

CASE SEMINAR: THE DEVELOPMENTAL LENS AND ADULT ANALYTIC WORK

(one credit) Kate Oram, Ph.D.

This is a course in which students will present clinical material (process) from ongoing psychoanalytic and psychotherapy cases. The focus of the discussion will be to use the clinical material to develop our understanding of our patients and of our work with them. Although we will discuss the particular patient and the approaches one might or might not use, this is not to be a supervision group, in the sense of telling the presenter what they “should” or “should not” be doing.

When relevant, I will recommend papers that people can read that will help us better understand the individual and/or the issues under discussion. I will be both a facilitator of this discussion and a participant. The perspective that I bring, Contemporary Freudian at the core, is strongly influenced by a strong developmental background which is based on my clinical work with children and their families. I would also like us to be aware of how this development took place within a particular culture that was part of what influenced our patients and their families. The role of these cultural influences, including generational trauma, will be part of what we will examine.

I would like to tell you a little about my experience and the resulting impact on my work with adults to give you a sense of this approach. My child/family work has had a number of different influences on my adult work.

One influence has been the way my experience with children has influenced my understanding of the backgrounds of the people with whom I work. I have had a great deal of experience in seeing how the child's individual difficulties are often intertwined with the parents and how in order to be of help you have to work with the parent and child together as well as separately. I often feel in my child/parent work that I am witnessing early stages of internalization: internalization of ways of managing the external environment (both human and nonhuman) and ways of managing the internal world of unconscious processes, emotions and the body. What has become more and more apparent to me is how these ways of managing have been, and still are, significantly influenced by the child's, and later the adult's, attempt to hold on to and manage important attachment figures. With adults this includes the therapist who often becomes a primary focus of attachment issues in the transference. Therefore, in working with adults I am very aware of how

attachment issues may be playing out with regard to the problems with which they struggle and within their relationship to me, the therapist.

Another influence is my interest in the development of the individual's ability to symbolize their experience. The ability to represent one's experience symbolically is something that naturally develops throughout childhood culminating with adolescence. It is part of becoming a differentiated individual who is able to separate one's internal world from the external world. With those adults who have completed this journey and are able to represent their experience symbolically, our more traditional ways of working are effective. However, there are many adults whose ability to represent their experience symbolically is problematic. These are people who can seem very concrete in their thinking and whose experience may be represented through action rather than through language. Their ability to reflect on themselves and their situation is extremely limited. They find it impossible to see things from the other's point of view. The reasons for this vary and our approaches need to change depending on our understanding of the underlying causes.

Recently, I have become interested in the writings of people (Bion, Bergstein) who believe that there is a whole level of human experience that can never be

symbolized and that our job as analysts is to open ourselves up to experience that, if symbolized, would be not fully understood or known.

This brings me to a third related interest. This is my love of, and belief in, play therapy. I have used it with my child/parent work and have learned how “playing” allows a space for new ways of experiencing oneself and others to emerge. Winnicott has written about this in his description of the development of the “transitional space.” It is within this “transitional space” that the ability to begin to see things from the other’s perspective is born. I have become more and more aware of how the idea of creating this transitional space with adults is crucial in the work that we do. I am hopeful that we can use the clinical case material to talk about this aspect of psychotherapy and psychoanalysis.

Finally, I have become more and more aware of how important it is to be aware of the cultural and gender issues that are part of the context of our work. This is very much an area that I am exploring and I would like our thinking about the development of our adult patients to take this context into account.

Below is a description of the different areas that I would like to explore with you in the course of discussing the clinical material that is presented and readings that are relevant to the area.

Areas of interest and related readings

Attachment.

Some papers relevant to this focus:

Peter Costello, "An attachment based view of development" in Attachment-Based Psychotherapy, American Psychological Association 2013 p.17-123

I find Peter Costello's view of development and the way he integrates attachment theory very helpful. However, how this understanding of the role of attachment impacts my view of the therapeutic approach differs from Peter Costello's.

Sheldon Bach "Sadomasochistic Object Relations" in The Language of Perversion and The Language of Love, Aronson, Northvale, New Jersey, London 1994 p. 1-27

Bach, S. A Mind of One's Own in *Getting From Here to there: Analytic Love, Analytic Process*. London: The Analytic Press, 2006

Dr. Bach has had a profound influence on my work. Many of his papers deal with how his understanding of development influences his approach.

Oram, K. (2013) "Poison Cookies" in *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, Vol 23, 5, p.581-624

This came from a panel at NYU and it includes an introduction from Lew Aron, a case presentation of a patient of mine, and then discussions from Sheldon Bach, Mary-Joan Gerson, Sue Grand, and Steven Knoblauch. The case is a good example of Sheldon Bach's description of a sadomasochistic object relationship.

