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# All That Is Solid Melts into Air: Zooming in Unprecedented Times

Jeffrey Prager

“All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned.” In his 1848 *The Communist Manifesto*, Karl Marx anticipates how capitalism depends on constant technological innovation with increasingly efficient machinery in his time and, now, with the globalization of the marketplace, an ever-improving internet. For Marx, this process always results in worsening and thinning relationships between human beings. A person’s value increasingly becomes defined as transaction; vestiges of humane, more ethical bonds between one another disappear. Connections between people that had once been solid and stable dissolve over time becoming always more ephemeral and instrumental. As that process within capitalism reaches its denouement, Marx insists, “Man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind.”

For now, because of the pandemic, only “virtual” psychoanalytic relationships are possible. For us, the

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sanctity and solidity of the consulting room has been upended, dramatically replaced by the technological limitations proscribed by the internet. Long before the coronavirus, psychoanalysis struggled with how enthusiastically to embrace this new technological capacity that enables the therapist to practice his or her trade absent in-the-room interaction. Today, we are faced with no alternative: We exist in a post-viral age. What had suddenly occurred, I imagined, was the degradation of my working day. What had been holy between me and my patient was profaned.

Months into our lockdown, I do not speak so confidently. The virtual experience, as a rule, is not as bad as I imagined. Without a doubt, it is a different way to engage with another. No longer can I ensure a physical space for my patients to explore their inner worlds or the privacy of their own thoughts. Instead, they confront the real constraints imposed by their living arrangements. Some of my patients have adapted more successfully than others. The few patients who decided to take a hiatus from treatment, while expressing various reasons including “not having anything to talk about,” nonetheless seem less able to pursue their own self-

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# Reimagining APsaA – Continued

Bill Glover and Kerry Sulkowicz



Bill Glover



Kerry Sulkowicz

Our first column, in the fall issue of *TAP*, on “Reimagining APsaA” gave a broad vision for the Association’s future. This vision builds on multiple efforts—the Strategic Planning Task Force, calls for racial justice, taking positions and organizing programs on social issues, correcting injustices within APsaA, all the work that led to the 6-Point Plan with the restructuring of governance and the creation of the Department of Psychoanalytic Education (DPE), and many more.

The features of *Reimagining* stem from our evolution in governance, educational standards, social engagement, self-examination on race and gender, while maintaining excellence in psychoanalytic education.

*Reimagining* is a vision for a plan to be developed in the coming months through dialogue across the Association with all stakeholders in a variety of settings: committee meetings, forums at meetings, local discussions, town halls, board meetings, and online exchanges.

The focus of this column is *Reimagining* APsaA membership. This initiative comes from the work of the Expanded Membership Task Force (previously the Psychotherapy Membership Task Force). The ideas presented are for discussion and elaboration as we work together to secure APsaA’s future.

*Bill Glover, PhD*, is president of APsaA.

*Kerry Sulkowicz, M.D.*, is president-elect.

## Reimagining APsaA Membership A Home for Psychoanalytic Thought and Practices

How will we define the family that lives in the APsaA home? The philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein suggested replacing the essence of a category or a concept (to determine what belongs and what does not) with family resemblance, that is, there are similarities and differences, but not one characteristic common to all. Adapting what he says to the concept of psychoanalytic: Our family includes all psychoanalytic thought and practices, their features overlapping and crisscrossing. We extend our concept of psychoanalytic as in spinning a thread we twist fiber on fiber. And the strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that one fiber runs through its whole length but in the overlapping of many fibers.

— *Britt-Marie Schiller, Head, Department of Psychoanalytic Education*

One decade into its second century, APsaA is poised to become a richer and more welcoming organization through vigorous policies of inclusion and correction of injustices. A better and necessary future for APsaA will consist of a membership more diverse in race, gender, geographic location, cultural heritage, and age. APsaA will be a home for psychoanalytic thought and practices, building on but not limited to education and clinical practice in psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic psychotherapy, including research, scholarship, and psychoanalysis in the community. These intertwined fibers of the psychoanalytic fabric support and strengthen one another.

In these challenging times, psychoanalysis has a great deal to offer in addressing social as well as individual

trauma and suffering. We urgently need a strong national voice to impact interdisciplinary and public conversations and promote our values and thinking, support research, influence public policy, and advocate for psychoanalytically based treatment while listening to and learning from others. APsaA can provide this voice and reaffirm its leading role in mental health by actively including members from the broader psychoanalytic community.

The potential for broadening the scope of APsaA membership has been demonstrated by the enthusiastic response to the spontaneous opening of our institutional borders during the Covid-19 pandemic. We are providing resources to the public, free training and peer consultation to mental health professionals who are adapting their practice during the pandemic and opening our Covid Town Halls to the entire psychoanalytic community. We are perceived as more welcoming and hospitable, and it is a breath of fresh air to see so many new faces joining familiar ones.

The scope of *Reimagining* APsaA membership follows over 20 years of considering membership for psychoanalytic psychotherapists. Many institutes/centers have developed psychotherapy training programs that enrich and strengthen them. Exposure to psychoanalysis motivates therapists to want more for themselves and for their patients. Some go on to seek analytic training; others practice psychotherapy or use psychoanalysis in other ways.

We now recognize APsaA is strongest if we support the full breadth of psychoanalytic thought and practice and welcome researchers, scholars, and advocates into the community as full members. Synergy among our various constituencies will advance psychoanalytic thinking and promote contemporary psychoanalysis.

*Reimagining* APsaA membership quickens the pace of change, building on

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## Reimagining APsaA

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years of work nationally and locally, and can make psychoanalysis more vital, accessible, and influential in today's world.

The Task Force on Expanded Membership is developing a proposal to present in 2021. There are myriad details to consider in a reorganization of this scope. The preliminary sections that follow address important concepts and decisions with the understanding that they will evolve and we will go into greater, more nuanced detail as the plan is developed in dialogue across the Association. The culminating step will be a comprehensive bylaw amendment.

To further discussion, here are core assumptions for Reimagining APsaA and suggestions for new membership groups:

### Core Assumptions - Reimagining APsaA A Conceptual Guide to an Inclusive APsaA

**Diversity, Equity, Inclusion** APsaA strives for a demographically diverse membership with equitable rights/benefits and inclusion throughout the Association.

**Pluralism** APsaA values diversity in psychoanalytic thought and respects different uses of psychoanalysis. All members are united by shared values and common goals.

**Democracy** All members are eligible to vote and stand for office, including president. New membership categories will be represented on the Board and other administrative bodies.

**Local Option** APsaA institutes/centers determine their own membership criteria, choose their own forms of democratic governance, and may exceed APsaA Educational Standards. The APsaA DPE is available for assistance.

**Integration** New membership constituencies will be integrated into APsaA governance, education, programming, and other activities to the fullest extent

possible with meaningful and proportionate representation.

**Educational Responsibility** Delineation of responsibility for education will be specified where functionally necessary, with communication and collaboration within the organizational structure.

**Stepwise Evolution** Implementing a *Reimagined* APsaA requires compromise and flexibility. To achieve the consensus necessary for change to occur, some steps may be incremental and evolve over time.

### Proposed APsaA Membership Categories

A key feature of *Reimagining* APsaA is expanding membership by drawing from a number of constituencies, as listed below. A question for discussion is whether those groups should be identified as belonging to different formal membership categories, or all be characterized simply as APsaA members, with equal benefits, voting rights, and eligibility for all nationally elected offices, with the following criteria and qualifications:

**Psychoanalysts** Open to all graduates of a program in clinical psychoanalysis at an APsaA or IPA institute, or to those who demonstrate substantially equivalent psychoanalytic training and experience. Psychoanalyst members shall be primarily responsible for education and qualification in psychoanalysis.


**Psychoanalytic Psychotherapists** Open to all graduates of a program in clinical psychotherapy at an APsaA institute, or to those who demonstrate substantially equivalent training and experience in psychoanalytic psychotherapy. Psychotherapist members would be primarily responsible for education and qualification in psychoanalytic psychotherapy.

**Academics** Open to graduates of a didactic program at an APsaA institute, or to educators and scholars who demonstrate interest in psychoanalysis in their work.

**Researchers** Open to graduates of a didactic program at an APsaA institute, or to scientists who demonstrate interest in psychoanalysis in their work.

**Community Advocates** Open to community members who are interested in psychoanalysis and support the mission of APsaA.

Each of the first four groups will have a corresponding category of Candidate or Student membership, but with some limitations to voting rights and eligibility to hold office.

As we have pointed out, *Reimagining* APsaA is an evolving document that will change in dialogue across the APsaA membership. We look forward to lively debate culminating in the adoption and implementation of a comprehensive plan for a sustainable and reinvigorated Association. 

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## All That Is Solid Melts into Air

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exploration. I will return to this at the end of these reflections.

Still, there are many features that remain the same. When I reflect on my reaction to the script “*the internet connection is unstable*” in session, as an accusation that I haven’t adequately provided for my patient, it’s not much different than when we shared the same space. It reminds me of those rare occasions when someone, like a delivery person, would knock on my consulting room door during a patient hour. Then, annoyed at the disturbance, my concentration and focus broken, and protective of the patient’s privacy, I would

forces us to confront ourselves and our interpersonal relationships in ways that might otherwise have escaped our attention.

I find myself often exploring with my patients’ fundamental existential questions otherwise obscured in the comfort and safety of the office.

### **Precarity, or the “World’s” Vulnerability**

In almost an instant, we were forced to accommodate to a new realization: our precarity to the danger of infection by a virus for which we have no immunity. However felt, in abandoning my office, the illusion of a vast chasm between my patients and me, at least for a time, powerfully dissolved. We were all doing the best we could to navigate treacherous waters. One patient reported feeling

their experiences of radical uncertainty. For both of us, we felt the contingent quality of decision-making as we tried to adapt to the powerfulness

and complexity of a world over which we have little control. The asymmetry of power inherent in the analytic relationship, for a time at least, was rattled. The actual conditions of mutually shared precarity became front and center.

The intensity of that moment has passed, the novelty of our meeting on Zoom has worn off and the pre-existing routine has returned, more or less. But I know that the forcefulness of a permanent and solid world we relied on has been profoundly shaken. We don’t yet know whether the visceral realization of human fragility in the world will be more permanently inscribed in our consciousness. Will the universality of this shared experience of human vulnerability make us all more ecologically mindful? Will the largely unchecked impulse to master nature, as if it were possible, generate instead a more authentic relation to our real place in nature?

### **Solitude and Finitude**

The pandemic brought a rapid retreat into our homes, halting immediate plans, calling into question long-range ones, and squelching visions for the future. We were required to reside more fully in the present and live within our inner selves. We shared in the experience of solitude, radical downscaling expectations in which we became less reliant on the outside world of people and things for stimulation. What now seems to be a nearly compulsive desire for novelty of experiences—travel, restaurants, entertainment, new cars, new people—has been called into



Jeffrey Prager

*Virtuality does not weaken feelings and behaviors essential to the analytic relationship.*

quickly handle the breach, apologize to the patient for the intrusion and, more to the point, feel as if I failed to provide the kind of safety I implicitly promise. When I am unable to provide a stable and strong internet signal, I similarly experience impatience as if I am letting down the patient. Even that has receded, as we together adjust to the realities of today’s world. I am able to demonstrate my reliability, punctuality, and my capacity to create and maintain a sense of care and responsibility for the patient’s well-being. Virtuality does not weaken feelings and behaviors essential to the analytic relationship.

There is nonetheless a truth to Marx’s original assertion that this new technological capacity makes us all “face... our real conditions of life and [our] relations with [our] kind.” For those we treat and for ourselves, our new reality—the necessity for self-isolation and our dependence on internet technology—

reassured, seeing me via Zoom in the safety of my home. She reported that until then it was difficult to hold a view of me as existing outside my office and, therefore, with the virus sweeping the world, especially vulnerable. I could hear her concern for me and my importance to her. Those feelings could no longer be so neatly bracketed off as when she could more comfortably think of us as in my office together “doing therapy.”

In the immediate aftermath of the lockdown last spring, my distress at not seeing my patients in person surfaced vividly. It was not unlike in the aftermath of a Southern California earthquake, when fear, danger, and uncertainty undid our routine. Then and now, I felt freer, even compelled, to share my own experiences with my patients, including what precautions I took to protect myself. In this instance especially, my own need to improvise with respect to the unexpected made me better appreciate

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question. For many of my patients, this scaled-down life has come to feel surprisingly centering, offering a greater confidence in their own capacity for self-care.

Simultaneously, as physical and emotional vulnerabilities are confronted, so too is the reality of one's own death. We are forced to acknowledge our own finitude. Many of my patients, with a more stripped away perception of time, feel greater urgency to realize their life. I have found this especially among people of color. For them, their finitude is more profoundly experienced, especially because of recent reminders that life can be instantaneously taken away because of the color of their skin. Seeing their own vulnerability with greater clarity, they engage their treatment with a more vivid sense of time passing and opportunities potentially lost.

In short, the locus of personal experience has shifted away from the "mundane"—the life world—and toward more "sacred" existential issues of being. Here again, more than reliance on a new technology, our retreat to Zoom comes to represent existential uncertainty. Zoom becomes a prod to face the "real conditions of life" rather than superficial distractions.

### **Loneliness and the Uprising Against It.**

For many, especially young people, Covid-19 threatens to evaporate hard fought gains in creating a place of one's own—a sense of forging and securing one's individuality and personal autonomy. This experience is surely aggravated for some by the near-absence of any collective expression that unites their own responsible behavior with serving a public good or the common welfare. We live in a nation that, rather than providing a sustaining linkage between individual initiative and the collective good, demands that individuals fend for themselves and socially isolate. This contributes to

loneliness, feelings that one does not matter to anything or to anyone. Anger, defiance, denial, anxiety, somatization, lethargy, and retreat all function to defend against loneliness.

urgency. Protesters stood against systemic anti-Black police brutality and a political leadership refusing to articulate a common national purpose and a collective vision for the future. In my view, the ubiquity and durability of the protests express a refusal, especially by the young, to tolerate simultaneously drastic social isolation and

*In this moment, anti-racism and anti-loneliness are powerfully linked together.*

By loneliness, I mean not an existential crisis but rather an expression of profound social failure. For me, keeping this kind of patient in treatment has presented a serious challenge; without social supports to encourage idealistic, even grandiose, purpose for which to prepare, the uncertainty of any planned future, and financial insecurity, the motivation to work on oneself becomes very precarious indeed.

No one could have anticipated the sudden acts of near universal condemnation of police brutality, systemic racism, and racial injustice in America in the midst of the pandemic. Following the death of George Floyd in May 2020, massive multiracial demonstrations throughout the country burst forth and they have endured. They take place in big cities and small, and in urban, suburban, and rural parts of the country. The starkly disproportionate number of Black Americans who have died from the virus highlighted the undeniable truth of racial inequality.

This social uprising would likely not have attained either the breadth or intensity of expression had it not been for the Covid-19 lockdown and the social isolation it created. The protests required individuals to forswear best practices that otherwise serve to protect them from infection. This "acting-out" occurred as a unified vision of America, one no longer divided by racism, gained strength and

a radical rejection of white inhumanity toward Blacks. In this moment, anti-racism and anti-loneliness are powerfully linked together.

