



MAGPS NEWS

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Spring 2005

A Conversation with Richard M. Billow, PhD

by Molly Walsh Donovan

Richard M. Billow, Ph.D., will be our presenter at the MAGPS Spring Conference. He is the author of Relational Group Psychotherapy: From Basic Assumptions to Passion, published in 2003.

MWD: I thought it would be good to start by talking about your book and what you refer to as relational group psychotherapy. Could you explain what you mean by that?

RMB: Yes. Perhaps we could start by asking what relational psychotherapy is in general? What does it stand for and what's different about it? The first premise would be the theory of intersubjectivity or co-construction: that the phenomena we study are mutually generated by the clinician and the patients or the group members. In the traditional model of the blank screen, the therapist is said to remain anonymous and neutral - and the therapist becomes the screen for the patient's projections, impulses, et cetera. That would be the traditional model. The relationalists understand that we're humans and not blank screens, and that, just as the way the patient acts conveys a great deal of information about him or her self, the therapist's subjectivity - his or her way of being - conveys a great deal of personal information and influences the interaction more than we can ever be aware.

MWD: Just by being in the room and reacting in all sorts of ways, verbal and non-verbal, the therapist conveys a lot.

RMB: Right. So that leads us then to the issues of authority and expertise. So that the relational model would be one where, rather than the analyst or the therapist being the authority, the therapist is one who is trained in accepting and encouraging the exploration of varied points of view, all of which have a certain legitimacy. So this moves us away from reliance on the clinical model wherein the patient is "ill" and the therapist is the "curer", towards a model of exploring interacting subjectivities and "negotiating" meaning.

MWD: Could you say a little more about what the expertise of the therapist is then?

(**Billow**, Continued on Page 2)

The MAGPS Spring
Conference Presents
***The 3 R's in Relational
Group Psychotherapy***
with
Richard Billow, PhD
April 30 & May 1, 2005



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RMB: Well, we say that the therapist needs to be an expert in promoting mutual ignorance, or another way of putting it, promoting an unknowingness – and thereby encouraging openness to evolving experience. The task then becomes making fresh meaning of here-and-now experience – which may arouse anxiety in all parties involved in the therapeutic interaction. It entails accepting that much of experience is irrational, pre-rational, “not nice” and so forth.

MWD: I believe in your book you refer to Bion as a relational group therapist.

RMB: Not exactly. I’d say that, as his theory of thinking developed, he developed into a relational theorist. Bion anticipated our current interest in intersubjectivity, perspectivism and co-constructionism....In my view, Bion’s metapsychology is profound and contributes a needed theoretical underpinning to relational thinking.

MWD: Can you elaborate on that?

RMB: I believe that Bion’s changing view of the nature and function of projective identification is key to understanding the development of his thinking. He initially adopted Melanie Klein’s description of projective identification, seeing it as a means of disowning inner experience — unacceptable self-representations — and involving the fantasy of taking over the thinking and personality of another. Bion then came to see projective identification as not necessarily pathological, but as a basic mechanism of pre-verbal communication.

MWD: So this was a real change in how he defined it.

RMB: Yes, and out of this expanded view of projective identification grew Bion’s concept of the “container-contained.” The “container-contained” describes how we hear and think about the other’s communication; how we convey our experience back; and how this communicative interplay influences the participants and the immediate future of the relationship. Hence from projective-introjective exchanges, we arrive at the container-contained, and a bare bones theory of therapeutic process as a dynamic field of mutual influence and interaction.

MWD: So he did not accept the therapist as a totally blank screen as others were doing then?

RMB: Bion argued that the therapist must utilize “subjective reactions” — no matter how seemingly irrational — as the basis of one’s most important interpretations. However, he assumed that such countertransference was a “container,” a vehicle for containing the patient’s or group’s projective identifications.

MWD: Before we end this, I wanted to at least mention the theme of our upcoming conference, this idea of the “3 R’s”. The “3 R’s” are shorthand for the fundamentals of something. So I guess you’re saying that these “3 R’s” feel like the fundamentals of group therapy.

RMB: Well, I think they provide one way of looking at group fundamentals. I am going to describe and demonstrate three ongoing processes that go on in all therapy situations: resistance, rebellion, and refusal.

MWD: The “3 R’s” - they all sound like somewhat negative forces.

