Introduction

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Memory, Myth and Meaning: In a Time of Turmoil was the title of the national conference of the American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work (AAPCSW), which took place at the end of February of 2009 in New York City. At this conference, compelling presentations explored the shared trauma of war, the economy, politics, and immigration. In addition, practice issues included the analytic attitude, varying theoretical orientations, as well as neurobiology.

With the privilege of having been Conference Chair, I can attest to the contributions of the Conference Committee and the presenters that were essential to the success of the conference. We were all gratified by the excellent reviews of the audience who were enriched by the experience.

The ten papers in this issue were presented at the conference. Subsequently, they were submitted and selected by peer review for this *Journal*. They are a good assemblage of how authors associate to and address an overall title. Rich in clinical material and articulating theoretical underpinnings, the papers fall into three separate sections – Memory, Myth, and Meaning – though overlap exists between them.

Memory

Several papers addressed aspects of memory. In Susan Fox Horn's sensitively written paper, dissociated memories and affects are "thawed out" in the treatment of a suicidal patient who experienced herself as a "frozen embryo." Through treatment, the patient was able to form a personal narrative.

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Informed by neuroscience, developmental research and attachment theory in her comprehensive paper on dissociation, Susan Gill refers to memories that remain frozen in time and clinically illustrates attunement to implicit communications and dissociative enactments in treatment.

In Sheila Felberbaum's poetically constructed paper, memories of parents are "internally reconciled" in the mind of elderly patients facing illness and death. Therapeutic work with the elderly took place while the therapist was confronting personal grief in her life.

In his even-handed paper on Bruno Bettelheim, William Meyer demonstrates how Bettelheim's childhood fears and traumatic experience as an adult in the Holocaust contributed to his suffering from survivor's guilt and shame. These experiences and memories shaped his theories in working with autistic children and contributed to his controversial reputation.

Myth

In her illuminating paper, Wendy Winograd applies the Persephone myth to depict a girl's journey into adult sexuality and lifelong struggle around separation/individuation. The transference to a female therapist in the treatment of two adolescent girls who were raped is illustrated. In Winograd's view, the therapist became the link to the absent father.

Meaning

Meaning is sought in all treatments. The search is demonstrated in the clinical material of these papers. The papers that are grouped under this heading are the ones that redefine concepts or revisit theory.

In his groundbreaking paper, Crayton Rowe reconceptualizes the meaning of “object,” whereby attachment is not attributed to the maternal object, but to the experiences of the ministrations provided by the object. He applies this view to his discovery of the undifferentiated selfobject transference, a lifelong, fundamental experience of “knowing that there are unknown possibilities yet to be uncovered.”

In line with the object relations approach of James Masterson, Jerry Katz thoughtfully argues in his paper for a neutral stance, rather than a relational approach, when working with more disturbed patients. The use of this method is clearly illustrated in his treatment of a borderline patient.

In her poignant paper on the reintegration of returning combat soldiers into their communities, Martha Bragin points out that violence inherent in their experience needs to be acknowledged by both warriors and society. In this way, it incorporates meaning into their narratives. Therapists need to “tolerate thinking about the unthinkable.” As a discussant of Bragin’s paper, Theresa Aiello suggests that the therapist may also be experiencing new neurological pathways in understanding the soldiers.

Utilizing neurobiology and attachment research in her insightful paper, Diane Barth demonstrates the developmental importance and defensive function of both idealization and denigration of parents. She argues that integrating multiple meanings of parental behavior can enhance awareness of one’s self and the other.

Lastly, reexamining the core concept of countertransference in light of competing conceptualizations such as compassion fatigue, Joan Berzoff offers a much needed and long over-do clarification of their different sources, functions, and points of intervention.

Each paper is a gem worthy of your attention!

Our next national conference is titled *Connection in a My Space World: Embracing Culture and Creativity in Psychoanalytic Thought*. Under Conference Chair Joan Rankin’s leadership, it will follow the high standard of scholarship and elegance in the tradition of our previous conferences. Join us in Marina Del Rey, California, in March of 2011.

Author Biography

Penny Rosen, MSW, LCSW, BCD-P is in private practice in New York City, NY. She is the New York Area Chair and was the 2009 Conference Chair, American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work (AAPCSW). She is on the faculty, a training analyst, Board member, and chair of the continuing education committee, National Psychological Association for Psychoanalysis (NPAP); a faculty member and training analyst, New York Institute for Psychoanalytic Self Psychology (NYIPSP); a Board member of the Accreditation Council for Psychoanalytic Education Inc. (ACPE-inc); a reviewer, the Clinical Social Work Journal; a Board Certified Diplomate in Psychoanalysis (BCD-P) of the American Board of Examiners in Clinical Social Work; a distinguished practitioner member of the National Academies of Practice. Her MSW graduate schooling was at Hunter College School of Social Work; post-graduate training was at NPAP and NYIPSP.