
IARPP eNEWS

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Sexuality: Yours, Mine and Ours **Relational Forays into Underexplored Dimensions of** **Sexual Experience and Sexual Identity**

A Report on the first IARPP one-day conference
New York City — November 23, 2002

Spyros D. Orfanos

Sexuality and its various countertransference manifestations were at the heart of this most successful day-long conference. 261 registrants attended the proceedings. The main question of the day was: What aspects of sexuality might be underexplored in clinical

practice and theory? The field's resistance to openly acknowledge countertransference experience has softened considerably in the last two decades, but areas that elude scrutiny remain.

In her keynote address, *Sexuality and Suffering, or the "Eeew! Factor*, Muriel Dimen described and explored a specific class of feelings of repugnance and disgust that may accompany sexual feeling, wherever it occurs, including the psychotherapeutic relationship. She described, with ample clinical illustration, the complex psychological and philosophical issues inherent in the topic of sexuality, expli-

cating some of the more disturbing aspects that remain underexamined. Discussants Mark Blechner and Ruth Stein made trenchant observations, offering their own compelling ideas, both humorous and sober. Neil Skolnick, the chair of the morning session, facilitated this most splendid keynote address, the two discussions, and audience participation.

The afternoon session featured an innovative format designed to encourage meaningful dialogue in the area of sexual identity: what happens when the stated or nominal sexual

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IARPP in Sydney

Annie Stopford, M.Ed. (Ad.Ed.)

The Sydney “branch” of the IARPP was formed a couple of months ago, after Neil Altman asked if I would be willing to convene a local group. In fact, the sort of activities that Neil suggested we might consider undertaking had been happening for some time prior to his email. A short time after the inaugural conference in New York, feeling motivated by the

conference and inspired by Stephen Mitchell’s vision for psychoanalysis, I suggested to Dr. Elizabeth Wilson that we begin a Relational Psychoanalytic discussion group (with a view to developing a network of people who might feel a kinship with the goals and interests of the IARPP)

Thus, we began a roundtable discussion group at Sydney University mid-2002. So far we have met three times and had some very lively discussion on three chapters of “Relational Psychoanalysis — The Emergence of a Tradition.” Elizabeth, who co-convenes the discussion group, is on the faculty of the University, and has been extremely generous with her resources, providing us with a meeting space, an email list, reading material for the discussions, and a website (www.silvantomkins.org/), on which can be found details of the next discussion (and past discussion

topics).

Attendance varies from about 10 to 15, and there are 25 people on the email list. We come from diverse backgrounds — psychotherapists, psychologists, psychoanalysts, psychiatrists, and academics — with varied theoretical influences and clinical training, including Self Psychology, Object Relations theory, Freudian psychoanalysis, Lacanian psychoanalysis, Critical Psychology, somatic psychotherapy, and family therapy. Four of us (including Mary Bayles, who trained as a relational analyst in New York, and recently returned to Sydney) have also established a peer supervision group with an emphasis on Relational Psychoanalytic perspectives. Since hearing from Neil, we have decided to make all our activities IARPP events. It is my expectation that this year we may begin another
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Evolving Perspectives on Therapeutic Impasse: Relational Analysts at Work

Report on the January Conference Co-Hosted by IARPP and the Toronto Institute for Contemporary Psychoanalysis

Hazel Ipp

A group of about 200 attendees – large for Toronto, which boasts a somewhat small and conservative analytic community – braved arctic temperatures and showed up for what was an extremely exciting and generative weekend. We were thrilled to have in our audience registrants from the United States also as well as a smattering from across the Atlantic.

The plenary session chaired by Gary Rodin featured superbly rich and evocative papers by Jody Davies and Irwin Hoffman with brilliant discussions by Jessica Benjamin and Malcolm Slavin. The plenary got us off to an excellent start, generating an enthusiasm that spilled over into lunch, with avid informal discussion groups setting up spontaneously. Saturday afternoon's panel comprised a compelling clinical presen-

tation by Taras Babiak, followed by four very varied and outstanding discussions by Adrienne Harris, Sam Izenberg, Stuart Pizer and Philip Ringstrom. That the audience was thoroughly engaged was evidenced by the reflective questions and comments generated as well as the press to remain way past the end so as to continue the discussion, ably moderated and facilitated by Margaret Black.

After a lovely reception in the Royal Ontario Museum's Chinese Tomb on Saturday evening, we reconvened on Sunday morning to hear Barbara Pizer's riveting paper, splendidly discussed from three very different vantage points by Virginia Goldner, Spyros Orfanos and Donnel Stern and chaired by Clarissa Barton.

The stellar panoply of Relational thinkers and their outstanding contributions to this conference, intended as

a fund-raiser for IARPP, ignited an atmosphere of excitement, vitalization and a general feeling of warmth that permeated and further enhanced the weekend. Several people signed up as members of IARPP on the spot and many more have inquired as to the procedure. The momentum generated appears to be ongoing as requests continue to come in for Relational study groups, a local chapter, and for much more of what they experienced this weekend.

Grateful thanks to Spyros Orfanos who gave so tirelessly and cheerfully of himself to work with me throughout; to Jessica who executed much of the program planning; to the Board of the Toronto Institute for Contemporary Psychoanalysis who facilitated much; and to the panelists who gave so generously and expertly of themselves to make this event the success it was. ❖

(Orfanos, from Page 1)

orientations of analyst and patient differ? Eric Sherman and Sheila Ronsen, respectively, presented *Adventures in Suburbia: The Analyst, the Patient and the Package in the Waiting Room* and *Closeted Minds: Narcissism, Penetration and the Analyst's Held Homosexual Norm*. Using detailed case material, they addressed the intersubjective dimensions of sexual identity difference. Courageously, they explored their personal reactions to this difference and speculated about its impact on the patient, the dyad, and the treatment. Following each 30 minute presentation, a distinguished panel of analysts representing a range of postclassical perspectives - Jack Drescher, Hazel Ipp, Sandra Kiersky, and Jonathan Slavin – each spoke for five minutes about the case. Then followed a discussion among the panelists and, finally, questions and comments from the audience. Virginia Goldner, the chair of this session, provided structure and commentary to ensure

the success of this intense afternoon program.

This was the first of IARPP's day-long conferences, delivered on IARPP's promise to foster debate on controversial topics among diverse relational schools of thought – interpersonal, self-psychological, object-relations. Where else could one find analysts so lucidly and courageously willing to grapple with the psyche and the body, the political and the clinical? ❖

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discussion group with a more strongly clinical focus, as some people have expressed a need in this area. Our longer-term plans include occasional seminars, and hopefully within a couple of years, a conference with attendance by one or more of our esteemed IARPP founding members. ❖

For information on discounts on a variety of psychoanalytic books and journals, go to our website **www.iarpp.org** and click on *MEMBERSHIP*. Information will be updated regularly.