Different perspectives on Masochism

Emmanuel Ghent (1990) Masochism, Submission, Surrender – Masochism as a Perversion of Surrender *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 26; 108-136

Sheldon Bach "Sadomasochistic Object Relations" in *The Language of Perversion and The Language of Love*, Aronson, Northvale, New Jersey, London 1994 p. 1-27

Novick, J. and Novick K.K. "Masochism and the Delusion of Omnipotence from a Developmental Perspective" in *Fearful Symmetry: the Development and Treatment of Sadomasochism*: London, Jason Aronson, p.45-69

Symbolic functioning

Some papers relevant to this focus:

Winnicott, D.W. "The Use of an Object and Relating through Identifications" in *Playing and Reality*, London: Tavistock Publications, 1971 pp: 86-95.

A close look at the internal psychic journey towards differentiation.

Danon-Boileau, D. "What Game are we Playing" in *The Silent Child: Bringing Language to Children Who Cannot Speak*, Oxford 1995

This is a French analyst who works with mute children using play therapy. I find it relevant because he is interested in early steps in the development of symbolization with these children. In particular, how the move from disorganized patterns of behavior to repetitive patterns of behavior represent a move towards representational thought. It is interesting to think of this chapter in relationship to our work with very concrete adults.

Katz, G. "Object Loss and Mourning in the Enacted Dimension" in *The Play Within the Play: The Enacted Dimension of Psychoanalytic Process*, Routledge, London and New York, 2014 p. 117-133

This is a wonderful paper that describes how early trauma manifests itself through enactments between the patient and therapist that develop over the course of the treatment

Bergstein, A. "The Psychotic Part of the Personality: Bion's expeditions into unmapped mental life" in *Bion and Meltzer's Expeditions into Unmapped Mental Life*, Routledge, London and New York, 2019 p. 1-27

Play

Some papers relevant to this focus:

Oram, K., Levy-Warren M., Kintzer, A., Sternberg, R., Weber, S. and Bartnett, M.
Collected Stories: Play in Four Acts

This is an elaborated description of a panel given at NYU that looked at play in adult work. It has been developed in order to eventually be published.

There are four examples of play in a session from different developmental stages from four different therapists (Marsha Levy-Warren, Alan Kintzer,

Rhonda Sterberg and Sara Weber). Michele Bartnette introduced the panel and I was the discussant.

Russ, S.W. "The Role of Play in the Development of Adaptive Abilities" in *Play in Child Development and Psychotherapy*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, London 2004 p. 8-33

Russ is a psychologist who writes about the research on play. I find her writing about the relationship between play and what she calls "divergent" thinking useful.

Winnicott, D.W. "Playing; A Theoretical Statement" in *Playing and Reality*, Tavistock Publications in association with Methuen, 1982, New York p. 38-52

Winnicott's view of the complex development of the ability to differentiate oneself and one's internal world from the external world is crucial to our understanding of our work with people. This includes his description of the transitional space which is crucial in this process.

Issues of Race and Culture

Vaughans, K.C. (2014) *Disavowed Fragments of the Intergenerational Transmission of Trauma from Slavery Among African Americans* in Vaughans

and Spielberg (Eds) *The Psychology of Black boys and Adolescents*. Praeger
2014 Fascinating discussion and description of how the silence around the
historical trauma in a family, in these cases slavery, corrodes the present.

Suchet, M. (2007) "Unraveling Whiteness" *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, Vol.
17(6) p.867-886

A wonderful description of the complexity of being white and of the
unconscious and historical processes that are part of that experience. What
makes this paper special is that the analyst describes her own very personal
journey.

Video on "Parenting across cultures: the different ways we raise our children"
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v+BJic9NrYKOY>). A U- tube video of a
conversation between a diverse group of people who have been involved in
studying the impact of raising one's children in a different culture from which
you have been raised. A mixture of personal experience and relevant research
is discussed.

Foster, rose Marie Perez (2001) "When Immigration is Trauma: Guidelines for
the individual and Family Clinician" *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*. Vol.
71(2) p. 153-170

A look at the research on the impact of immigration. The emphasis of the article is on 1) how to sort out true pathology from the normal impact of coming from a different culture and 2) distinguishing patient's issues that are due to stressors that are endemic to the experience of immigration from those which are due to trauma that has occurred prior to, during, or after the immigration.

Gender and sexuality

Fox A. (2018) "Gay-Friendly Psychoanalysis and the Abiding Pleasures of Prejudice." *Studies in Gender and Sexuality*, 19:4, 265-278, DOI: [10.1080/15240657.2018.1531544](https://doi.org/10.1080/15240657.2018.1531544)

Hansbury G. (2017) *Unthinkable Anxieties: Reading Transphobic Countertransferences in a Century of Psychoanalytic Writing*. *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, 4(3-4): 384-404

Saketopoulou, A. (2014) "Mourning the Bedrock: Developmental Considerations in Treating Transexual patients Analytically." *JAPA* 62(5): 773-806

This is a beautiful paper about understanding the developmental process that needs to take place with transexual patients.

Miscellaneous

Ogden, Thomas 1997 " Reverie and Interpretation" Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 66:567-595

Bach, S. Grossmark, C. and Kandall, E. 2014 "The Empty Self and the Perils of Attachment" Psychoanalytic Review, 101(3) p. 321-340

Novick, J. & Novick K. (2001) "Two Systems of Self-Regulation" Social Work (8)(3-4):95-122