Marx's invocation that new technology forces us to confront, in the new ways, "the relations between [our] kind," might capture, at least in the U.S., today's moment in ways that Marx could not anticipate. The rallying cry that "all lives matter only when Black Lives Matter" suggests a new sensibility and a new subjectivity among people—dramatically forged in the course of these protests against police brutality, with the pandemic as its backdrop. Beset by the affective realization that life is both precious and brief, the uprising embodies the realization that overcoming loneliness requires a world that cares for everyone, not just some. Millions of protesters proclaim that America cannot be whole until "our kind" has no racialized referent.

Only now has the reality and morally bankrupt character of white supremacy come into sharp focus. This is not a new insight for African-Americans, but it may be for others. What is solid that has melted into air may not be our discovery that therapy can occur without a physical office but rather our complacency with which we imagined that, following the pandemic, our nation will return to the way it was.

APSA

# Covid-19, George Floyd, Racism, Psychoanalysis, and Music

Julie Jaffee Nagel

Like many of you, I tuned into the APsaA Sunday Town Halls on Zoom when we first began the lockdown and found them supportive and thoughtful. For a large group of members, many of whom know each other only through badges at APsaA national meetings or on Open Line postings, there was an extraordinary sense of camaraderie and sharing personal feelings. Kerry Sulkowicz and William Glover provided a safe and welcoming atmosphere.

At the beginning of the third Town Hall, in reply to Kerry Sulkowicz's question "How are you all doing and what's helping you during this time?" I was particularly moved to hear several members comment that music provided relief for personal and professional fears. Particularly poignant, was the comment by one member who recently lost his mother and mentioned the comfort a particular musical composition brought to his mourning. Two of the Town Halls concluded with recorded music provided by William Glover.

As I write in mid-summer, we are moving beyond our initial efforts to scramble to adjust to working remotely with patients, the initial rise and fall of the Covid-19 curve, and tragically, a Covid-19 surge occurring again in July. Additional trauma including the murder of George Floyd, civil protests, exposure of systemic racism,

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unemployment, a conundrum around opening schools, and analysts' anxieties about safely returning to their offices—or not—has exacerbated Covid-19 anxiety.

## Oral and Aural Roads: An Intersection of Music and Psychoanalytic Ideas

In many analytic sessions, currently and past — not unlike in the APsaA Town Halls — a number of my patients have recalled music in their lives. Mr. T. spoke about a "spectacular concert" he attended and "wished I could have heard the music." Exploring his comment in our session, he revealed his wish that I could have been with him at the concert. Mr. C. softly hummed

melodies as he walked from my waiting room to my consulting room, totally unaware, until I inquired, that he was remembering a special song. Ms. D. recalled that as a child, she shared music with a currently estranged parent and associated to her faded but ever-present wish to establish an adult relationship with this parent.

Classically trained as both a musician and a psychoanalyst, I feel acutely attuned to melodies in our minds. I am curious about what resonates intrapsychically when words have limited value. What brings particular music to my mind — or to your mind? Why did Leonard Bernstein's "Age of Anxiety" (especially the Masque movement) comfort me immediately following the heartbreaking, untimely death of my mother? Sometimes, melodies enter my



Julie Jaffee Nagel

mind when my patient is not associating to music, and this influences my response. In my clinical work I have noticed my patients soften their

defenses, express affect, and recall memories that resulted in fruitful associations from their past, relevant to present relationships, and expressed in their relationship with me. Can analysts creatively use music both inside and outside our consulting rooms to reach out to a public that is coping with the pandemics of illness, loss, death, racism, and murder? My answer is yes.

The polyphonic, or multiple functions


*Music is always present inside the consulting room when we listen and pay close attention.*

of music, like overdetermined principles in psychoanalysis, enable us to feel both elevating and disquieting dynamics simultaneously. I remember once saying to my analyst, "I wish I could speak like a full orchestra so I could talk about all the feelings I am having at the same time. With music you can play more than one note at the time." With words, you can only say one word at the time. "Multiple formal musical elements resonate with the disparities among simultaneously conflicting impulses, defenses, affects, and actions that we and our patients share. We hear the resonance and nuance of music in our analysts' associations, their tone of voice, the rhythms in their speech, the timing and length of their silences, and the power of

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## CrossCurrents Part II

Michael Slevin, Special Section Editor

The election is behind us. The pandemic continues. Racism remains in the forefront of APsA and the nation's dialogue. With that in mind, we complete our series of brief essays on the way our lives as clinicians have been affected. The suddenness of infection in our bodies and the uprising that compelled conscious recognition of the long-term damage of systemic racism have segued into the familiar and a long slog of change and commitment. Yet the three essays here printed are as timely as when written in the heat of summer. I offer you the gift of three fine writers: Lisa Roth, Tareq Yaqub and Matthew von Unwerth. 



Michael Slevin

*Michael Slevin, M.S.W., is a psychotherapist in private practice in Baltimore and co-editor with Beverly Stoute, M.D., of a book, The Trauma of Racism: Lessons from the Therapeutic Encounter, forthcoming under the Routledge imprint.*

## Coronavirus Has Infected the Internet!

Lisa Roth

Augustus\*, a little boy with feelings as big as his name, stood at his window and asked me to stand at mine. It was our first video session during the pandemic after two years of treatment. I waved, jumped, and shouted, but he could not find me. He turned from his window to the screen.



Lisa Roth

"Dr. Roth, where is your house, anyway?"

A pang of guilt. I had left the city, and him, on the coattails of my privilege.

"My house is in the Catskills."

"Oh, well then I definitely can't see you. My house is in the Bronx."

*Lisa Roth, M.D., is a child, adolescent, and adult psychiatrist in private practice in New York City (downtownpsychiatry.com) and a child and adolescent psychoanalytic candidate at the New York Psychoanalytic Society and Institute.*

One missed session, and then another. His aunt would appear on screen and say he refused to come. Their house had curtains, not doors, so I assumed he could hear me. If he was angry at me, I said into the ether, maybe we could talk or play about it in session.

I saw his face, a chubby finger coming towards the camera, then black.

"Internet disconnecting! Internet disconnecting! Coronavirus has infected the internet!"

"Oh no! I was so excited that Augustus was finally going to play with me for our session, and now coronavirus has infected the internet and I can't see him after all? I am so sad and angry and disappointed! I wish more than anything that we were back in the office so we could play together like normal!"

A whisper coming from the blackness. "Dr. Roth, you have to restart Windows."

"Oh phew! I just have to restart Windows and then I'll see Augustus after all. Such an easy fix. BEEP! WINDOWS RESTARTING."



"THIS IS YOUR WINDOWS OPERATING SYSTEM. REBOOTING. 1%... 2%... 3%..."

"Wow, this is going to take a really long time."

"20%... 99%..."

"Oh yay! I will see him so soon!"

"7%..."

"Oh no! I'm never going to see him!"

"80%... 98%..."

"Yay!"

"32%..."

"No!"

I was helpless at the hands of the coronavirus, which had infected our treatment. He did not even have a door to close, a space that deigned to mimic the private world we shared in my office. He would not pretend that video was the same, that my leaving was okay, that we were still together. My guilt was my own to bear. But now, at least, we could play about being apart.

\*Not his real name



# Time Travel, Teleportation, and Telepsychiatry

Tareq Yaqub

I hate the virus. I'm pacing through the sepulcher, otherwise known as my apartment, wondering how my social distancing sacrifices will be monumentalized within these walls. I'll surely die here confined by these 600 square feet. I am deeply alone, and yet I am bombarded by notifications of "connection." This living space has also become my workspace and my place of leisure. Days become nights and, in the absence of routine, time collapses.

I stare at myself in the mirror and begin to laugh at the absurdity of my wardrobe: a shirt, tie, and a new pair of

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sweatpants: my patient will never know. I am tying my tie and I am flooded by memories of my father walking me through the motions, hundreds of times, until I learned to master it on my own. I'm finding it particularly difficult to tie a knot today. "Stop thinking about it and do it," I tell myself, echoing my father. I miss my father's voice.

Time and space have lost their coherence before. I remember first coming to terms with the idea of a "time zone" when my family, excluding my father, immigrated to the United States when I was six years old. For various



Tareq Yaqub

reasons, Baba was forced to stay in Saudi Arabia for one year after the rest of us departed. I recall both the pain and the wonder of speaking to my father on the phone: he under the night sky and I under the sun. Our voices were the bridge between day and night. At times, I thought our voices alone would shatter the distance. I pictured the sound waves that connected us traveling through the telephone wires I had seen earlier that day. I imagined what it would be like to join those waves on that journey through the wires to once again reconnect with my father. Despite my inability to metamorphosize into a sound wave, I found myself, nightly, in Virginia, in Riyadh, under the sun, under the moon, so near to my father, and yet so far, all at the same time.

I write this now, envying my previous ability to exist outside of time and space. For now, however, I have finally tied my tie and can't be late for my patient: He has been struggling with the isolation brought about by the virus. 

# The Frame and the Lens

Matthew von Unwerth

In the middle of the journey through my analytic training, I had a patient who wondered to the point of insisting why psychoanalysis couldn't be conducted *en plain air*, walking together in some shared landscape instead of him lying beneath my chair, in my office. I dutifully, perhaps breezily, certainly defensively, recited the

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accumulated thinking that had glacially gathered — even as our forebears practiced their craft through the disruptions of war, persecution, displacement, economic calamity, and exile — to forge the fearful asymmetries of the analytic frame: the chair and the couch, the purse and the pocket, the fastened, shortened "hour," the analyst's space housing the patient's mind, in person, but at an angle — in



Matthew von Unwerth

order to delineate the analytic relationship from all those other kinds of being with-others on whom one must cling or rely, endure, respond, or relate. Those conditions, informed by the doctrine of abstinence from gratification which was considered so central to analysis in its early, randy days, were understood (by me) to foster, through their idiosyncrasy, transparency, and constancy, to allow the dyad to dispense with the semantic anguish of civilized life, and focus on the mental and internal experience of the patient, to the approximate exclusion of reality.

Convincing not even to myself, my patient — who was after something I couldn't yet apprehend — had no use for my reasons, and though he

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## The Frame and the Lens

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grudgingly tolerated the rules of our engagement, the gauntlet was down, and, before long, he assayed various inspired infractions against the frame. With my half-hearted endorsement, and with my supervisors' eyes on me, the patient sat on the floor, then lay on the floor, then insisted we switch chairs; once he hung upside down. Later on, we played with time — shorter and longer sessions, floating appointments — which, to my relief, the patient found even less congenial than I did.

But really, why, apart from the anxiety of scrutinized inexperience that analytic training entails, should I have

ultimately, we learned that much of what I had to tell the patient about himself according to the theories with which I prosecuted him was of far less use than what he had to show me about what it was to be him, and that it was work enough for a long time to bear witness to his mind, and his yearning to be both idiosyncratically himself and also acknowledged and cherished for his becoming. For it was in that witnessing, in our embroiled reaching and not being reached and yet still reaching, that he could feel himself somewhat known, fleetingly seen, provisionally less separate, less *mediated*.



the sudden disclosure, through barking and baking and other irruptions of our own humanity into an analytic frame newly mediated by the camera eye, we are learning new ways to work, ways that were proscribed by custom if not training, until made urgent by our and our patients' mutual need. And now, having abdicated so many of the familiar symbols, guardrails and first things of our practice, we are left to ponder, as my patient and I did long ago: How shall we find one another again, what is really required to witness the mind of another, and can our patients still use us to find out what they come to us for?

Several years further on into the treatment, I was inadvertently locked out of my office at just the time I was to meet with my patient, and I hastily arranged for a substitute space. The space was just a few minutes away, and so we walked there together. The initial moments, which were not unfamiliar from rides we had occasionally shared in the elevator, had an anxious and uncertain quality for both of us, but then we adjusted to the new situation, and we began to talk as we might in the office. It was not lost on either of us that we had accidentally finally realized the patient's early wish. As it turned out, my patient and I did have our walking analysis, and managed to find ourselves together again in the new frame. [APSA](#)

*...we are learning new ways to work, ways that were proscribed by custom if not training, until made urgent by our and our patients' mutual need.*

cared? As we came to understand together, all of this playing with the frame wasn't simply a matter of working out the nature of control in the relationship (though it was that), but the founding of the relationship itself. In wanting to know what could be changed about the place and the way we interacted, the patient was asking would this be a collaboration; could he count on our relationship to move with him and still be constant, and above all, could he get with me what he had come for, and be sure it was his and not mine?

In due course, I had to learn with this patient (for that was what was needed) to dispense with not a few of the rules I had learned: We opened and read his mail together in my room when the pile grew too large in the patient's mind; we spoke by phone when the effort of finding the office was too great;

Now, *de golpe*, psychoanalysis, so intrinsically concerned with the mediation of inner experience, must suddenly contend with the mediations of film, the Modernist twin with whom it has so long shared the frame. And now we all find ourselves with certain rules dispensed, rules that we might have been cautiously considering before, in terms (we'd tell ourselves) of what was effective, therapeutic, ethical, developmentally informed, in the patient's interest, but perhaps also a little defensively, fearful of some disintegration if how we are with patients were to become too estranged from our inheritance and self-conception. Trading face time for FaceTime, evacuating our offices (for many of us, the incarnation in space of our therapeutic identities), confronting

# DIVERSITIES

Justin Shubert, Diversity Editor

## Analyzing Psychoanalytic Racism

Mark J. Blechner

It is time for psychoanalysis as a profession to reckon with its conscious and unconscious racism. We need to reject the status quo and engage in a self-study of our own



Mark J. Blechner

prejudices. The membership of the American Psychoanalytic Association does not reflect the proportional racial diversity of the United States population, but rather reflects years of insufficient attention to the psychological issues of people of color and the psychodynamics of racial prejudice, in our conferences, our teaching, and our publications.

No psychoanalytic institute, as far as I know, claims to be racist. However, it is not enough to say, "We don't discriminate." We can also ask, "How much do we actively support candidates of color? Do we welcome them? Do we actively train our candidates to have expertise in working with issues of race and prejudice? To what degree are we anti-racist? Do we passively accept the status quo?" Every one of our organizations and institutes must engage in an interrogation of

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conscious and unconscious racism. We must grapple with such questions as: How are issues of race and culture addressed in our courses? In our journal articles and our reading lists? How many members of racial minorities hold positions of authority and power? What is the proportion among administrative leaders and training and supervising analysts? In the day-to-day operation of psychoanalytic institutes and organizations, how much and in what ways are issues of race addressed? Are any issues bypassed or given short shrift?

### Some Lives Matter Less

The relationship of psychoanalysis and issues of race has been complex. What can psychoanalysis teach us about the psychology of racism? How does racism affect psychoanalysis today, and how can racism in psychoanalytic institutes be lessened or ameliorated?

Today, we hear the statement "Black Lives Matter." Some respond "All Lives Matter," but that rejoinder misses the point that all lives should matter *equally*, no matter the skin color, religion, ethnic heritage, or other factors. Essential to racist tradition and maltreatment is the idea that some human groups are not fully human or not people at all. In pre-Civil War America, Black people were counted as 3/5 human. In December 1945, a question asked by a Polish child was written about in the underground press: "Mommy, was it a human being that was killed or a Jew?" In Rwanda in 1992, Leon Mugesera, a Hutu, preached that Tutsis were cockroaches and should

be killed, which led to the genocide in which hundreds of thousands were murdered. When Australia was settled by ex-convicts from Great Britain, the settlers developed a law that said the land was uninhabited by humans, so that the whites could take the land. This law came off the books only in 1993, when aboriginal people were redefined as human beings.

