

## Introduction

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Los Angeles served as the host city for the American Association for Psychoanalysis and Clinical Social Work (AAPCSW) Biennial Conference entitled “Connection in a My Space World: Embracing Culture & Creativity in Psychoanalytic Thought” which sought to explore the myriad ways stories are told and connections are made in the 21st Century. The members of the planning committee tried our best to embody a respect for culture in all its diversity, and to focus on creativity in psychoanalytic thought in this ever-changing world, due partly to the impact of technology on our lives. Even though we used ‘my space’ in our conference title, that social media was collapsing under the success of Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn among others, during our conference.

Our major themes were:

- Culture In All Its Diversity
- Creativity and Innovations in Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy,
- The Political Implications for Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy
- The Person of The Analyst
- The Modern Family in the 21st Century: Contemporary Families Adolescents, and Children

A highlight of the “Culture in All its Diversity” theme was illustrated best by Robert Stolorow, Ph.D. and his son Benjamin A. Stolorow in their paper “Blues and Emotional Trauma”. The process of bringing the visceral, bodily aspect of emotional experience into language plays a vital role in the working through of painful emotional states. The blues is a

wonderful example of such dialogue. In the unifying experience of the blues, songwriters, performers and listeners are joined in a visceral-linguistic conversation in which universally traumatizing aspects of human existence can be communally held and borne. Also, under this theme, Roger Frie, Ph.D. examined the bilingual interaction between a German-speaking second generation Holocaust survivor and a German-speaking analyst of German descent. By paying attention to the language shifts between German and English he exemplified that the therapeutic process is grounded in the culture and language of its participants.

The theme “Creativity and Innovations in Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy” was well represented in the works of Eagle, Rowe, and Trop. Morris Eagle, M.D. presented his work on Autonomy and Relatedness versus Self-absorption, expanding the psychoanalytic dialogue. Crayton Rowe, MSW extended Kohut’s theory with the unveiling of his concept of the psychoanalytic undifferentiated self-object. Also, Jeffery Trop, M.D. in his important paper “A Dynamic Process of Change” explores the application of dynamic systems theory to the psychotherapeutic situation. Although dynamic systems theory was originally applied to the study of chemistry, math and physics, its emphasis on contextualization provides a rich platform for the reconsideration of how change occurs in the therapeutic dyad.

In regard to the theme “Political Implications for Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy” Laura Groshong, MSW gives us an insightful peek into an analysis in which there were stark differences between patient and clinician politically that created hatred of her by the patient and hate in the countertransference. Groshong illustrates how the dyad was able to work through the impasse through the use of the therapeutic relationship, leading to a better appreciation of their differences.

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The Person of the Analyst was a theme well-represented at the conference by the works of Shatsky, Rankin, and Warner. In her clinical case, Paula Shatsky, MFT, ATR shared the story of a patient who, after conquering a lifetime of depression learned in the therapist's care, was struck down by Lewy Body Disorder, a rare form of dementia at 42. One of Shatsky's main concern was not knowing how changing the frame would impact the patient and treatment outcome. Shatsky also tells us how she bore the struggles and the complications as well as countertransferences of this unique case, to the end of her patient's life. Carol Ganzer, MSW provides commentary on Shatsky's case and drawing from her own practice, addresses the issue of how altering the frame impacts both patients and therapists.

Joan Rankin, MSW, Psy.D. presents her paper "Disorganizing Paralysis of the Clinician's Mind as a Property of a System of Treatment." It speaks to the phenomenon of "psychic numbing" in the clinician's capacity to understand and respond to a patient's highly turbulent reaction to a personal crisis of the clinician. Through gaining an understanding of the different meanings of the re-traumatizations for both the patient and the clinician, the clinician became able to re-capture her own mind, and respond differently to the patient, calming the turbulence of the treatment. Also, addressing the theme of the analyst's person, Ashley Warner, MSW explores the contributions of Heinz Kohut, as well as Self Psychology's conceptualization of art and healing on both an individual and cultural level. The roles of normative narcissistic development, selfobject experience and empathy are emphasized in the formation and maintenance of creative expression.

The theme of "The Modern Family in the 21st Century: Contemporary Families Adolescents, and Children" was a popular conference subject, and the articles by Edward, Paris, Sable, Frost, and Gower. Joyce Edward, MSSA presented on "Sibling Discord: A Force For Growth and Conflict" which introduces readers to the benefits and pitfalls of sibling rivalry. Eileen Paris, Ph.D., Psy.D. presented an insightful paper "Interrupting Trauma and

Advancing Development: Considering Parent Education in Contemporary Psychoanalysis" which integrates two modalities that can have a powerful effect on parents and children in its ability to halt the intergenerational transmission of trauma. The article highlights the *Parenting Process*, an integrative model of parent education that is at once educational and therapeutic.

Also under the theme of the modern family, Pat Sable, Ph.D., using the ethological-evolutionary framework of Attachment, Neuroscience, and animal studies proposes that a relationship with a family pet, especially a dog or cat, reflects certain dynamics of attachment; this may account for the sense of comfort and connection they provide to their owners at all levels of the life cycle.

Velia Frost, MSW introduces us to "Tensions of Marriage: Love, Cooperation, Capitulation, and Annihilation". She posits that these are the inevitable conflicts that married couples can expect due to the mutual subjugation experienced by all couples in an intimate relationship. Relatedly, Maxine Gower, LCSW, NCPsyA, in her paper "Revenge: Interplay of Creative and Destructive Forces", reveals a theory about the degrees of revenge which reveals both the inherent ubiquity, self-preservative and adaptive propensity of revenge, when considered in degrees of usefulness. Gower states that we are living in a time when revenge is in the air.

In conclusion, as social workers and psychoanalysts we recognize that the potential for social and political action is omnipresent, whether we are actively engaged therein or not. We also wish to draw on and strengthen our sense of community and build our sense of connection as valuable operatives in the 21st century.

### Author Biography

**Joan Rankin** LCSW, Psy.D. is in private practice in Los Angeles. She is the Los Angeles Chair of The American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work (AAPCSW). Dr. Rankin is a Board Member, and Training and Supervising Analysts of ICP (Institute of Contemporary Psychoanalysis) in Los Angeles.