RMB: Yes, my title may seem to suggest pathological forces, which is unfortunate. The “3R’s”

(Concluded on Page 8)



Welcome Aboard (pun intended)

Bob Schulte, LCSW, CGP, President

The election of a new Board of Directors is completed. We all owe heartfelt thanks for outstanding service to Emily Lape, Nominating Chair and her committee members, Joan Medway and Daryl Yoder for navigating a complex process with grace, professionalism, and vision. The new board will assume their responsibilities on May 1, 2005. Congratulations and I look forward to working with you.

On behalf of MAGPS, I want to express our collective gratitude for the dedicated service of departing board members: Irwin Sacks, Venus Masselam, Cheryl Poe, Cooke Read and Paul Timin. They're a joy to work with—hardworking, fun, funny, creative, articulate, dependable, endearing, committed and respected. Be sure to bring your own special superlative when we honor them during the luncheon at the upcoming Spring Conference.

Through the dedicated efforts of the Board of Directors, committee members and volunteers, MAGPS continues to blossom—well into its 43rd year. To anyone wanting to 'give back', MAGPS welcomes your ideas, willingness to work and ability to play—whether that's expressed by joining a committee, writing an article, running for office, or simply giving voice to your most authentic thoughts, feelings and concerns.

As I look to my new term as President, I want to re-commit myself to supporting the creative energies and active involvement of all our members, to operate within the by-laws of the organization, to be fiscally responsible in decision making, to search for viable and sustainable ideas to improve our programming, and to synchronize our collective efforts so that everyone benefits. I welcome your direct and constructive feedback so we can continue to maintain the traditions of excellence, commitment and inclusion that are the hallmarks of our Society.

I want to remind everyone that scholarships continue to be available for students, interns and residents wanting to attend the Spring Conference and Pre-Conference Institute as first-time attendees. Your help in distributing the Conference and Institute information to interested colleagues, especially students, interns and residents helps us greatly with our mission to support group psychotherapy education. Each of us is an important link to both current and future generations of group educators and group therapists. It can be your way of saying, 'Welcome aboard'.

I hope to see many of you at the Cinema Series on April 1 at the Washington School of Psychiatry. We've got the perfect film for April Fools Day. Come Join Us! |

Warm Regards,

Bob Schulte



MAGPS Board of Directors, May 2005-2007

by Emily Lape

The new Board of Directors, as elected by the Membership during the recent election, is as follows:

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The Nominating Committee was concerned to find people to run for the various positions who would reflect the diversity of the organization in a variety of ways. They were quite successful. There are seven new and six returning Board Members, with three new Officers, two new Members-at-Large, and two new Student/New Professional Representatives. There are six men and seven women. Geographically, there are three from Washington DC, three from Maryland, and five from various parts of Virginia. The disciplines include one MD, one LPC, one MEd, five PhDs and 5 MSWs. There is a nice diversity in age, race ethnicity, sexual orientation, and spiritual affiliation. At least five Board Members have affiliation with universities, several with hospitals, some consult to agencies, many have private practices, and a few also offer life coaching. All Board Members currently are or will be AGPA members during the terms they serve. Currently, eight are CGPs, one is an AGPA Fellow, and one is a Fellow of the American Board of Forensic Examiners. |

Student Outreach and Recruitment (SOAR)

by Cheryl Poe

Two years ago, the MAGPS Board inaugurated a program (SOAR) which focuses on increasing the participation of students studying in the field of group work who attend universities located near the spring and fall Conferences. The mission of SOAR is two-fold: to develop mutually rich networking relationships with area colleges and universities that offer students the opportunity to experience our community, and to increase diversity.

This spring, the SOAR program is working closely with the Pre-Institute Conference Committee to encourage educators to send students to both the Institute (on April 29) and the Conference (April 30 – May 1). SOAR participants will have the chance to have lunch at a local eatery with Board members of the MAGPS and ask questions about the benefits of becoming a member of MAGPS.

SOAR is offering scholarships to eligible participants. The scholarships will include the Pre-Conference Institute, registration fees for the weekend Conference, and lunch during the Institute. These scholarships are awarded to applicants on a lottery basis and will go fast. To be eligible for the scholarships, a person must be a first-time attendee who is a graduate student, and intern, or a resident.

(SOAR Continued on Page 5)



Cinema Series

Nancy Swain & Pat McCallum, Co-Chairs

The Cinema Series is sponsored by MAGPS and the WSP Group Psychotherapy Alumni Association (GPAA). Presentations include a light dinner and socializing followed by the film and a moderated discussion. There is no admission fee and free CEU's are offered.