That some people are not humans leads to the acceptance of inferior or evil "races," who can then be murdered and mistreated without guilt. These days the notion that one race of people is not fully human is being lived out in the United States, consciously and unconsciously, in regard to people of color, most egregiously toward African-Americans, and pervades our thinking and action. We disavow this idea even while we tolerate it, until a picture of a white police officer with his knee on a Black man's neck captures, viscerally and emotionally, the outrage of a man murdered as if he were not human.

### Psychodynamics of Racism

A psychoanalytic view of racism would naturally look at the psychological tendency of human beings to categorize people according to groups and to presume that some groups are inferior to others. In 1985, Erik Erikson called this "pseudospeciation." According to Erikson, "The term denotes that while man is obviously one species, he appears and continues on the scene split up into groups (from tribes to nations, from castes to classes, from religions to ideologies, and I might add, professional associations) which provide their members with a firm sense of unique and

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## Analyzing Psychoanalytic Racism

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superior human identity." Harry Stack Sullivan thought that racist prejudice protects us from feelings of inferiority and resultant psychopathology. He wrote in 1940: "It may be said of the practice of

limited the civil rights of Jews (who were considered an inferior race), separating them into their own neighborhoods and eliminating their right to marry outside their racial category. Yet the Nazis, at

*It is not enough to say, "We don't discriminate." Also ask, "Do we actively support candidates of color? Do we welcome them? Do we train candidates to have expertise working with issues of race and prejudice?... Are we anti-racist? Do we passively accept the status quo?"*

disparaging others and the entertaining of active prejudice to whole classes of people that, like the use of alcohol, they protect the person concerned from a more serious disturbance of personality; they are, in a word, the lesser of two evils for the person who manifests them."

Belonging to a privileged racial group allows a person to believe that she or he has heightened value by virtue of birth. This is true of all racisms, not only the version of "white racism" most familiar to Americans. In China, for example, westerners are called "big-noses" or "white devils." By developing a field of "comparative racism," we would be able to consider how notions of race are used the same or differently by different groups and the role that prejudice plays in human personality functioning.

### American Race Laws: Too Harsh for the Nazis in 1935

Adolf Hitler wrote in his autobiographical manifesto *Mein Kampf* that he admired the United States as the world leader in devising strict laws to maintain racial purity. Nazi legal scholars looked to American racial laws as the model for the Nuremberg laws which

least in 1935, thought American race laws were too extreme, as documented by James Whitman in his 2017 book *Hitler's American Model*. The Nazis based their definition of a Jew on the number of Jewish grandparents. They did not go so far as the American "one drop principle," which stated that one drop of inferior blood stripped a person of his belonging to the superior race. The Nazi lawyers argued that the American miscegenation laws were also too harsh. While the Nazis made it illegal for Jews to marry non-Jews, they did not at first make already consummated mixed-race marriages a crime, as was the case in the United States until 1967.

While the United States race laws were harsh, they were balanced by a liberal, egalitarian streak underlying the United States government. The Declaration of Independence stated in 1776: "We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness...." Many of the authors, including Thomas Jefferson, owned

slaves. Equality of men was stated in clear terms. In practice, however, equality applied only to white men.

The idea that Black people are not fully human continues today among many white people, despite the fact that the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution conferred to all people "equal protection of the laws." The last time I served on jury duty in New York City, all defendants were Black or Hispanic. It seemed that I was in a court for people of color. A year later, one of my white patients told me when he was a teenager, he was stopped by a policeman, who searched his car and found marijuana. The policeman gave him a warning and let him go. I said to him, "Do you realize that if you were Black, you would have been put in jail for 10 years?" The "average expectable environment" is clearly different for white and Black people in the United States. We know this racial disparity exists but allow it to continue.

The two conflicting strains in American culture — human equality vs. maintenance of racial purity — continue to compete in the contemporary United States. Their disjuncture allows for various forms of splitting and dissociation. In the psychoanalytic literature, there are examples of unabashed racism. For example, in 1914 John Lind studied the dreams of 100 African-Americans and concluded that their dreams were undisguised wish-fulfillments, as Freud said was characteristic of children's dreams. Lind stated that Negroes had childlike minds and childlike dreams. He did not take into account that many were in jail, reporting dreams to white investigators, so likely less than fully candid about their dream content.

There are many other examples of sanctioned racism in the psychoanalytic past, but change in the present is more

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## Psychoanalytic Racism

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important. At the William Alanson White Institute, we have established scholarships for candidates of color (and for transgender candidates) in the hope of attracting future leaders who may correct for past blind spots in our thinking and training. That is just the beginning of a vast task. Systemic racism tends to accommodate perturbations in society, give lip service to justice for a while, and then re-establish the status quo. Can we as psychoanalysts outline psychodynamics that will lead to genuine long-lasting change?

If we really want to engage in self-study on this issue, we must welcome feedback from the members of our community who have been the targets of

understand latent and unconscious racism, you must ask the opinion of people who are experiencing discrimination to tell you what you cannot see

*If we really want to engage in self-study on this issue, we must welcome feedback from the members of our community who have been the targets of prejudice and invite the opinions of people outside our community.*

prejudice and invite the opinions of people outside our community. Psychologist Marie-Louise von Franz said that you cannot see your own back. If you show it to another person, he can see it, but you can't. If you are white and want to fully

about yourself. Psychoanalysis needs a thoroughgoing analysis of the ways racist and other prejudices are silently, perhaps unconsciously, imprinted on its theories and practices.

APSA

## Notes from the Inaugural Meeting of the Holmes Commission on Racial Equality in APsaA

### The Leadership Team

At last, on October 11, 2020, the weekly meetings of the Holmes Commission's leadership team — regularly attended by (the eponymous) Dorothy E. Holmes, Anton Hart, Dionne Powell and Beverly J. Stoute — expanded to all 19 members in our inaugural gathering of the Holmes Commission on Racial Equality in APsaA. It occasioned warm welcomes and introductions, listening to the Stanford Talisman Alumni Virtual Choir's rendition of "Lift Every Voice and Sing," which brought many to tears and the emotionally connected sharing of personal reflections and aspirations as we began our work as a commission.

Commission Chair Dorothy E. Holmes opened the meeting by reading from Freud's 1937 *Analysis Terminable and Interminable*.



Dorothy E. Holmes



Dionne R. Powell



Anton Hart



Beverly J. Stoute

### Dorothy E. Holmes

In addressing psychical matters that may or may not require psychoanalytic attention, Freud referred to the patient's latent, instinctual conflict as a "sleeping dog." But, he noted, when such a dog is, in fact, causing disturbances, it is not truly sleeping and should not, thus, be left to lie. Instead, Freud argued:

We seek to bring this conflict to a head to develop it to its highest pitch in order to increase the instinctual force available for its solution. Analytic

experience has taught us that in every phase of the patient's recovery we have to fight against his inertia which is ready to be content with an incomplete solution.

In the reality of our current society and in our organization, the "sleeping dog"—racial conflict and racial inequality—have again been awakened. It is, in fact, repeatedly barking and loudly.

Following Freud's admonition that we must bring such latent conflicts "to a

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## Holmes Commission

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head,” the commission’s aim is to bring to a head the conflicts and disturbances around race in APsaA, and to bring them to their highest pitch. This will not be easy.

In the formation of CO-RAP, our acronym for our commission, there is an intellectual recognition of the mental sickness of racism and that we must do something about it, starting in our own analytic home. Given the intransigence and embeddedness of racism in its many expressions, institutionally and individually, and the historical record of high cultural moments about race being repeatedly followed by the basest moments, we need to wage a fight against inertia in our attempts to find solutions to racism within our organization.

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**Dorothy E. Holmes, PhD**, psychoanalyst in private practice, Bluffton, SC; teaching, training and supervising psychoanalyst, Psychoanalytic Center of the Carolinas; fellow, IPTAR; PsyD Program director emerita, clinical psychology, The George Washington University. Her current scholarship is focused on “whiteness.”

**Dionne R. Powell, MD.**, is a training and supervising psychoanalyst at both the Psychoanalytic Association of New York (PANY) and Columbia University Center for Psychoanalytic Training and Research (CUCPTR), New York.

**Beverly J. Stoute, MD, FABP, FAPA** is a training and supervising analyst at the Emory Psychoanalytic Institute, and child and supervising analyst at the New York Psychoanalytic Institute, and co-chair of the Holmes Commission on Racial Equality in APsaA.

Systemic racism, wherever it is found, involves powers, the organizational equivalent of instinctual forces that are expressed to create and maintain racial inequality. The formation of this commission is an intentional effort to bring a new powerful voice to meet and transform the old organizational powers that have kept systemic racism in place. Our work will be aimed at helping APsaA redefine and rebuild its structures, operations, and practices, including institute practices, in order to achieve racial equality and to build alliances to do the same with other analytic groups. In such kinships we will also aim to actively work in larger communities—regional, national, and global—to eliminate all forms of oppression.

Just as Freud speaks of necessary suffering, frustration, and damming up of libido as necessary components of the work to be done to liberate oneself, in fostering CO-REAP, APsaA has agreed to the examinations the commission will conduct that will likely involve some organizational frustration. We will persevere to make discoveries and propose changes that will not dam up but transform organizational instincts into constructive developments. Deep disservices of race are as old as our country. They persist and course through all of us. Perhaps racism is interminable, but the commission’s commitment is that it is modifiable for the good of all in our Association and beyond. We pledge to be radical in our examination of race in the best psychoanalytic sense. That is, we will upset the status quo for the purpose of progressing toward racial equality.

Remarks by Dionne Powell, Beverly J. Stoute, and Anton Hart of the Holmes Commission’s leadership team follow below.

### Dionne R. Powell

It is difficult to come up with introductory remarks for such a lifelong battle; including the personal, which I believe is the source of any meaningful change. We are a segregated, invisibly gated community. And while there may not be the snarling white faces and racial epithets of my youth, the message of how “welcoming” APsaA and analytic institutes are is suggested by its lack of diversity, particularly African-Americans, Latin Americans, and Asian-Americans.

The Holmes Commission is an attempt to look at all of this closely or as stated in my recent paper “From the Sunken Place to the Shitty Place: The Film *Get Out*, Psychic Emancipation and Modern Race Relations from a Psychodynamic Clinical Perspective” published in the [2020] *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*:

Our analytic understandings are formed within a racist system that privileges certain people and excludes others. We hide behind maintenance of an “analytic stance” and yet are blinded and mute to how that precludes inclusiveness and diversity. In the end our stance becomes defensive armor that is rarely challenged.

The Holmes Commission is tasked to look at our participation and the maintenance of racist structures and behaviors individually, organizationally, and institutionally, requiring us to dwell in the shitty and unpleasant places, exploring its embeddedness and intransigence, finding new paths to mitigate the effects of racism. This is undoubtedly subversive and uncomfortable as we acknowledge our sordid past and present, while looking at personal, institutional and organizational thoughts, behaviors, and biases that have denied, discriminated, and restricted access to those often identified

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## Holmes Commission

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as foreign or stranger or the Other. However, if we can struggle with humility and openness, we can reclaim those aspects of the self that have been unacceptable because of our conscious and unconscious attempts to exclude and deny that have our institutions, organizations, and an entire nation psychologically enslaved. To move toward a freedom that is essential for psychoanalysis and our nation, is the reason for my excitement for the commission's and APsaA's possibilities.

### Anton Hart

My understanding of our convening is to help us think together, to create the mind of our group, and to use this mind in the service of equality and justice, and that is an exciting prospect. I experience this as the beginning of something exciting rather than obligatory, a chance to think together and to be surprised, to be curious, to have humility, and to have courage.

This is not always what it feels like when starting a meeting with a group of psychoanalysts, I dare say. We sometimes succumb to bureaucracy, to some other version of what it is to have a meeting or to get administrative work done. My hope is that we will keep this interesting, stimulating, and surprising. I expect that, in addition, to being imaginative and courageous we'll also have to become uncomfortable with each other and in relation to the organization we're trying to help.

We'll have to expect breakdowns, that things in our dialogic process will break down. Conversations will falter. Sometimes we won't be able to find words to speak to each other. We won't be able to find suitable ways of speaking to our organization. These are inevitable when walking in the territory of race and

racism. In tough moments, our words will fail us. But, as psychoanalysts, we know that breakdowns are opportunities for finding new thoughts and words. When conversations fail, there are possibilities for figuring out how we can start talking again. Let's expect such breakdowns, and let's think of them as opportunities.

My hope for APsaA is that we will begin to transform indifference toward racial equality into curiosity and engagement, and that we will help people start to move from positions of holding on to what they preciously cling to, toward positions of recognizing what they could generatively lose.

### Beverly J. Stoute


James Baldwin once said, "History is not the past. It is the present. We carry our history with us. We are our history." Every African-American knows this. This is a trans-generational mantra of racial suffering. Every psychoanalyst knows this. It is a fundamental psychoanalytic tenet. James Baldwin believed that the true American identity would be forged by overcoming whiteness and Blackness in favor of a reformulated American nationalism, resolving the split between Black and white within the American psyche. By recognizing that which has been excluded, the identity of Black America, Baldwin believed that the identity of white America would be transformed to reclaim its humanity. This is true of America as a nation. This is true of American psychoanalysis.

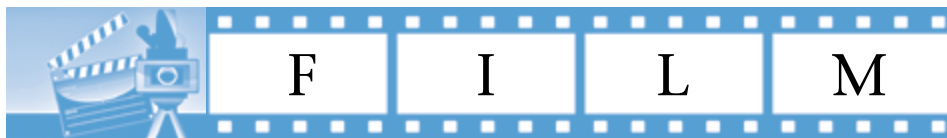
I would like to mention the members of this commission who could only be here in spirit today: Solomon Carter Fuller, Ellis Toney, Margaret Morgan Lawrence, Charles Prudhomme, Jeanne Spurlock, Enrico Jones, Ruth Fuller, Hugh

Butts, Henry Edwards, Walter Bradshaw, Samuel Bullock, Jean Christmas, Charles Pinderhughes, Argyle Stoute. They are the Black psychoanalysts who forged the desegregation of psychoanalysis.

The places at this metaphoric table that we each occupy were earned by sacrifice, by painful struggle, by activism, by this generation of freedom fighters — Black psychoanalysts who came before us and carved out paths where there were none. Many shunned membership in APsaA because of exclusionary practices, insularity, lack of community engagement, and the intolerable prejudiced teachings about African-Americans espoused in institute curricula. There are times when leadership takes charge and forges a path of social progress, but there are equally important times when leadership recognizes that it must yield to the forces of the historical moment to revive the radical potential of psychoanalysis by internalizing the mobilizing force of Blackness into the American psychoanalytic identity. Blackness represents Black psychoanalysis but also the symbolic Other. Our task is a noble one and a necessary one. Let's commit ourselves to the struggle for racial justice and equality with honor, with dignity, with authoritative humility, in our organization and hopefully reposition psychoanalysis in our work community to reclaim our psychoanalytic soul.

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Lastly, Holmes commissioners took turns speaking personally about what had brought them to the present endeavor. Each account was moving and inspiring, reflecting fear and courage, apprehension and commitment. As expectably overcommitted each commissioner is, there was a palpable sense of gratitude for the opportunity to come together and do the important work we have set before us. 



