and clients.



- Practitioner Diversity
  - As you will see, the survey addresses 15 categories of diversity.
  - We also ask whether the experience of diversity plays a role in being a schema therapist.
- Client Diversity
  - We ask members to provide demographic data on their clients in the same 15 categories.
  - We then ask members whether client diversity is a factor in client access to ST services
  - We also ask members for their opinion on which areas of diversity should be prioritized for schema therapy research and development of resources.
- Qualitative Questions
  - Were you raised in circumstances of hardship?
  - If you identify with any other form of diversity or minority that you think is important to have recognized, please list it below.
  - Please use the space below to describe how your diverse characteristics impacted your training/certification experience.
  - What resources or opportunities do you think would be helpful for addressing any challenges you experienced during training/certification due to diversity?
  - Please use the space below to describe how your diversity impacts your experiences of Schema Therapy practice.
  - What resources or opportunities do you think would be helpful for addressing any challenges you experience in your practice due to diversity?
  - If you indicated that Schema Therapy does not meet the needs of some of the people in the above question, please use this space to share your thoughts about this.
  - Which of the following populations do you think should be prioritized for research and developing resources to use in Schema Therapy?
  - Please use this space to describe how access to Schema Therapy is limited.
  - What do you think would help make Schema Therapy more accessible to diverse populations?
  - What do you think the ISST could do to make Schema Therapy more accessible to diverse populations?
  - Please use the space here to describe any other perspectives or concerns you have about Schema Therapy and diverse populations.

### **Examples of Responses to Qualitative Questions**

- “Schemas are cultural constructs and need to be adapted to the different populations”



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- “The number of certificated therapist is limited, and the therapy prices are expensive. So, people with low economic conditions cannot afford for therapy sessions.”
- “I would say that Schema Therapy is predominantly an intra-personal therapy. It pays less attention to power structures than e.g. Systemic Therapy, except I guess in childhood, where the imbalance is fully recognized. But I don't know that it overtly recognizes power in adult problems.”
- “By the fact that psychologists do not represent the diversity of clients needing help. I believe this in itself deters some client groups.”
- “Greater representation in the work force. How do you get this? Select for it in training courses. Stop training being open only to those who can afford to pay for it. Make clinical training more open, as it is in the UK.”
- “Psychotherapists have preconceptions towards different type of sexuality (and neurodiversity) or they don't have enough knowledge about these issues.”
- “Train therapists from diverse populations with financial support.”
- “Learning how to use schema therapy with a physical disability (e.g. challenges with chair work).”
- “I am concerning about clients who are deaf or blind. Especially deaf how to use imagery rescripting.”
- “Maybe to organize sections to group professionals who work with specific diverse population so they can exchange their experience and give each other additional support.”
- “Make it easier to achieve certification! Since the new standards (with 3 years practicing ST before for having the opportunity to be a supervisor) we lose a lot of colleagues on the way.”
- “ST doesn't offer specified information about working with minorities. I want to add, ST doesn't offer much help to people having existential concerns.”
- “I think asking clients from diverse populations would help- this could generate the most useful answers to this survey.”



- “I believe us therapists need more training programs about helping diverse populations. Also, ISST could create more events like conferences and workshops for diverse populations, addressing the issues they struggle with. I would definitely appreciate if there was an online resource where I could direct my clients to find some validating and supportive information they often need.”

### **General Observations**

As all members have access to the general survey, we invite you to make your own observations on survey outcomes and start dialogues. We would like to share some of our own.

- Overall Concern with Increasing Attention to Unmet Needs
  - A solid 3% of respondents state that ST does not meet diverse needs, around 18% say ST meets diverse needs "somewhat" while another 15-25% are "unsure."
  - This may indicate that as many as 40% of respondents believe there is room for improvement— in all areas.
  - ISST member population is under 5% gender diverse, and under 15% racial/ethnic and sexual diversity.
  - In some diversity categories, 60% of membership states that ST *already* meets the needs of diverse client population.
  - This may indicate that as much as 40% of the membership, *who are not of a diverse demographic*, are willing to say that ST meets the needs of diversity.

### **Further Gathering and Analysis of Client Feedback**

An element of member response which stood out is the fact that 40% of membership— who are not part of a diverse population— are willing to answer *on behalf* of diverse people, assuming that ST meets their needs.

These responses present as a clear call for further surveying of our clients, as a check on our own willingness to make assumptions about client needs. We need to ask these questions of our clients.

While ISST has limited resources, there may be research and funding opportunities to explore survey and evaluation methods to improve our insights into client needs and response to ST methods.

Deliberative practice, as a field, may be one such avenue to pursue.



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## **Recommendations: A Call for Member Involvement in Improving ISST Responsiveness to the Needs of Diverse Clinician and Client Populations**

Currently, ISST is managed by a small paid administrative staff and volunteer Board members and Committee chairs. In order to build on the insights of this survey and promote the mission of attending to diverse needs, the ISST needs more folks to volunteer some of their time to get involved. In addition to the challenging and insightful points raised by members in the qualitative responses, some areas of further exploration could include the following questions:

- How does racism, prejudice, and poverty impact client psychology?
- How does social strife (exile, immigration, disaster survival) impact modes and treatment outcomes?
- How do social issues impact self-esteem, parenting, and outlook in modes, especially the inner critic?
- How does physical limitations of the patient or clinician impact the delivery of ST?
- How should we include those findings into training manuals to empower clinicians in their work?
- How to help the Healthy Adult Mode navigate in life despite harsh environmental conditions?
- How can these factors be addressed with innovations in ST technique?

The Executive Board and office of the ISST Secretary hope to offer leadership and support on these issues in 2023.

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