The series is held at the Washington School of Psychiatry at 5018 Wisconsin Avenue and starts at 5:45 pm. **Due to security procedures, please arrive by 6:15 pm.** All are welcome but space is limited, so call **202-237-2700** for a reservation.

The final presentation of the 2004-2005 season will be *The Return of Martin Guerre* (1984) held on **April 1, 2005**. It will be moderated by Bob Schulte and Amy Bush. Daniel Vigne's film is set in 13th Century France, where Martin Guerre disappears as a young husband only to reappear many years later to resume his life and marriage. The "new" Martin divides the community into those who believe in his miraculous character change and those who see him as an opportunistic imposter. The power of the large group both obscures and reveals the elusive nature of the human heart. |

To the Membership

Anyone who has suggestions for movies for the Cinema Series next year, contact:

Nancy Swain
703-281-4928 x425

Or

Patricia McCallum
703-548-6476



(SOAR Continued from Page 4)

This is my last term as the Chair to the SOAR committee. As with all new things, the position and program faced bumps and bruises through the evolutionary process. However I am thankful to Emily Lape (past president who appointed me) and to all the Board members who trusted and supported me while I was trying to encourage other students to experience the rich fellowships I had while being part of the MAGPS community. |

Ron Kimball, PhD, CGP

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Photographs by Paul Timin

**Fall 2004 Conference: The Space Between Us**

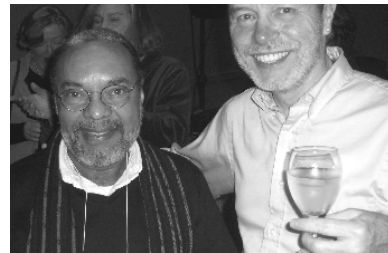
by Lenore Pomerance

In spite of the fact that our Fall conference fell on the University of Virginia's big football weekend game with the University of Maryland, we were able to carry on with an intimate experience at the Omni Charlottesville in the heart of Charlottesville, Virginia. The conference theme centered on Dr. Ruthellen Josselson's framework of eight dimensions of healthy relatedness in group psychotherapy. Given the short time allotted to didactic work, Dr. Josselson gave a comprehensive description of the normal ways humans reach out and connect with one another throughout life. Her dimensions of holding, attachment, eye-to-eye validation, mutuality and resonance, idealization/identification, passionate experience, embeddedness, and caring, gave us a fresh look at how we get these needs met.

Participants received copies of her article in *Group*, (Vol.27, No.4, December, 2003) which is a distillation of her book, The Space Between Us: Exploring the Dimensions of Human Relationships. Her use of two tables brought out the dimensions in bold relief. One defined aspects of the dimensions and gave examples of theorists closely associated with each one. The other defined the dimensions in terms of their absences and excesses. Both are useful tools for those of us teaching or supervising group psychotherapy.

Conference participants were invited to a brief reception at the home of former MAGPS president, Emily Lape before enjoying a tasty banquet and tripping to the strains of Charlottesville's contra dance band *Catharsis*. We had a large group experience negotiating "the spaces between us" as we learned several circle dances and the Virginia Reel.

Conference volunteer Judy Tyson made sure that late registrants all had a bed to sleep in given the pressure on rooms that week-end, and Co-chair Deb Sinek enriched our enjoyment of what free time we had with her guide to her favorite hang-outs. We were also pleased to award six scholarships to enthusiastic students. |



Group Psychotherapy Experiences with Seniors: Matching Therapeutic Goals to Generational Challenges

by Beryce MacLennan

This is a report on a workshop given at the 2005 APGA Meeting in New York City by Beryce and Hindy Nobler of Los Angeles.

Seniors are a diverse population drawn from different generations with different life experiences. Although seniors in their 60's and 70's face different problems than those in their 80' and 90's, there is considerable overlap and the state of their health may be a major influence in determining what is possible for both cohorts. "Baby Boomers" in their sixties are often at the height of their achievements, while many others are contemplating down-scaling and making major changes in their lives even though they may be able to anticipate 20 or more years of active living. In contrast, those in their 80's and 90's are usually battling a number of chronic disabilities which restrict them. Chronic illness reduces energy and mobility while diminished sensory capacities can restrict life choices. Most have endured relationship losses and face increased dependence and the imminence of death.

Hindy discussed groups for the older generation, conducted either in her private practice for those living independently or, for those who have accepted assisted living situations, in their residences. The former groups are focused on psychodynamic relationships while the latter on life review and reminiscence.