## Id(e)a

Giuseppe Civitarese



Giuseppe Civitarese

*Ida*, Paweł Pawlikowski's 2013 film set in 1962 Poland, tells the story of a young novice who, abandoned as a child, raised by the nuns, is about to take her vows. As a child, she was welcomed into a total institution: a container that we can see as a metaphor for containers that are not "concrete," but psychic. In her case, its rigidity is proportionate to the explosive force of emotions that, if given free rein, threaten to drive her mad. (See W. R. Bion, *Learning from Experience*, 1962) "Container and contained are susceptible of conjunction and permeation by emotion. Thus conjoined or permeated or both, they change in a manner usually described as growth. When disjoined or denuded of emotion they diminish in vitality, that is, approximate to inanimate objects. Both a container and contained are models of abstract representations of psychoanalytic realizations.")

A week before taking her vows, *Ida* is invited by the abbess to visit her aunt, Wanda, as if to take a definitive farewell to

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the world outside the perimeters of the convent. This meeting offers a way to reintegrate painful aspects expelled outside herself, thus rendering her choice to become a nun more conscious. In her encounter with Wanda, *Ida* discovers many things about herself and her family of origin. Striving to embrace this new content, which is also potentially destructive, *Ida* endeavors to become more "human."

A Polish black and white film about a young novice who is about to take her vows? Accustomed to the narrative grammar of Hollywood and more or less happy consumers of successful American television series, it would be difficult, at least for the Italian viewer, not to evoke the hero of Paolo Villaggio struggling with Eizenštejn. This refers to a "mythical" scene in Italian cinema in which the famous comic actor played the tragicomic figure of a humble member of the

Communist Party who for once rebelled against the ideological obligation to see and applaud the *Battleship Potemkin* for the umpteenth time. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3EZE9FGvbw>)

Instead, none of this. Having overcome our initial reluctance, we remain fascinated by the magic of great cinema. We rediscover the ways a wonderful photograph can demonstrate the most subtle emotional nuances. *Ida* is a complex and successful film because it effortlessly operates on

various levels: the historical level, the current level of the relationship between the characters, the level of the characters seen as internal presences within *Ida's* mind and therefore the level of the intrapsychic, and finally the level that includes the spectator in his creative reception of the film. It is clear that the spectator films/views the film and gets filmed/viewed by it.

For the purposes of our discourse on the emotional work of analysis, we conceive of *Ida* as an "idea." What we hope to do with our patients and ourselves is to have new and fruitful ideas, both rational and "sensitive," about ways of giving meaning to life. *Ida's* life is the same as any new idea: She can die, live, or close herself in a *claustrum*. (D. Meltzer uses this Latin word that means "closed place," then "cloister" in his 1990 work, *The Claustrum* (London: Karnac) to indicate a claustrophobic and constrictive psychic container.)

The film is built around binary pairs, starting with the choice to shoot it in black and white. The effect transports us to the beginning of the 1960s; by renouncing color, the director establishes a past/present opposition more effectively than a simple historical setting would do. Other binary couples include: fidelity/atheism, morality/dissoluteness, victims/

*In terms of mental health, the point is what is true, not in absolute terms, but how much truth/idea is sustainable (containable) for the individual and the group.*

butcher, communism/postcommunism, Catholics/Jews, openness/closure, spirit/body, *Ida/Wanda*, idea/body, virgin/prostitute, submerged/saved, asceticism/depravity, fidelity/cynicism, Catholicism/postcommunism, and guilt/redemption, illustrating how many different interpretative paths could legitimately be taken.

But what truths do these couples represent to us? The journey that *Ida* undertakes deconstructs rather than

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## Id(e)a

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strengthens these oppositions. As Dostoevsky teaches, there is sanctity in abjection and wretchedness in virtue. The past is in the present as the present is in the past. The saved become executioners and vice versa, as we see every day in so many ruined places on Earth. At this point we evoke a principle of Bion's method: the caesura seen not as a clear separation but as a transitable area and an instrument-symbol of an attitude, both ethical and epistemological, to the systematic exercise of doubt. This exercise has the precise purpose of widening the area of what we can think—host in our mind—and tolerate. In terms of mental health, the point is what is true, not in absolute terms, but how much truth/idea is sustainable (containable) for the individual and the group.

*Ida* "works" as a psychoanalytic journey of discovery. It expands the mind and helps us take responsibility for ourselves, or rather for the crowd of characters our minds are made of. It "looks" like a black and white film, but in reality, it is a film about life's infinite shades of gray. Nothing is ever purely black or white. *Ida's* emotional work, as well as the emotional work of the viewer who identifies with her, is to free oneself from the hyper-bright logic of binary oppositions.

The film-as-a-container of our anxieties, as any work of art is meant to be, presents various institutions as true characters: the convent, the party, the mind, the community, the family. Each such character is responsible for managing certain content. Some content can be potential killers, i.e., destructive. At a certain point in her life, unexpectedly, *Ida* is given the possibility of a change that could be catastrophic—in a sense that is not necessarily negative. Little does it matter that it was the abbess—a maternal *imago* or internal split object that offers to

be integrated in contact with the other "maternal" aspects represented by her aunt—who invites *Ida* to become acquainted with her aunt. This could represent a first truth or contained waiting to be metabolized.

Between *Ida* and *Wanda*, an uneasy relationship is established. The film asks: Will *Wanda* become more human in/through her contact with *Ida*? Will *Ida* be able to become more human in/through her contact with *Wanda*? Will the mother-abbess succeed in contaminating herself with mother-*Wanda*?

It is a fact that, together, *Ida* and *Wanda* undertake a journey to discover *Ida's* family origins. As always, the essential mystery is of birth and death. Along their path, they come across several "truths" that reveal *Wanda's* bloody past, her miserable present, the revelation of her Jewish heritage, the Holocaust, the betrayal and murder of her parents.

In her journey, however, *Ida* also encounters music, Coltrane's jazz, sensuality, youth, dance, and sex. We witness as she gradually sheds features of her rigid uniform and "sees herself," and is seen, with new eyes.

However, the aunt cannot stand the pain and takes her own life. It is as if this new trauma pushes *Ida* to close down abruptly and definitively, totally disillusioned and again abandoned. The new *Ida*, or *id(e)a*, who stayed in her for a while, announced the possibility of a different and fuller life but does not ultimately come alive. It is, nevertheless, true that *Ida* is now richer, more human and her choice represents a more mature one. Of course, *Wanda* represents what *Ida* cannot accept about herself and her aunt's suicide is the "suicide" of the cloister that *Ida* creates by choosing poverty, obedience, chastity, simplicity. Even if *Ida* does not actually open herself up to life, she will not live the same cloister she would have had she never met her aunt. Surely, there are human nuns

and bad nuns, that is, doubly cloistered. From a psychological perspective, the integration abbess-*Wanda*, characters who somehow are the opposite of each other, has not succeeded. In fact, *Ida* still feels the need to renounce living a more vital and fulfilling life and sacrifices it to an inner cruel God.

As a last reflection, I would like to comment on the strength of the film. There is one element, in particular, that deserves attention. The real protagonist of the film is not actually *Ida* but the beautiful and expressive face of *Agata Trzebuchowska*, the actress who plays *Ida*. She is the interpretative key the director offers us. The incredible beauty of *Ida's* face represents the beautiful face the mother has for her newborn baby. In *Ida's* case, it is the face she could not sufficiently contemplate. As the film progresses, *Ida's* face becomes an intense and sensual presence that evokes an intolerable absence. In fact, in taking vows, she hides this face, as if *Ida* were enacting the absence of the other. By neither allowing anyone to gaze at her nor allowing herself to see a reflection of herself in the other's eyes, *Ida's* ultimate decision serves to represent this profound absence, thus containing the pain and anger that it stirs within her.

APSA

*[Editor's note: For more information about the author's sources, please email [gcivita@psyc.org](mailto:gcivita@psyc.org).]*

## In Memoriam

We note the sad news of Bruce Sklarew's passing. For years, Dr. Sklarew served as TAP's film editor, offering psychological insight into such movies as *Casablanca* and others. Many have commented how much they enjoyed his contributions.

# Finding Order in Meaning, Being and Becoming through Memoir: An Interview with Joan Wheelis about *The Known, the Secret, the Forgotten*

Fred L. Griffin



Fred L. Griffin



Joan Wheelis

There is a growing interest in memoir among the general readership, and an increasing number of psychoanalysts who are writing books about their lives that readers within and outside the field are eager to read.

This article centers on one particular memoir by a psychoanalyst, *The Known,*

*Joan Wheelis, M.D., is a training and supervising psychoanalyst at Boston Psychoanalytic Society and Institute; assistant clinical professor at Harvard Medical School; clinical faculty at McLean Hospital; and teaches at Massachusetts General Hospital / McLean Hospital Psychiatric Residency Program.*

*Wheelis's parents were both psychoanalysts who practiced in San Francisco, in offices that occupied a part of the home in which she grew up. Her father, Allen Wheelis, was the author of 15 books, including psychoanalytic and philosophical explorations, novels, and memoir. Joan Wheelis's mother was known professionally as Ilse Jawetz. Fred L. Griffin, M.D., is training and supervising analyst at the Dallas Psychoanalytic Center and clinical professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School. He is author of *Creative Listening and the Psychoanalytic Process.**

*the Secret, the Forgotten,* written by Joan Wheelis and published in 2019 by Norton. After a few comments to set the context, I interview Wheelis about her book.

## Memoir and Clinical Psychoanalysis

Memoir is a literary genre that is more about the emotional experience of a life than the factual accounts. Memoirs are as diverse in their nature as their authors, both in the ways they are constructed and what they aim to do. Rather than trying to define what memoir is and is not, I am more interested in how it goes about doing what it does: how it brings order to one's life; how it plays with memory and time; how it attends more to the subjective experience of what is emotionally true than the objective truth; how the process of writing memoir may lead to a discovery of meanings as it captures states of being; how writing memoir may be itself an act of becoming. All of this is to say, writing—and perhaps reading—memoir is not so unlike what happens in the analytic situation.

## Why are psychoanalysts interested in memoir?

Many psychoanalysts are drawn to creative writings and to their authors. It is not only a scholarly interest that makes good writing so appealing, and not just because we rely upon words to achieve the talking cure. For those of us who love language, words are fascinating in the ways they are used to create implicit and explicit metaphors as the psychoanalytic process unfolds. Imaginative language—shared by analyst and analysand—has the potential to communicate the past, the present, the as-if experience of transference-countertransference, and

the possibilities of a future. Through the creation of metaphor, the writer Cynthia Ozick tells us, “We strangers can imagine the familiar hearts of strangers”; this act “transforms the strange into the familiar” (*Metaphor & Memory*, 1991).

Language in creative works, moreover, generates nuances of sound and rhythm; it can convey how it feels to hear and say words. In so doing, language communicates something more, beyond the words themselves. I am referring to how language works inside us, between us and others.

*The Known, the Secret, the Forgotten,* Joan Wheelis's memoir about her relationship with her parents, both accomplished psychoanalysts, beautifully captures such elements of language and memoir that many psychoanalysts find intriguing. Wheelis writes in her opening chapter:

My parents are both dead, yet their lives are very much within me. Time and memory rushing in like waves on distant shores. Pulling shells and stones and crabs out to sea and then tossing them back to shore again. Loudly and then softly, inexorably.

This is language we can feel, that has the power to stimulate the imagination so we not only grasp something of its meaning, but also sense how the author is trying to reach the reader. Her words bridge the gap between her and us.

Memoir is a unique kind of self-inquiry conducted not only at the writer's desk but also in the public square. For some authors, memoir brings narrative order to a life. For some, writing memoir is a therapeutic act. Deriving its name from

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the French word for reminiscences, memoir generates its own unique treatment of memory and time. Memoir can create states of mind much like those found within the psychoanalytic process as consciousness is in fluid interplay with time and memory.

*Memoir can create states of mind much like those found within the psychoanalytic process as consciousness is in fluid interplay with time and memory.*

In speaking about the emotional ambience of timelessness captured in his memoir, *Speak, Memory*, Vladimir Nabokov writes:

A sense of security, of well-being, of summer warmth pervades my memory. That robust reality makes a ghost of the present...Everything is as it should be, nothing will ever change, nobody will ever die...I confess I do not believe in time.

John Banville, novelist, short story writer, and author of *Time Pieces: A Dublin Memoir*, raises questions about the reliability of memory in memoir when he writes of “the blithely treacherous nature of memory, about its playful deceptions, its willful insistences, its blind spots and black holes.” He challenges us to question our notions of time— “When does the past become the past?”—and goes on to say memoir is an art form that articulates states of being: “Art is a constant effort to strike past the mere daily doings of humankind in order to arrive at ... the essence of what it is, simply, to be.”

These authors speak of the authenticity of emotional experience conveyed in memoir—how it transcends our everyday ideas about time and memory and demonstrates something about being and becoming more fully human.

These elements of memoirs speak of qualities that mirror the depths of the psychoanalytic experience and echo what we hope to achieve in a personal analysis. Many psychoanalysts are drawn to this near-unconscious treatment of inner and relational emotional

experience and to the realness of one person turning to another— be it psychoanalyst or imagined reader— in an effort to reach toward emotional growth and the freedom to be oneself.

***The Known, the Secret, the Forgotten***

**Fred Griffin:** Why write a memoir? Did you set out to write such a book, or did it happen in a different way?

**Joan Wheelis:** My father died in 2007, and I wrote a short piece entitled “Last Cut,” about cutting my father’s hair, which I read for his memorial. I never intended to write a book, but over time I thought to put together some other reminiscences of my father for my son. After my mother died in 2012, the process of sorting through the belongings of my parents led me to discover their journals and letters and took me on a journey into their past as well as my own. The vignettes that I wrote started to coalesce around themes of love and loss. Ten years after I wrote the first vignette for my father’s memorial, a memoir took shape as a kaleidoscope of reminiscence and reflection on my relationship with my parents.

**FG:** What was it like to release your book out into the world? Any regrets?

**JW:** I had no regrets. Perhaps because it took so long to write, I had more than ample time to metabolize its content. With the reality of its publication, I

asked myself if I would be comfortable with family, friends, colleagues, and patients reading it, and I was. I still am.

**FG:** Did you learn anything about yourself you weren’t expecting? Did anything take you by surprise?

**JW:** The experience of writing the memoir was varied. Initially it was extremely difficult and slow and brought up many uncertainties about my writing abilities and comparing myself with my father. Sometimes an idea came to me while I slept, and I wrote an entire piece when I woke up. Sometimes I had an idea but couldn’t write a word for months. At times it felt cumbersome and plodding and other times it was exhilarating and fluent. Rather than writing from nine until noon each morning like my father, I had no routine. Sometimes I wrote early in the morning before I started seeing patients, in the breaks between patients, in bed late at night or on the weekends. My father always wrote on bond paper on a clipboard with a fountain pen. Sometimes I wrote on my computer, sometimes I jotted things down on a scrap piece of paper or in a notebook with a pencil or a ballpoint pen. These comparisons with my father’s habits were invidious and often made me feel fraudulent. It took a long time and much encouragement to feel I had a worthy voice of my own.

**FG:** Did you find that writing your memoir was a therapeutic act? A process of self-analysis?

**JW:** The first piece I wrote, “Last Cut,” was therapeutic as it helped me take stock of my father’s death. It also initiated a process of self-analysis as I revisited some of the vicissitudes of my relationships with my parents and my son in each vignette I wrote.

**FG:** In an earlier conversation, you told me it was after your mother died in 2012 and you were in possession of all of your parents’ belongings that you were

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## Interview with Joan Wheelis

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struck by the “enormity” of the material possessions and, I assume, of the emotional legacy of what you had to go through. You told me this memoir is, in part, a way for you to put things in order. I am thinking here about Joan Didion’s statement: “We tell ourselves stories in order to live.” But you may have something else in mind.

**JW:** I have always told students that the goal of psychoanalysis is to develop a narrative of one’s life that one can live with. I resonated with Joan Didion’s statement when I wrote in my book, “We create stories to live by.” Writing the memoir felt like that in so far as I organized recollections differently from my lived experiences. Even deciding which chapter should follow another was a way of creating a new narrative distinct from the timeline of my life. Like a dream where a vivid piece may stand out to send the dreamer into unexpected psychological excursions, writing the memoir seemed to offer me such an opportunity to discover and reorganize what mattered.

In the end it was reassuring. Developing another narrative of my life felt liberating. Mortality felt less tethered to existential angst, allowing the telling of the story to create structure for closure. Like the satisfaction to leave a house after a full and rich summer—fixing a broken step, storing kayaks and picnic tables, picking apples and pears to take back home, sweeping the deck, finding the missing sandal, pulling down the shades, locking the door. Everything in order with expectation but not certainty one will return again.

I thought of my son and how I enjoyed thinking I would leave him with much of myself in this memoir but also the room to develop his own narrative. The last line of the memoir, “Or maybe not,” refers to my musing as to whether my

son might someday look at a photograph of me and see our physical similarity. He told me he found this last line abrupt. Of course, it was. To claim any certainty about his sensibilities still to be realized is to arbitrarily answer questions that remain for him. I thought of how I have responded to the question: “When do you know an analysis is over?” with “when you understand it can go on forever.” To end my book with another inquiry was in recognition of the timelessness of self-analysis.

**FG:** *The Kirkus Review* said, “This is more of a memoir about memory—its connections and deceptions—than about the author and her family in particular. It shows how the dead live on.” A memoir about memory. Does it seem so to you?

**JW:** Yes, very much so. This book is as much about time and memory as it is about love and loss. As I had access to my father’s journals as well as his published writing, I was repeatedly struck by the interplay of my own memory and his about shared experience. Finding objects and letters of my parents after their deaths ignited my own memories and sometimes led to interesting experiences of both the collapse and expansion of time.

After my parents died, I found an audograph, which is an old version of a tape recorder, as well as a stack of cobalt blue discs that could be played on this machine. I discovered that many of these discs were recordings of love letters dictated by my parents to one another after my mother finished her residency training at Austen Riggs and before my father left as a staff member there to join her in San Francisco. Listening to these recordings was like sitting in a room with my parents. The clarity and familiarity of their voices from 60 plus years prior was unnerving, and

transporting. Listening to them speak to one another, before they were married, expressing their love for one another, their hopes and desires for the future, their wish to have a baby was to take a walk with them in their past.

At one point my father was playfully describing a conversation with psychoanalyst David Shapiro about his struggles as to whether to accept a wooden cabinet made in the Shop at Riggs by a patient and whether he should keep it for a while or return it and all the psychological manifestations of each option. I telephoned David in New York and played this for him. I could hear him laughing. He said, “I’m sitting right next to that cabinet! I never gave it back.” It felt so exhilarating to listen to my father’s voice in 1953, then speak in the present with David who still had the object and the memory of my father at that time. It was such unusual access to the layering of memory and the interface across time. Like the process of analysis zigzagging through present and past experiences when time and memory come together and then pull away.

Also, when I read my father’s journal describing important events, I noted the convergence and divergence of his memory of an event with my childhood as well as adult recollections of the same event. It was another entry point to explore the intriguing layering of perspective and construction. Like the movie *Rashomon* where Kurosawa shows us the subjective, self-serving, often contradictory stories told by the different characters who wrestle with their experiences of a specific event.

**FG:** In a review of your book, Warren Poland said it captures “the struggle to become and be a person.” It demonstrates certain kinds of “transformations.”

Does it seem so to you?

**JW:** Yes, it does. In writing the memoir I was aware how important answers used to be for me growing up and how much I

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# Psychoanalysis in a Broken World: Who We Are and What We Might Become

*At the June 2020 APsA online meeting, the third panel in the "Psychoanalysis in a Broken World Series" was moderated by Jane Kite, training and supervising analyst at the Boston Psychoanalytic Society and Institute.*

*The panelists, Past President Prudy Gourguechon, President Bill Glover, President-Elect Kerry Sulkowicz, and Program Chair Don Moss, grappled with three questions.*

## **Jane Kite introduced the topic:**

Against a societal backdrop that has laid bare the disavowed history of systemic racial injustice in this country, and in the shadow of death, the panels in this series have invited new insight, new energy, and new depth of feeling. They have created the possibility for us of a different experience of being an analyst.

We are at an inflection point as a field. Who are we as psychoanalysts at this historical moment? What are the questions we need to ask, and more importantly, what are the actions we need to take? Can we

pivot from what has been a nearly exclusive focus on psychic reality to material reality and back again?

We are, manifestly, a notoriously conservative and largely white organization legitimately proud of our intellectual heritage, and legitimately confused about how and where to turn next. Personal pain and personal curiosity have been, for most of us, the engine driving our careers as analysts. We are part of what now reveals itself as a broken world. How do we reliably bridge the deeply personal and the powerfully social?

**What is the place for psychoanalysts outside the consulting room, especially in the context of the contemporary moment?**

**What is the nature of the tension between those working inside the consulting room and outside the consulting room, and how does this impact our training?**

**Prudy Gourguechon:** Psychoanalysis has always had a place outside the consulting

room. Freud, Abraham, Aichorn, Erikson, and in our era Lord John Alderdice, Sverre Varvin, Sally Weintrobe, Jorge Bruce, Dorothy Holmes, Gil Kliman, Harold Kudler, Stuart Twemlow, Henri Parens, to name just a few, have made enormous contributions, using psychoanalytic concepts to explain and facilitate change regarding social and cultural problems.

Despite this persisting and proud legacy, only a small minority of analysts are engaged in non-clinical psychoanalytic work. And our training programs have almost exclusively ignored training in applying psychoanalytic knowledge outside the consulting room. Not all analysts are suited to this work or interested in it.

I believe there are five distinct cohorts of analysts:

1. Those who want to do good clinical work inside their offices and really don't experience the excitement or

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## Interview with Joan Wheelis

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turned to my parents for answers to my questions. It created a sense of safety and security. Writing this memoir made me aware of the shift that had occurred in me. Exploring the questions and living in the uncertainty of the answers felt rich and empowering. While disconcerting at times, it led to living more flexibly.

**FG:** Roy Hoffman of the *New York Times* describes your memoir as an "often luminous work [that] is less an act of therapy than a hushed celebration of everyday mysteries...[Wheelis's] success is in letting enigmas endure beyond the

couch, questing on for the known, the secret, the forgotten." It seems here Hoffman is pointing to something we psychoanalysts are sorting through: Is the psychoanalytic process about a search for meaning or about attunement to states of being and becoming? Or both?

**JW:** Yes, I believe the psychoanalytic process of sorting through is both about being and becoming, which is being comfortable with change and not knowing, while searching for coordinates of what can be known and become meaningful. Being too certain takes one down the familiar roads with little discovery. No compass at all can lead one to being in the woods without light. Finding meaning requires enough comfort to explore the questions and

enough discomfort to wrestle with ambiguous answers. The stories told and retold, forgotten and remembered help that process to occur.

**FG:** Can we look forward to more books by Joan Wheelis?

**JW:** I hope so. I am working currently on a book about my mother's Austrian parents who perished in the Holocaust. Again, I have an unusual treasure chest of letters and diaries dating to World War I as well as many of their things, books, documents, linens, and my mother's stories. As I make this journey, I have discovered new family members and acquaintances, enlarging the view into the lives of my grandparents. Looks like more to come on time, memory, and continued self-analysis!

 APSA

## Broken World

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potential for psychoanalytic work outside the consulting room.

2. Eloquent theorists.
3. Researchers—a vital minority.
4. Interdisciplinary academics.
5. Traveling analysts who pack our psychoanalytic understanding in a metaphorical backpack and take it on the road, talking to whatever segment of the public will listen to psychoanalytic explanations.

We naturally select.

Regarding training, we must make sure that those trainees who have the interest and talent to be travelling analysts are exposed to the work of its best practitioners and taught the theory and technique that underlies it. The theory and technique behind extra-clinical work needs to be better elaborated and articulated by traveling analysts so it can be taught to future generations.

**Don Moss:** I first came to psychoanalysis as a theory of possibility, of what humans might be, a theory of liberation, working with groups who were looking to become what they could only imagine but had not yet seen. Standard clinical training focuses on psychopathology, on “cure,” diminishing or eliminating psychic impediments. I was disappointed in my training where the dimension of *possibility* had little or no place.

My own work outside the consulting room has meant a scholarly and theoretical focus on homophobia, misogyny, and racism — first conceptualizing them as symptomatic structures and then imagining relations free of them. My paper, “Like Drives, Culture Exerts a Demand on the Mind for Work” (*Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 2010) provides theoretical grounding to contain the tension between working inside and outside the consulting room. We can understand the human in its full surround rather than the interiorized

subject responding primarily to its demanding interior.

**Kerry Sulkowicz:** “The use of analysis for the treatment of the neuroses is only one of its applications; the future will perhaps show that it is not the most important one.” That was Freud, in *The Question of Lay Analysis*, nearly a hundred years ago. The future is now.

While most psychoanalysts do, and will, practice clinically, I think we need to raise other forms of analysis to the same level. That means we need to teach them, support them, and value them accordingly. Working in non-traditional settings forces us to learn to speak plainly and elevates our standing in the modern world. This accrues to the benefit of those who choose to focus exclusively on clinical work by raising public awareness of psychoanalysis as something of inestimable social relevance and brings more patients to the doors—real or virtual—of psychoanalysts.

Every field of human endeavor, from the arts to education to politics to economics, can benefit from collaboration with a psychoanalyst. However, the analyst must not take an arrogant, know-it-all position that I would characterize as “pathological certainty,” and instead adopt an attitude of curiosity and humility.

Simply put, psychoanalysts need to get out more. We can do a lot of good for the world if we also work at a larger than dyadic scale.

**Conscious and unconscious bias in us as individuals and in psychoanalysis as a field has shown itself in an outsized diversity problem involving race and class. Has any real progress been made? What are the obstacles standing in the way of our becoming a more diverse, anti-racist community and a socially relevant field?**

**Bill Glover:** The word “obstacle” implies something that can be removed, something defined, concrete. Racism is much more diffuse, pervasive, embedded in our habitus, in our psyches. Complicity is obscured by denial, disavowal. Have we made progress?

Not nearly enough. We need to go deeper, work harder. But we’ve taken some steps.

At a panel on racism at the February 2018 meeting, we sat at tables and shared thoughts and reflections. I recalled and shared something I had remembered but never spoken about – a contemptuous and grossly racist comment my grandfather made when I was 10 or 11. I felt guilt, shame, and worry—how would I be seen by my peers? But the larger issue was how could I deal with this family secret. How could I reconcile my love for my grandfather with his blatant racism? Kept hidden, such conflicts lead to disavowal, secrecy, complicity.

I found Jonathan Lear’s article, “Gettysburg Mourning,” very helpful (*Critical Inquiry*, 2018). In the Gettysburg Address, Lincoln mourned the Union war dead but not the rebels, who were buried outside the cemetery. Lincoln links the Confederate dead to Polyneices, the disgraced brother of Antigone in Sophocles’ play. Antigone defied an order against honoring Polyneices, the traitor, whose body had been left to rot. Lear describes the Southern Antigonas, sisterhoods of Southern women who formed memorial associations to bury their dead and build memorials and, in doing so, celebrate them. They romanticized the “Lost Cause” of the confederacy, nostalgic for a society that never existed, its foundation on slavery hidden by denial, disavowal, and revisionist history.

Lear leads us to ponder the psychic retreats of white people – “What about our losses? What about our poverty? They are pushing us aside!” These protests represent white melancholia, psyches stuck in racist bastions, rather than mourning and reconciling. Lear points to the need to mourn the dead without honoring their cause, “...in order that our Nation might live.”

**Don Moss:** Psychoanalysis’ problem with race began in our formation. Freud persistently refers to civilization as “white” and “Christian” and consistently refers to

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nonwhite peoples as primitive, infantile. We linked unthinkingly with the racist premise that Europe embodied civilization while non-industrialized cultures embodied “primitivity.”

Racism not only confers “privilege” on white people, it also afflicts white people, depriving them of relationships with and connections to a wide swath of the world’s peoples while also afflicting them with the internalized violence they have visited upon those peoples.

**Kerry Sulkowicz:** There are some things we’re born with that we can change. There are other things we’re born with that we can’t change, like our race or our inheritance of trauma. My parents were Holocaust survivors from Poland who emigrated to the U.S. in 1947. Their experience—most of their family members were murdered and they themselves were emotionally damaged—profoundly shaped me as I was growing up in very segregated Dallas, Texas. I feel strongly that our country has not come close to dealing with its own history of crimes against humanity and genocide. The transgenerational transmission of trauma is a subject we analysts know something about.

Has any real progress been made in the field of psychoanalysis with our diversity problem involving race and class? Not much, not nearly enough. We need to keep having the hard conversations about racism that we’ve just begun to have. We need to tell our personal stories and listen carefully to others. We need to look in the mirror and make sure we don’t have policies and procedures that inadvertently (i.e., unconsciously) contribute to our lack of diversity. We need to actively recruit more people of color as candidates and members. We need to make sure we’re warmly welcoming potential students of psychoanalysis, of psychoanalytic psychotherapy, or of academic disciplines that are informed by psychoanalysis. Our numbers need to reflect the society in which we live and work. Right now, they don’t.

And we white analysts need to do a lot of this work ourselves, without unduly burdening our Black colleagues. It’s one thing to seek their advice and guidance, but it’s wrong to ask them to do the work for us.

**Do we have an obligation to act, as individual analysts and as an organization, in pandemic times or other times of crisis? If so, what are the meanings and possible roles for psychoanalytic activism?**

**Bill Glover:** One contribution we can make to the current climate is to bring our psychoanalytic attitude and setting to activism – understanding the importance of and creating spaces to think, recognize, and examine.

An example of this kind of work is going on in San Francisco—in a program called “Reflective spaces, Material places.”

**Prudy Gourguechon:** We have the potential to act, both as individuals and an association. What can we do to enhance this potential for psychoanalytic activism until it builds into an internal force that compels action?

- Understand that people are hungry for in-depth understanding of the uncertainties and confusion they face.
- Appreciate the power of psychoanalytic concepts to explain social and cultural issues.
- Grow the potential through training for candidates and graduates and support for those who dare to leave their office.

**Don Moss:** We know there is no such thing as “not acting.” This question raises the more fundamental one of “what is neutrality” not only during pandemics or other times of crisis, but always. Actually, there is no cultural/historical moment which is not, for billions of people, a time of crisis.

The issue here is whether activism and neutrality are in contradiction. Silence is action. Not acting is action. Our patients live in the world and have transferences to it, no

less than living in the consulting room with transferences to it. To actively interpret that world and the transferences evoked is a psychoanalytic/interpretive act.

The race issue resembles the ones we face regarding white peoples’ relation to the objects of nature—a posture of limitless dominion: “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.”

**Kerry Sulkowicz:** Do we have an obligation to act, as individual analysts and as an organization, in times of crisis? Yes, we do. Psychoanalysts don’t often talk about “values,” and I’m not entirely sure why. Psychoanalytic activism is founded on psychoanalytic values.