I described groups for multiply-handicapped elders living in nursing homes who desire to combat their feelings of loneliness and isolation by developing close relationships with others in a group where they will live until they die. There they create a supportive "family." These groups combine a mix of life review and current problem-solving. I also demonstrated a group for the young elderly who are coping with major changes in their lives—facing decisions regarding retirement, remaking a different social and intimate life after loss, considering giving up their own home and independence, or coping with role reversal in caring for elderly parents. Members reviewed their lives, explored the implications of change, and understood better what they want to do for the rest of their lives. In each of these groups, we enlisted the experiences of the workshop participants to enrich the workshop.

MAGPS EVENTS CALENDAR

April 1, 2005

Cinema Series

The Return of Martin Guerre
(1984)

April 29

Pre-conference Workshop

AGPA's

Principles of Group Psychotherapy
Holiday Inn, Bethesda, MD

April 30, May 1, 2005

MAGPS Spring Conference

The Three R's in Relational Group
Psychotherapy

by

Richard Billow, PhD
Holiday Inn, Bethesda, MD

October 14, 15, 16, 2005

MAGPS Fall Conference

Spirituality in Group Psychotherapy

by

Ken Porter, MD
Location to be Announced

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Bridging the Gap in Charlottesville

by Lisa Zimmerman

I arrived for my first MAGPS conference with expectations and anxiety. While I was new to Mid-Atlantic, this was not my first group conference and I was not new to group work. My passion for group had been ignited in the Clinical Program at the Washington School of Psychiatry and fueled at the AGPA conference last year.

I came hoping not only for personal growth but for a professional community where I might find a home. No longer did I qualify as a student or even a “new professional” by AGPA standards, yet decades of experience seemed to separate me from so many of the other participants. I wondered whether or not there was a place for me somewhere in between. That the conference theme was “The Space Between Us” gave me comfort.

Ruthellen Josselson’s model provided an accessible yet thought-provoking way of conceptualizing healthy relatedness. Her ideas were easily taken from the theoretical to the personal, serving as an intriguing lens through which to view the start of my relationship with MAGPS.

Being new to the organization and feeling somewhat alone, Josselson’s talk of our need for holding and attachment resonated quite strongly with me. Much to my surprise, the conference organizers – and the organization as a whole – seemed exceptionally attuned to this. Between the mentoring program and the warmth of longer-term members who seemed to go out of their way to introduce themselves, the sense of embeddedness that Josselson described came alive for me.

My deepest sense of belonging emerged out of my small group experience. What was most remarkable to me was the short time in which the space between members was bridged. Less than a week after the national elections that left our country so polarized, sharing in this experience moved me profoundly.

I left with a feeling of optimism that I hadn’t anticipated. I was hopeful I might be able to carve out a place for myself within Mid-Atlantic, and I found myself feeling less cynical about the world. People essentially do want to find ways to bridge the spaces between them. I realized the unique position that a group therapist is in to help foster the conditions for them to do so. †

(Billow, from Page 2)

describe relational or “intersubjective” dynamics, and the categories do not refer necessarily to positive or negative qualities or to a particular outcome. Individuals and groups have all sorts of motives for the “3R’s” including those that are quite reasonable and others that are typical in therapeutic situations. They exist in individual and group therapy, and encompass the therapist as well as the patient, group member, and group. And they serve as an impetus, not necessarily as an impediment, for potential discovery, independent thinking and new modes of relating

MWD: I’m sure there is much more to say about all this, but we are going to have to end here. I think this will make for a very stimulating weekend, and I think you’ll find it’s a pretty open group that will be both receptive and questioning of all this.

RMB: Well, the people I’ve met have been terrific. I’ve been impressed with their scholarliness and openness – I’m expecting to learn a lot!

MWD: Thanks, Richard, for your time. †

The complete, unedited version of this interview can be found online at www.magps.org.



CGP—Why Me?

Barry J. Wepman

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A long, long time ago (in what seems like a galaxy far, far away), I was a newly, minted Ph.D. and was sitting in the office of a very senior colleague whose walls were almost wall-papered by framed certificates. I guessed he was a credentials junkie, and I swore then and there that I'd never become one. Over the years I have obtained credentials, but have been selective, and on more than one occasion have resisted the importuning of a friend or colleague to apply for this or that status. Mostly I have pursued those credentials that either are practically useful or that support standards that make sense to me. I have the **CGP (Certified Group Psychotherapist)**. Let me tell you why.