What do I mean by “psychoanalytic values”? One of our primary values is truth (especially emotional, historical, and developmental truth). We value listening without passing judgment, and tolerating painful emotions. We value complexity and an appreciation of conflict. We value language and expressiveness. We value the idea that we’re all products of our biology and our early environment and of our accumulated life experiences. We believe that with understanding and self-awareness, and with personal truth and reconciliation, we can change. And we value fundamental human equality.

If you think about our values, they sound like the makings of an activist. Our work is radical, whether with individual patients or with larger groups. Psychoanalysis stands for freedom – emotional and otherwise.

Finally, I think we American analysts need to be part of a global, not only an American, psychoanalytic movement. We in APsA need to take a hard look at, and ultimately abandon, what has become an American exceptionalism that, as the history books tell us, never ends well.

## APsaA's Excellent New Fellows for 2020-2021

*The American Psychoanalytic Association Fellowship Program is designed to offer additional knowledge of psychoanalysis to outstanding early-career mental health professionals and academics, the future leaders and educators in their fields. The 17 individuals who are selected as fellows each year have their expenses paid to attend the national meetings of the American Psychoanalytic Association during the fellowship year and to participate in other educational activities. The biographies below introduce this year's excellent group of fellows. We enthusiastically welcome them to APsaA.*

**Maura Boldrini, M.D., Ph.D.**, is associate professor of clinical neurobiology in the Department of Psychiatry at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons.



She is a co-investigator in the Conte Center for Suicide Prevention, Project 1, "Neurobiology of Suicide: Childhood Adversity, Neuroinflammation and Genomics." She has been studying adult hippocampal neurogenesis in the human brain since 2006, assessing how it is affected by antidepressants treatment, psychopathology, and aging. Boldrini is interested in studying the relationship between childhood adversity and neuroplasticity in the hippocampus, and the effect of genetic and epigenetic factors on it. In the Conte Center, Boldrini will study brains from depressed suicides and non-suicides and individuals without psychopathology, assessing the relationship between history of childhood adversity, levels of neuroinflammatory markers, and the total number of neurons in the hippocampal subfields. The project aims to distinguish the effect of psychopathology from that of adversity. Boldrini's research in mood disorders and suicide has been continuously funded by private foundations, New York State, and NIH since 1999. She has been the PI of several grants studying the neurobiology of neuropsychiatric diseases in the postmortem human brain after trauma.

**Danielle Frank, MSW, LCSW**, is a clinical social worker at Lenox Hill Hospital's Outpatient Center for Mental Health in Manhattan, Montefiore Medical Center in the Bronx, and is also in private practice. She earned a BFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art, an MSW from Smith College School for Social Work and completed a post-MSW clinical fellowship at Bennington College Psychological Services. In 2017, she co-chaired a conference at the Institute for Clinical Social Work in Chicago on the significance of the work of Frantz Fanon for contemporary psychoanalytic practice. She is currently a board member of the Association for the Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society, and presents her writing on issues of trauma, mourning, identity, and the implications of sociopolitical subjecthood on the psyche.



**Andrew Frazer, Ph.D.**, received his Ph.D. in clinical child psychology from the University of Kansas and completed an internship and fellowship in the psychiatry department at the Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center (LSUHSC). While at LSUHSC, Frazer completed a fellowship in infant mental health, and he also participated in the honorary mentorship program through the New Orleans-Birmingham Psychoanalytic Center. Frazer splits his professional time between his private practice and serving as an evaluator for several research projects affiliated with LSUHSC. His interests include child



development, family systems, religiosity/spirituality, and the integration of psychoanalytic and behavioral approaches to psychotherapy.

**Anne Friedman, MSW, LCSW**, is a doctoral candidate at the Smith College School for Social Work. She received her MSW from U.C. Berkeley and her BA from Brown University. She practices as a therapist at a Federally Qualified Health Center in Oakland, CA. Friedman completed training in a variety of settings including the San Francisco VA, the San Francisco Department of Public Health, and the Coalition for Clinical Social Work housed at the San Francisco Center for Psychoanalysis. Her current research focuses on social theories of power and intersectional identity for employees in community health and mental health settings. An additional interest is the role of neoliberalism as it impacts both the therapeutic process and clinical settings.



**Ali Haidar, M.D.**, graduated from the faculty of medicine at the American University of Beirut. He subsequently joined the National Mental Health Program in the Lebanese Ministry of Public Health as an intern, working on national policies and guidelines serving refugees and underserved populations of Lebanon. He also served as an intern at the World Health Organization in Geneva, where he contributed to the Mental Health Gap Action Plan. He



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completed his psychiatry residency at SUNY Downstate and is currently a child and adolescent psychiatry chief fellow at Mount Sinai. He is also pursuing further training in adult and child and adolescent psychodynamic psychotherapy. His primary areas of interest include public psychiatry, cultural psychiatry, medical education, and global mental health, particularly, displacement and migration's effect on the psyche.

**Carly Inkpen, MSW,** is a social worker, writer, and collage artist. In each of these roles, they focus on trauma, gender, migration, and how people inhabit their bodies as they move through the world. Inkpen holds an MSW from Smith College School for Social Work and works in community mental health and private practice in Boston. They are interested in the role creativity can play in digesting trauma and they are drawn to the free-associative aspect of collage as a way to say what might feel unsayable. Their article, "Fabulousness – What the Doctor Ordered: Exploring the Intrapsychic Significance and Social Meanings of Fashion," was recently published in *Psychoanalytic Social Work* and they are currently co-authoring a book about collaborative negotiation, career development, and community building. process and clinical settings.



**Nikki Karalekas, Ph.D., MSW, LMSW,** is a social worker with the Perinatal Behavioral Health Service in the Department of Psychiatry at Washington University in St. Louis. This service provides co-located mental health services to pregnant and postpartum women across antepartum, postpartum, and neonatal units at Barnes Jewish Hospital and St. Louis Children's Hospital. Karalekas provides emotional support, clinical case management, and brief psychotherapy to parents in the NICU. In 2018, Karalekas completed advanced training in



psychodynamic psychotherapy at the St. Louis Psychoanalytic Institute. Prior to becoming a social worker, she completed a Ph.D. in women's, gender, and sexuality studies at Emory University, focused on feminist philosophy. She is interested in applying psychoanalytic theory in diverse clinical practice settings and broadening psychoanalytic understandings of the perinatal period.

**Alba Lara, M.D.,** is a chief resident at the University of Texas at Austin Dell Medical School. She received her M.D. from Texas A&M College of Medicine. As an APA/SAMHSA fellow she will investigate the mental health and somatic outcomes of trauma in refugees and immigrants in addition to leading psychoeducational workshops and co-establishing a psychological asylum evaluation clinic at her program. She enjoys incorporating psychodynamic psychotherapy into routine psychiatric encounters and incorporating these ideas into resident and medical student psychiatric education. Her additional professional interests include psychosomatic psychiatry and embodiment of psychic conflict, neuromodulation of affective disorders, attachment/relational trauma, and disorders of self and identity.



**Eric Lin, M.D.,** received both his BS in psychobiology and M.D. from UCLA. His psychiatry residency and research training were at Yale and its Neuroscience Research Training Program. Lin's work applies machine learning and natural language processing to clinical trial data and patient interviews with the aims of improving clinical nosology. He hopes to apply his love for psychodynamic formulation to digital phenotyping. As a first year VA Boston Medical Informatics fellow, he splits his time between the VA MAVERIC machine learning group under Nate Fillmore doing big data analyses in the veterans' health records and McLean



Hospital's Institute for Technology in Psychiatry under Justin Baker examining deep phenotyping (with multiple digital signals from smartwatches, questionnaires, and clinical interviews) of borderline personality disorder.

**Celeste Lipkes, M.D., MFA,** is a fourth-year psychiatry resident at Yale New Haven Hospital. Prior to medical school she received her MFA in poetry from the University of Virginia and taught writing workshops at the high school and college level. Her first manuscript of poems was a finalist or semifinalist for several national book prizes. Her professional interests include mental health illness narratives, emergency psychiatry, long-term psychodynamic therapy, and advocating for providers with chronic medical conditions. This year she will serve as a chief of medical education and chief of Yale's psychiatry emergency department



**Xiaochen Luo, Ph.D.,** is assistant professor of counseling psychology at Santa Clara University. She earned her Ph.D. degree in clinical psychology from Michigan State University and completed her postdoctoral fellowship at Stony Brook University. She received her BS in psychology and BA in philosophy from Peking University as well as her MS in epidemiology from the University of Groningen. Luo's current research focuses on effective therapeutic processes, therapeutic relationship, and psychotherapy integration.



**Charla Ruby Malamed, MSW (They/Them),** is a recent graduate of the School for Social Work at Smith College and an entering post-graduate fellow in the Program for Psychotherapy at Cambridge Health Alliance. They completed their second-year internship at the Center for Counseling and



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## 2020-2021 Fellows

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Psychological Health at UMass, Amherst, where they developed a space for clinicians (specifically white clinicians) to inquire into the nature of whiteness, particularly as it unfolds in the clinical context. Malamed, has continued investigating what it looks like to integrate social justice work with clinical work in white clinician/white client dyads. Their paper, "A White Person Problem: Conducting White/White Treatment with a Social Justice Lens," is currently under review in *Psychoanalytic Social Work*. Malamed's professional interests include the relationship between spirituality and individuation; queer and trans-feminist theory; sexuality, gender, intimacy, attachment, and consent; and the creation of spaces in which paradox, conflict, and difference can be played with creatively and constructively. They hold a BA in liberal arts from Sarah Lawrence College and a master's in clinical psychology from the New School for Social Research.

**Clio Stearns, Ph.D.**, is an assistant professor of education at the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts. She received her doctorate in curriculum and instruction from the University of New Hampshire, and her MS Ed in childhood education from Bank Street College of Education. Her book, *Critiquing Social and Emotional Learning: Psychodynamic and Cultural Perspectives*, examines the ways children's emotional lives can be excessively regulated in oppressive classroom structures. Her current research deals with the role of consent as it relates to classroom management, and she is also involved in creating groups that support teachers to work with children experiencing or recovering from trauma.



**Jamie Steele, MA, MFT, LMFT**, is a doctoral candidate in science and technology studies at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and holds master's degrees in family



therapy and social sciences. Her dissertation research examines the sociotechnical enactment of gender in artificial intelligence technologies (AI), and the ways in which these gender enactments mediate the intersecting space between the technical reality and social fantasy of AI. This work includes bringing more explicit psychoanalytic theory into the field of science and technology studies in order to expand the kinds of questions STS asks. In addition to Steele's dissertation research, she has also extensively researched and presented on mental health and technology. She has been involved with the American Psychoanalytic Association for several years, including serving on the Committee on Gender and Sexuality and the DPE diversities section.

**Kelly Truong, M.D.**, is an addiction psychiatry fellow at Baylor College of Medicine, Menninger Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, where she completed her psychiatry residency. She also completed the psychodynamic psychotherapy training program at the Center for Psychoanalytic Studies in Houston, TX. In college, Truong cultivated her interest in the humanities by studying African-American history, theater, and neurobiology. A former circus artist and current aerial acrobatics instructor, she enjoys thinking creatively about the intersection of the body, performance art, and psychoanalysis. Her professional interests include psychoanalysis and addiction, psychopharmacology, personality disorders, trauma, community mental health with focus on race and sexuality.



**Jason Tucciarone, M.D., Ph.D.**, is a research track psychiatry resident at Stanford University. He received a BA in biology and philosophy from Union College. He spent three years at the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke as a post-baccalaureate IRTA



research fellow developing MRI contrast agents to map neuronal connections. Following this, he entered SUNY Stony Brook University's Medical Scientist Training Program (M.D./Ph.D.). There he completed a doctoral dissertation in neuroscience under the mentorship of Josh Huang at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory. His thesis work employed mouse dissections of excitatory/inhibitory neuron subtypes with a focus on fear circuitry and chandelier inhibitory interneurons in prefrontal microcircuits. His research interests include uncovering circuit mechanisms of psychiatric disorders with hopeful applications to novel therapeutics. He's involved in Stanford's psychotherapy education leading an individual psychotherapy small group and he leads a support group for internal medicine residents on ICU rotations in response to the Covid-19 health crisis. In lab he's currently investigating the role of opioid receptor subsystems in mouse models to hopefully uncover the role of endogenous opioid modulation in the value circuitry involved in addiction and primary drive processing during play, bonding, and care.

**Liz Camarena West, MSCP, AMFT, APCC**, received her MS from Notre Dame de Namur University after earning a BA in psychology from ITESO University, Jalisco, Mexico. She has served nonprofits in Mexico, Nepal, and the United States. Immigrating four years ago, West continues to advocate for other immigrants by teaching ESL and citizenship. While completing her master's, she was selected by NDNU to travel to a detention center to serve women seeking asylum in the U.S. She is a member of the Bay Area Border Relief, and believes in the power of justice for asylum seekers at the southern border. Currently, she provides counseling services at Ayudando a Latinos a Sonar (ALAS), and is interested in implementing community-based psychoanalytic therapy for Latino immigrants suffering from trauma.



APSA

# The Western New England Institute for Psychoanalysis in the Time of Covid

Deborah Fried and Bonnie Becker



Deborah Fried



Bonnie Becker

On March 13, 2020, one of Western New England's (WNEIP) study groups gathered for its weekly meeting; this group focuses on race, diversity, and psychoanalysis. It is a candid and sometimes painful exploration for a group composed of mostly white, older psychoanalysts. This particular meeting began with nervous laughter about a rumored virus, then concluded in somber, thoughtful, quiet determination to meet again in person the following week, certain that given our size and the size of the room we would be safe.

Within 48 hours, we were emailing our doubts and then determination to meet the coming week and as long as

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*Bonnie Becker, PhD, is a clinical psychologist in private practice, an advanced academic associate candidate at WNEIP, and an assistant clinical professor of psychiatry (psychology) at the Yale School of Medicine.*

necessary by Zoom. What seemed a distant, vague threat one day quickly evolved into a clear and present danger — a pandemic.

There have been more than 200 epidemics documented in our world, including scores widespread enough to be classified “pandemics.” Lasting as long as 25 years, pandemics have killed up to 200 million people, the most devastating being the ongoing HIV pandemic appearing in the 20th century and the Black or Bubonic Plague in the 14th century. Others, like cholera, influenza, typhus, TB, leprosy, and malaria have lasted for years and many have recurred.

That we could be in this current pandemic for years to come, even with treatments, vaccines, and modernity, was only an inkling when at our next Zoom meeting our group spoke about our desires to be helpful in the larger community. The idea surfaced to volunteer with the Yale University Department of Psychiatry, which was organizing large-scale support for members of the Yale New Haven Hospital (YNHH) community, and their families, who were treating Covid-19 patients. YNHH serves the 860,000 residents of the greater New Haven region, a college town embedded in a mixed community of Blacks, Hispanics,



Asians, whites, and blends of many cultures.

The next week, WNEIP's leadership called a society-wide meeting where we created an ad hoc committee of six, including our society and institute presidents and the chair of the Education Committee. The psychiatry department responded enthusiastically to our offer of analytic assistance to cognitive-behavioral supports underway.

We led the virtual Town Halls offered by our psychiatry department to the YNHH communities. Initially offered twice daily, we used Town Hall meetings to address fear and conflicts about the virus, the sudden lockdown mandate, and managing life at home with work and families.

We also joined the staff of the Department's 1:1 professional support program for members of YNHH hospital programs and their families. The program offered acute stress Intervention sessions, using a curriculum developed by a member of our institute, Steven Marans. We also noted that some of those seen through this program were struggling with race-related issues that exploded after George Floyd's killing on May 2020. Significantly, as the pandemic and racial issues flared, the relevance of our

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# Committee on Psychoanalytic Study (COPS)

Gail Glenn, Chair

As we continue to deal with our new normal during Covid-19, COPS study groups remain diligent in pursuing their missions. We moved our study group discussions online, and we learn from one another as we deal with the pandemic and our analytic work. In this issue, we feature Charles P. Fisher, chair of the Study Group on Psychoanalysis and Neuroscience, who discusses the relevance of neuroscience on our reactions and ways of coping during the pandemic. We welcome your feedback, comments, and participation in COPS.

## Study Group on Psychoanalysis and Neuroscience

Charles P. Fisher, Co-chair

The COPS Study Group on Psychoanalysis and Neuroscience was created in 2009 to develop educational materials and programs about the relationship between psychoanalysis and neuroscience for APsA candidates, members, and institutes. Virginia Barry and I are the co-chairs.

In a time of rapid change in neuroscience and of theoretical pluralism within psychoanalysis, the work of our study group has turned to current controversies in both domains. In the light of the Covid crisis and the turn to distance analysis as a form of treatment practiced by most or all APsA members, we are thinking about how neuroscientific considerations may inform us, the effects and significance of working with patients online, and how that interacts with analytic process.

Many psychoanalysts and psychotherapists describe unusual fatigue in

working with patients through video technology. This phenomenon is not universal, however. Our study group is interested in why this phenomenon is so frequently reported, why it is not universal, and what it might imply about psychoanalytic and psychotherapeutic processes.



Charles P. Fisher

An article in the New York Times, "Why Zoom is Terrible," by Kate Murphy (April 29, 2020) points out, "The problem is that the way the video images are digitally encoded and decoded, altered and adjusted, patched and synthesized introduces all kinds of artifacts: blocking, freezing, blurring, jerkiness, and out-of-sync audio. These disruptions, some below our conscious awareness, confound perception and scramble subtle social cues. Our brains strain to fill in the gaps and make sense of the disorder, which makes us feel vaguely disturbed, uneasy and tired without quite knowing why."

A different spin is offered by Stephen Hartman, a psychoanalyst. In a widely circulated email, he wrote in response to Murphy's article: "It's not that the article is wrong about screen fatigue, etc. In fact, it could be much more descriptive about the neurocognitive differences between screen relations and in-person encounters. For that, I

strongly recommend Gillian Russell's excellent 2015 book: *Screen Relations: The Limits of Computer-Mediated Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy*. The problem with the article is that it works with a somewhat dubious premise that screen relations and in-person relations *should* be similar. Or, said differently, that screen relations are a second-rate version of the in-person relations that they mimic."

His counsel is to "allow yourself to play with the differences between the two mediums rather than suffer the lack of verisimilitude," and "imagine that digital time and space are a different kind of time and space with a different way of configuring experience." In effect, Hartman supports video psychotherapy as a valid but fundamentally different form of treatment. Others believe that the video format is simply a different frame for treatment. Hartmann suggests it is fatiguing when we fight the difference.

The "Johnson" blog for *The Economist* (May 16-22, 2020) presents an article entitled "The Linguistic Psychology of 'Zoom Fatigue.'" The author writes there is a lag of about 150 milliseconds – sometimes more – between the picture and the sound on Zoom and other platforms. That makes it difficult for speakers to time conversational turns with "no gap, no overlap." Interruptions and pauses are more frequent, leading to difficulty in accurately assessing the intention of the speaker. For example, an additional pause due to the 150-millisecond lag time can make the speaker seem less convincing to the listener. (Daniel Foti and Felicia Roberts, "The neural dynamics of speech perception: Dissociable networks for processing linguistic content and

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# A Psychoanalytic Approach to Combating Racism

Margarita Cereijido

It's clearly time that we, as a society, confront white heterosexual hegemony that "normalizes" racism and other forms of prejudice and discrimination. Such prejudices are antithetical to what should be our society's aspiration to be inclusive and pluralistic.

Cultural hegemony is the cultural influence exerted by a dominant group over a culturally diverse society. The dominant group's subjective world views become the accepted cultural norm, inhibiting alternative views.

Cultural norms are the result of social constructions. They are related to conscious and unconscious identifications, and to the historical place each of us has occupied within society. To be an inclusive pluralistic society, which embraces cultural diversity, we need to encourage the articulation of alternative world views and cultural norms. That calls for deconstructing the existing hegemony. Psychoanalysis has much to contribute to that process.

As part of that contribution, psychoanalysts need to question, explore, analyze, and confront prejudice in themselves and their patients. Psychoanalysts must also distinguish between popular discriminatory stereotypes and patients' personal anxieties wrapped in prejudice in order to differentiate between social ideology and personal pathology.

Socially shared prejudices represent an unconscious part of the ideology of a society, feelings that provoke and justify discriminatory measures, including

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exploitation of one group by another. Psychoanalysis holds that racism and hate toward "The Other" are universal characteristics of individuals and societies predicated on the need to construct one's psychic self by excluding, devaluating, and hating the Other.

As it develops, the undifferentiated, primitive, and narcissistic ego projects outside of itself that which it experiences as unwanted and dangerous, thereby making the external object into something foreign and evil. In that fashion, the process of projection renders strange what is in fact old and familiar. That "strange"/"otherness" is part of our unconscious, and therefore is an inherent part of us (Freud, 1919, "The Uncanny").

In *Civilization and its Discontents*, Freud (1930) states that just as we maintain a cohesive sense of self by projecting onto the Other our own unacceptable aspects, so too we can love one another as a group as long as there are outsiders we can hate. That projective process takes place at both the individual and social levels. It encompasses both the individual psychic and the social imaginary, that include the values with which each society constitutes itself. As an example, consider this probably apocryphal anecdote from 1870. Argentine president Domingo Sarmiento, was meeting with an indigenous chief. Sarmiento opened a window complaining "it smelled of horse" and the indigenous chief opened another window, complaining "it smelled of cow." Both were indirectly accusing the other of having barbaric eating habits, and hence being barbaric.

The Mexican sociologist and anthropologist Roger Bartra wrote in his 1992, *El Salvaje en el Espejo* that the creation of the myth of the savage man is a fundamental ingredient of



Margarita Cereijido

the European culture. The savage man is Western man's alter ego, an artificial savage who preserves the civilized identity of the European man

and justifies racism. In other words, a constructed Other becomes the depository of our unwanted repressed aspects. This captures how psychoanalysis' notion of the unconscious connects the social phenomenon of racism with our individual psyches. Given that racism stems from the projection onto the Other of unwanted aspects of ourselves, owning those unwanted aspects would mitigate our impulse to ascribe them to others.

The 2020 summer's social protests were about racism. The year before, in June 2019, APsA apologized to the LGBTQ community about homophobia. Without minimizing their differences, racism and homophobia are both forms of discrimination and devaluation of the Other.

In its capacity to combat racism and other forms of discrimination by fostering an understanding of the unconscious construction of the Other, a psychoanalytic perspective can contribute to the larger society. By promoting an integrative process of owning unwanted aspects, understanding them, and changing them, psychoanalytic practice helps and supports individuals as they do their own work combating their own prejudice.

As Julia Kristeva says in her 1988 work, *Strangers to Ourselves*, acknowledging our "otherness," allows us to stop perceiving "the Other" as a threat. In her words "If I am a stranger, then there are no strangers." APsA

*[Editor's note: For more information on this article's sources, contact the author at cereijido.margarita@gmail.com]*

# Psychoanalytic Education in the Age of the Pandemic

Alan Sugarman, Education Editor

For all of us, the world turned topsy-turvy last March. We had met in New York in February for APsaA's 2020 National Meeting, and conducted business as usual with only faint rumblings from Asia about a virus in faraway places. We attended organizational meetings, candidates met in the Candidate's Council, members attended the scientific program, and the Department of Psychoanalytic Education (DPE) went about its activities promoting quality psychoanalytic education. We now know we were operating in a state of ignorant bliss, secure in our assumptions that psychoanalytic life would continue in the manner it had been. At that time, all seemed well.

Just a few weeks later, most of us were living, practicing, learning, and teaching in lockdown. Everything we had taken for granted changed, seemingly overnight. Suddenly we were scrambling to see our patients and maintain our involvements in psychoanalytic education. APsaA's leadership acted quickly and decisively to create a team to help the membership deal with the crisis. Town Hall virtual meetings were instituted, along with other events, to support our members and community. Institutes were encouraged to move all aspects of their functioning to telephonic or video-conferencing modalities. Both APsaA and the IPA announced that remote learning, including training and control analyses, would count toward progression and graduation in all APsaA institutes. And

*Alan Sugarman, Ph.D., is former head of the APsaA Department of Psychoanalytic Education.*

the leadership of the DPE fielded individual and institutional questions about the effect of changed circumstances on formal psychoanalytic education.

As everyone began to gather their feet under them and realize that the situation could go on for some time or reappear in a second wave, DPE leadership considered ways of developing longer term aids for institutes, faculty, and candidates. No longer enough to provide short term solutions to maintain psychoanalytic education, we now needed to help institutes, faculty, and candidates prepare for the next academic year operating remotely.

Just as APsaA and the DPE were beginning to deal with COVID-19, George Floyd was murdered. The entire country erupted in this most recent example of institutionalized racism and rose up in protest. APsaA and its institutes now faced challenges both to take a stand on racism and to look inward at our lack of diversity, in our curricula and in those we educate. We all now were compelled to grapple with a second trauma.

## Workshop for Directors of Institutes, Education Committee Chairs, and Child and Adolescent Program Chairs

The DPE moved up the date of its Workshop for Directors of Institutes, Education Committee Chairs, and Chairs of Child and Adolescent programs, allowing the leadership of APsaA institutes to share problems and consider solutions for more immediate educational issues. Held virtually, the May 16 workshop was well attended. Meeting online became tiring, so we limited the discussion to the two most pressing issues



Alan Sugarman

while tabling the rest for the next and further meetings. We planned follow-up workshops during the APsaA meetings, and possibly over

the course of the summer.

Most striking was the sheer number of concerns, questions, and issues that institute leaders raised, mostly about candidates' anxiety around training. Some reported candidates' doubts about the quality or value of educating remotely. Harriet Wolfe, IPA president-elect, described a candidate's fear that the pandemic was the "death knell" of psychoanalysis. Harriet responded that, in fact, psychoanalysts were most well-equipped to deal with the anxieties and uncertainties brought by the pandemic. Her response reflected the need to balance, in these challenging times, the worries with a positive vision of growing and maintaining an analytic identity and mind. Many institutes offered their own town hall meeting for candidates and faculty as a way of dealing with these anxieties. One institute reported that candidates seemed more open with their concerns when faculty were not present. Others thought it was useful to combine both groups.

Often candidate anxieties involved more practical issues. For example, many continued to worry that remote training would not count despite reassurances from both APsaA and the IPA. Clearly anxiety was interfering with the ability to take in and trust information. Some candidates worried about beginning control cases virtually, a difficulty that seemed even more daunting with child control cases. Some institutes wondered if tuition should be

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## Psychoanalytic Education

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reduced for virtual coursework. The group shared ideas, sources, and tools to help with these issues.

Another common concern revolved around graduations during social distancing. The fact that graduation acknowledges candidates' efforts and successes seemed to highlight the importance of providing some event. Some institutes planned to postpone graduation until they could gather in person, while another institute planned graduations via Zoom, where they could drink a toast virtually. Attendees were all impressed by institutes' creativity and thoughtfulness.

Other concerns, such as the pressure candidates might feel to see patients in person once their state opened when they did not feel safe working that way, were postponed for the June workshop. It was clear that we faced an ongoing need to create and sustain a psychoanalytic community during this difficult time; to that end, we discussed establishing consortiums of institutes in geographic proximity to share instructors, scientific meeting speakers, and other personnel.

The DPE held a second workshop on June 13 where we focused primarily on ways of recruiting diverse candidates and teaching about racial and ethnic diversity as part of the analytic curriculum. Because having a course on this subject is far from sufficient, we noted the role, meaning, and relevance that racial and ethnic differences have in all the traditional tracks of an analytic curriculum. The way that children organize their experience of others along the lines of sameness and difference, for example, contributes to how looking or behaving differently takes on meanings that are then internalized. We were reminded that the Diversities Section of the DPE, chaired by Anton Hart, had

developed a bibliography that institutes could draw on for their courses.

Since June, the new leadership of Britt-Marie Schiller as head, and Wendy Jacobson as associate head, have instituted more regular virtual meetings of this group to remain available and help institutes share their experiences of educating with distance-mediated technology with each other.

### The Psychoanalytic Education Forum

Typically, the forum discussion revolves around controversial subjects in psychoanalytic education. In 2020, considering the Covid-19 crisis, the June 14 forum focused on complexities of teaching psychoanalytic courses by remote technology. Britt-Marie Schiller distributed related materials and invited all APsaA members to attend.

There was a consensus that teaching remotely poses particular challenges. It is difficult to use more Socratic or seminar-based learning, for example, to promote critical thinking. Furthermore, not being able to read body language, to know when to speak, to feel the emotional atmosphere in the group in virtual meetings adds to the pedagogical challenge.

### Task Force for Model Mixed Distance-Mediated/In-Office Training

Another effort to help institutes during the pandemic involved the creation of a task force to develop a model of best practices for analytic education that promoted a necessary mixture of in-person and remote training.

**The task force's mission:** Just as APsaA is responding to the needs of its members to manage these complexities, it is also committed to the DPE's role in helping APsaA's institutes adapt psychoanalytic education to the virtual realm during the pandemic. Neither our institutes nor our candidates, in their partnership of

seeking excellence in psychoanalytic education, can afford to simply pause this lengthy pursuit indefinitely while in social isolation, let alone repeat the pause if Covid-19 rebounds in the future. Our institutes and APsaA exist, in part, to spawn the next and future generations of analysts. Consequently, the task force was asked to examine how best to maintain, adapt, and improve psychoanalytic education at present and in the future when elements of virtual education may need to be integrated with in-person training.

This task force plans to study and suggest strategies for:

- Distance supervision
- Distance analysis in training analyses and control cases
- Teaching engagingly and effectively via technology
- Recruitment, admissions, and progression procedures via technology
- Curriculum issues
- Complexities of transitioning back and forth between virtual and in-person as environmental circumstances change
- Maintaining institute morale and connectedness when in-person meetings cannot occur
- Financial strains of social isolation for candidates, faculty, and institutes
- Ethical issues involved with technology

To date, the task force has met biweekly to develop a document to help institutes think about and deal with the complexities of providing excellent psychoanalytic education in an environment where they may have to move back and forth between the office and virtually. Its early discussions led to the realization that individuals, local institutes, and APsaA had reacted to the trauma of the pandemic with rapid action and prescription of poli-

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# Psychoanalysis Underwater

Luke Hadge

Over the last year during the Covid-19 pandemic, I've spent a good deal of my time underwater swimming and snorkeling in the Pacific Ocean off the



Luke Hadge

coast of Hawaii. I live on land in Honolulu near a coral reef, visited by all sorts of fish, including Hawaii's state fish, the *humuhumunukunuaipua'a* (a word even harder for me to pronounce than *Nachtraglichkeit!*). Easy to spot in the water, this colorful reef triggerfish displays a palette of white, black, blue, orange, and stripes of yellow. The water is home also to sea turtles and monk seals, with occasional appearances by dolphins, whales, and sharks further out in the open sea. Most of my submerged sessions, not far off the south shore of Oahu, are spent in silent conference with a bounty of mostly friendly fish and turtle species native to the Hawaiian Islands.