The CGP says to colleagues that the holder has attained a level of fluency in the idiom of group psychotherapy by formal study and by practical experience. The requirements for the CGP include participation in a minimum of twelve hours of class study in group psychotherapy theory and practice, 300 hours of group psychotherapy experience as a leader or co-leader of a psychotherapy group, and at least 75 hours of group or individual supervision of group psychotherapy. So one who possesses the CGP is identifiable as having a reasonable basis for claiming to know his/her way around the contemporary practice of group psychotherapy.

AGPA acknowledges the CGP by making it the qualification for inclusion in the online registry that is used for making referrals for group psychotherapy services. Further, it is the credential required to be able to run groups in any of the grant programs administered by AGPA. In so doing, AGPA recognizes that the person holding the CGP has met national standards for providing group psychotherapy services. The recognition of the CGP extends beyond AGPA. It is recognized by consumers and employers, and by the Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO), the major accrediting body of U.S. hospitals.

By joining the over 3000 CGP's you'll be supporting the efforts of the CGP board in advancing the practice and standards of practice and education for group psychotherapy, and identifying yourself as a trained and qualified group psychotherapist. †

Congratulations to Emily Lape for being named a recipient of the AGPA Affiliate Society Award for outstanding service to the Mid-Atlantic Group Psychotherapy Society. Her accomplishments are outdistanced only by our collective delight and pride in seeing her so honored. Well done, Emily.

The Charlottesville Program in Object Relations Theory & Technique

Spring Workshop: From Independence to Mutuality

Guest Presenter: *Maria Ross, LCSW* of Washington, DC

Friday, April 8, 2005

9-11 AM

Gender & Competition: How Women and Men Compete

7:30 PM

Desire and Transformation as shown in the film, *Don Juan DeMarco*; film and discussion

Saturday, April 9, 2005

9AM-1PM

Working with Desire and Pleasure in Psychotherapy: An Experiential Workshop

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Cost: \$75.00

For **Information & Registration** contact: **Michael Kaufman, LPC**

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The Pre-Conference Institute: Not Just for Beginners

by Venus Masselam

The Pre-Conference Institute (PCI) is a consolidating one day trip into the world of Group Psychotherapy. While the curriculum follows the guidelines of AGPA’s five Principles, it has a fresh and valuable approach appealing to the very experienced as well as to the fledgling therapist. In a single day a breadth of information is presented by enthusiastic faculty and reinforced by the experiential processing groups, producing a solid integration of material.

Participants represent all of the mental health professions from graduate students with limited group experience to those in private practice who have led groups for over a decade. Thus, seasoned professionals wanting to begin groups again after a lapse in time and those starting groups for the first time meet together and feel supported and motivated in their efforts, aided by the verbal feedback and written evaluations of the PCI.

The CGP faculty members from the MAGPS share their knowledge and, more importantly, their experiences. This year’s faculty includes: Nina Brown, EdD; Emily Lape, LCSW, CGP, FAGPA; Joan Medway, MSW, PhD, CGP; and Irwin Sacks, PhD, CGP. Seven CEU credits are earned in the PCI, which means that if the PCI is followed by attendance at the two-day Spring Conference, the 12 CEU’s required for CGP certification will have been earned.

Here are some remarks from one of last year’s participants in the Institute who originally signed on to complete necessary hours for CGP designation:

“The day went well beyond any expectations I had. It was a fabulous learning experience and made me fall in love with group all over again...the pieces all came together perfectly...I loved being immersed in group theory and challenged to think...it was one of my favorite small group experiences...and the PCI (Friday) training enriched my enjoyment of the weekend conference.”

(Katherine Thorn) ¹/₁



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April 30 & May 1, 2005

The Three R's in Relational
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with

Richard Billow, PhD

Holiday Inn, Bethesda, MD

11 CE Credits Available

Pre-Conference Institute

**AGPA's
Principles of Group Psychotherapy**

April 29, 2005

Holiday Inn, Bethesda, MD

7 CE Credits Available

MAGPS FALL CONFERENCE

**Spirituality in Group
Psychotherapy**

Presenter: Ken Porter, MD

October 14, 15 & 16, 2005

Location to be Announced

GPAA/MAGPS Cinema Series

Nancy Swain & Pat McCallum, Co-Chairs



Friday, April 1, 2005

The Return of Martin Guerre (1984)

Bob Schulte & Amy Bush

5:45 to 6:30 PM Light Supper & Wine

6:30 ~ 9:30 PM Feature Film & Discussion

Washington School of Psychiatry

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