The first time I ran into one of these large sea turtles, I had hardly seen it coming when, all of a sudden, I found myself face-to-face with a real live *honu* (Hawaiian for "turtle"). Fortunately, turtles are dexterous in the water, and this one was able to avoid my flailing, spasmodic body. I must have been

swimming directionless, looking down at the reef which caused me to veer into its "lane," so to speak. The turtle gave me a look that I can only describe as, "What the hell are you doing?" or "Watch where you're going!" or "Get out of the way, man!" It took me a moment to realize this was *its* home, not mine. I was trespassing. I promptly apologized as the turtle swam away. I have consequently become more careful in watching where I am in the water and more adroit at swimming alongside the turtles, who don't seem to mind me anymore.

The rest of my time in the year of the pandemic has been spent in the dry confines of my office, way above sea level on the 20th floor of an office building overlooking the ocean where I practice psychotherapy and psychoanalysis in-person and remotely with humans, not sea creatures. It has occurred to me that some of my patients may have, from time to time, thought or wanted to say: "What the hell are you doing? or "Watch where you're going!" or "Get out of the way, man!" Nevertheless, we keep swimming along, albeit flailing and, at times, spasmodic, around a reef, we hope, of understanding, insight, healing, and change. This has been especially challenging given the tsunami of illness, death, economic hardship, and disruption we're all swimming in. I lost a family member last year to the virus, and I still grieve this loss. Much of the time I have spent in the ocean these past months has been floating around thinking about my loved one — also an analyst -- reflecting on her life and what she meant to me.



## Locating to a New Life

Prior to the pandemic, I traded in a life where I was keeping my head above water on the island of Manhattan, for this one on Oahu where I try to keep my head below water. As a native New Yorker, I found the decision to relocate difficult, but, now in hindsight, it has worked well for my family and me, particularly now that Hawaii has been hit less dramatically by the virus than much of the rest of the country.

It wasn't until sometime after leaving New York that the pandemic struck. Residing on my new tropical "rock," as locals call Hawaii, exploring the coral reef, its inhabitants, and all the ocean around it, my mind has become freer to drift along with my body in the water. Far from my office, my patients, my books, and theory in a concrete sense, my mind frequently drifts toward psychoanalysis in a way I had not experienced before. Alone in the water with the sun rising above me or setting in front of me, I sometimes see the sun setting on one side and the moon rising on the other: I float between two celestial bodies. Lying on my back or swimming through the undulations of waves, I recall something a patient said to me and what it might possibly mean, or of my own analyses, or something Freud wrote and I have a sense, maybe for the first time, what it *really* means.

*Continued on page 33*

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## Psychoanalysis Underwater

Continued from page 32

Like an “oceanic feeling,” floating lubricates my mind. But then I wonder if a mind thinks about psychoanalysis while in the ocean, does psychoanalysis therefore exist in the ocean? If a mind contemplates psychoanalysis, is psychoanalysis alive for those moments in the vast open space of salty water and sea life? Fred Busch’s idea of “creating a psychoanalytic mind” comes to my mind. Some assert that, these days, psychoanalysis exists only on the margins. This is literal for me, living in Hawaii: I am the only APsaA member and formally trained analyst practicing in the state. And even though it may be even more marginal underwater, as long as a single human mind conceives of psychoanalysis — or functions according to its truths — then psychoanalysis lives.

When I am out in the water, I realize that I am freed in these moments -- in these hours, like analytic hours — from the distractions of daily life and, now, the constant reminders of the pandemic. I am away from my office phone, my smartphone, my laptop, my desktop, my email, my snail mail, even my watch. Importantly, I am away from other people with whom I have to confront fear and anxiety, or “fear and trembling,” in Kierkegaard’s words. “Wet trembling” in my case. The writer and surfer William Finnegan described the ocean as “an unkind god, power beyond measure.” It feels primordial but also soothing. Alone in the elements, I feel a clarity of thought arise within me. Avid swimmers have described an altered state of consciousness called “sea-dreaming” and a state of mind of “forgetting the water.” I haven’t quite had this experience yet, but often, while swimming and letting my mind wander,

I lose track of time as I do during analytic hours, but here I cannot reorient myself to time or human connection since there is neither clock nor human voice. I am out there, a speck in the ocean — an insignificant speck — a floating mind within a floating body, suspended in animation.

The water never stops moving. The tides go high and the tides go low. The waves form and break. The current goes this way and that. Fish and turtles and other sea creatures go about their business, not thinking about the pandemic, certainly not thinking about psychoanalysis. But I lie in this ungodly expanse of ocean in awe of a virus-free world. With my goggles, I see my own personal loss and try to reflect on the analytic mind swimming in our own watery skulls. During this tragic and terrifying time, I think underwater is the safest place to be.

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## Psychoanalysis and Music

Continued from page 7

their affects. Increasingly, I have appreciated that the symbols and formal structures of music I studied at Juilliard also can be thought of as an auditory representational world of individuals and a non-verbal pathway to the unconscious. Music is always present inside the consulting room when we listen and pay close attention. The late psychoanalyst, Stuart Feder, stated, "Music is a simulacrum of mental life." In my book, "Melodies of the Mind," I suggest that Freud's adherence to the (verbal) Royal Oral Road of dreams has a (non-verbal) Royal Aural Road counterpart which can lead psychoanalytic thinkers to embrace a theory of affect left incomplete by Freud.


### Future Directions: Beyond the Consulting Room and Concert Hall

In my presentations and writing, I have illustrated an intersection between music and psychoanalytic ideas with the iconic musical "West Side Story," a timeless masterpiece that premiered in 1957. Through the story of rival gangs, Jets (White) and Sharks (Puerto Rican), on the streets of New York City, this musical explores intolerance, prejudice, searing pain, boiling anger, and intense frustration between the gangs and within the individual minds of their members.

The overtly comic but deadly serious song, "Gee! Officer Krupke" illustrates the way neither gang felt heard nor respected. Despite the loving (and forbidden) relationship between Tony (Jet) and Maria (sister of the Sharks' leader, Bernardo), a fair fight between the gangs turned foul, culminating in Tony's unintentional murder of Bernardo. The harmony sought through the story and in the song "Maria" becomes dissonant, sonically representing intrapsychic and interpersonal

conflicts in all the characters as well as reflecting the aggressive and loving conflicts in all of us. Poignantly, throughout "West Side Story," from the opening sound to the last note, composer Bernstein weaves a musical interval called the *tritone* representing instability in sound. The tritone does not resolve consonantly but ambiguously. In psychoanalytic terms, there is no psychic resolution by the end of the show.

As with colleagues and patients, music is in our minds on many occasions. Psychoanalytic ideas have homes and purpose both in our consulting rooms and outside our clinical walls. In pointing out the similarities between music and psychoanalytic ideas as routes to affect and the unconscious, it is my intent to illustrate that the Royal (oral) Road has converged, rather than diverged, at an aural and oral junction within the larger community of ideas.


Creative, bold challenges and opportunities invite, indeed demand, involvement by the psychoanalytic community as we discover our new "normal." Multiple crises and opportunities are begging for psychoanalytic listening, understanding, re-evaluation, and active involvement in novel ways. When we work in harmony with other disciplines, psychoanalysts can confront the deadening viruses of hatred, intolerance, injustice, anxiety, loss, and grief by providing creative approaches to emotional healing. As we respond to the lessons of the current moment and their psycho-historical precedents, psychoanalytic contributions both inside and beyond our consulting rooms can have a powerful impact on others, especially when music has something to do with it. 

## COPS

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monitoring speaker turn-taking," *Brain & Language*, 2016.)

An additional consideration is the difference between two-dimensional images on a screen and three-dimensional perception in face-to-face interaction. Erez Freud and Tzvi Ganel in "Visual control of action directed toward two-dimensional objects relies on holistic processing of object shape," (*Psychon Bull Rev* 22, 2015) point out that two-dimensional and three-dimensional images are processed differently in the brain, requiring the mental construction of "perceptually driven holistic representations of object shape" in order to guide action. It is not clear from their experiments whether psychotherapy evokes the mental imagery of action on the part of the psychotherapist. What kind of reverie, mirror neuron activity, or imagined action takes place in the psychotherapist or psychoanalyst in the office or on the screen?

The natural experiment of teletherapy during the Covid crisis, combined with insights gained through neuroscience research, help us parse the internal psychic processes of psychoanalysts at work with patients in an office, on a video call, or on a telephone. In addition to helping us discern whether video-therapy is a distinctly different process from practice in an office, such experiments will support us in our efforts to describe the essential ingredients of a psychoanalytic frame. 

[Editor's note: For more information on the sources in this article, please contact Charles P. Fisher at [Charlep@aol.com](mailto:Charlep@aol.com).]

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## In the Time of Covid

*Continued from page 27*

Race and Diversity Group became increasingly apparent.

Members of Western New England were invited to participate in a departmental pro-bono virtual therapy clinic for Covid workers. Many from WNEIP stepped up both to supervise residents and to provide brief treatment. While fewer workers sought help than we anticipated, those who did were relieved to see such symptoms as insomnia and panic resolve rapidly. "Doing better," said one caller, "quite better! Without using my screens all night and now reading this book called *Educated*, and then? I can sleep, and I'm getting educated myself!" Another participant reported, "Talking helps, voicing my concerns. I have more energy to work. I'm not as easily upset, am sleeping much better." Regarding the fallout from the George Floyd murder, we heard the sober understatement: "We just need to learn how to be more careful," words that spoke to the powerful intersection of the many present dangers.

We are, as we write this, many months into the pandemic. By the time you read this, we will know more, likely have suffered more and certainly will have continued to offer our help to as many as possible. We are surprised by how relatively few front-line workers asked for help, yet we continue to reach out to them. We anticipate that over the longer haul more will seek treatment. Many psychoanalytic communities are stepping up in ways similar to ours, and we look forward to the time when we take stock of how we have integrated our efforts as we learn from each other and manage to survive these surreal times — now and for a long, long time to come.

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## Psychoanalytic Education

*Continued from page 31*

cies and guidelines. Task force members were struck by the relative absence of the usual analytic principle of self-reflection preceding action. Most had not even thought to pause, reflect on, and discuss advantages and disadvantage before acting. It seemed that one of the pandemic's traumatic effects was to cause reflection and discussion about education to collapse. APsaA and its institutes moved their educational functions into the virtual arena quickly and reflexively because it seemed so obviously necessary.

Meeting and discussing with each other helped the task force members to regain their bearings and to remember the value of talking and thinking about the impact of the pandemic on education. It helped them to clarify what was useful in educating candidates and what seemed to interfere. For example, it highlighted both the importance of such reflection and discussion before developing educational policies as well as how the traumatic anxieties and losses of the pandemic could lead to forgetting this basic axiom. They realized that the change to distance-mediated teaching, supervising, and analyzing had affected both the traditional analytic frame and the more implicit, but equally traditional educational frame. Thinking about these changes in frame and how they may impact so many educational activities is valuable. Articulating the new frame more explicitly is also important.

The task force also has noted that complicated issues are likely to arise as we move out of the pandemic. It was impossible to anticipate the pandemic, leaving no time to think about it beforehand. But APsaA and its institutes do have the luxury of anticipating its end and considering how it will affect educational programs. It would be valuable to think about what changes lie ahead. One issue that is likely to arise will be whether a candidate will be allowed to graduate if all his or her control cases were conducted virtually. The task force is not advocating a policy. Instead, it is emphasizing that it is useful to think about and discuss the principles that such an issue involves. It is important to be mindful of the value of being reflective about such educational issues. The document that it ultimately develops will delineate the various issues that institutes and APsaA might find it most useful to deliberate as we all continue our educational mission.

In summary, APsaA's institutes have been challenged to maintain the high quality of education during the Covid pandemic and racial reckoning. They have shown resilience and creativity in response. In addition, APsaA's Department of Psychoanalytic Education is an active partner in this task. This partnership highlights the importance of working together in adapting psychoanalytic education to the changing environmental and social context.

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## Corrections

In the last issue of TAP, the names of Alan Sugarman, education editor, on page 2, and Timothy Rayner, director-at-large candidate, on page 23, were misspelled. We regret these errors.



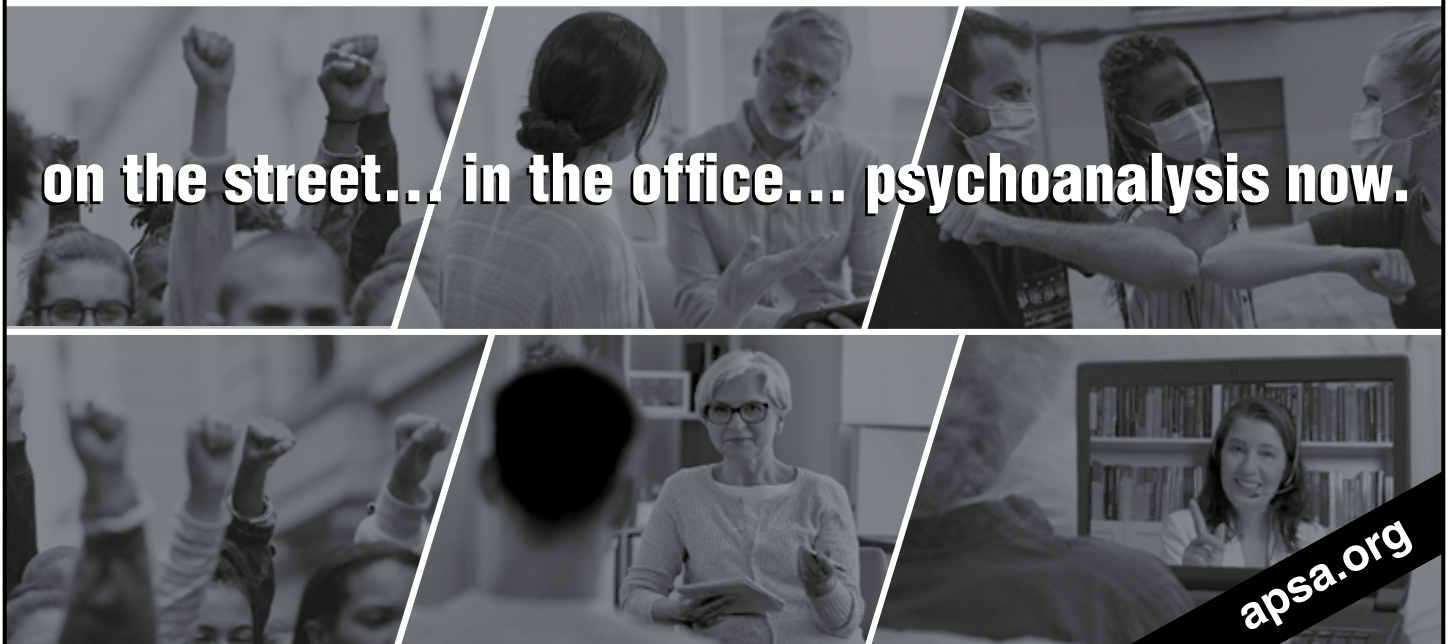
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