

Prologue

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Attachment theory has evolved exponentially since Bowlby pioneered the concepts of *attachment schema*, *proximity seeking* and *secure base*. Building on this classic attachment lexicon, we now speak of *mutual affect regulation*, *neural plasticity* and *the social brain*. Advances in neuroimaging have enhanced our understanding of how early and intimate relationships build and shape brain structure, such that secure attachment contributes positively to the development of adaptive affect regulation while its relative absence usually leads to emotional dysregulation and disturbances in reactivity to stress and interpretation of the social environment (see Cozolino 2006, for a comprehensive summary of the interrelationship of neuroscience and attachment, reviewed in this issue by Dennis Miehls).

As the guest editors have aptly noted in their introduction to this special issue on adult attachment, the involvement of social workers in attachment-based research and clinical work has also evolved since James Robertson's seminal collaboration with Bowlby and later influence on Ainsworth's development of the *strange situation*. That psychodynamically informed clinical social workers should be on the vanguard and serve as inspiration for the most significant contributions to the mental health field should come as no surprise to readers of this journal. One only need read Kanter's (2000, 2004) research on Clare Winnicott's significance to development of the *holding environment*, a key construct previously attributed solely to her more celebrated husband Donald Winnicott, to discover the extent to which her observations, garnered

during her social work practice with children, provided much of the grounded theory for her husband's object relations formulations. Without Kanter's persistent inquisitiveness and scholarship, this fact would have remained in obscurity.

Clare Winnicott and James Robertson are exemplars of clinical social work-in-action and, as is typical with many outstanding clinical social work practitioners, concentrated on the actual work rather than extensively documenting its import. As a profession we need to ask ourselves how and why this occurred, but answers to these questions would likely constitute several volumes of this journal. Fortunately, Susanne Bennett and Judith Nelson have taken steps to insure that social work clinicians conducting groundbreaking theoretical and clinical research in adult attachment receive the recognition and forum they so richly deserve. What I find most impressive and appealing about this issue content is that these guest editors and their contributors are working with the most difficult-to-treat populations, many of who suffer from multiple traumas and could readily be categorized as having disorganized/disoriented patterns of attachment. Equally remarkable are the contributors' theoretical advances in the areas of mutually regulating affect and social interaction in couples therapy, eating disorders treatment, supervision, telephone psychotherapy, and wilderness treatment, not to mention the attachment-based neurobiological exploration of laughter in the therapeutic encounter.

These articles go well beyond the rubric of applied scholarship, and the co-authored contribution of Allen Schore and his wife Judith (herself a social worker), attests to the importance of clinical social work in the advancement of attachment theory. If not a clinical social worker, who can better understand the systemic interaction of the mind-body embedded in a social context. Attachment

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theory as articulated by these contributors gives new meaning to the biopsychosocial approach. When Drs. Bennett and Nelson proposed the special issue I was elated because there had been so much interest in the topic among the journal's readership, and I was considering reaching out to the leading social work scholars in attachment theory and research. Two names quickly rose to the top of the list: C. Susanne Bennett and Judith Kay Nelson.

Dr. Bennett, an assistant professor at Catholic University of America, National Catholic School of Social Service, is best known for her innovative research on the application of attachment theory to the understanding of the clinical supervisory process. She draws on her extensive experience in health care and mental health settings, as well as in her private practice, to examine the attachment fit between supervisor and student. Dr. Nelson, Acting Dean of the Sanville Institute for Clinical Social Work PhD Program in California, has been a distinguished practitioner for over 40 years and has been actively researching right brain to right brain communication in therapy, such as occurs with laughter and crying. Her recently published book *Seeing through Tears: Crying and Attachment* is the culmination of this research. Both Drs. Nelson and Bennett were recently inducted as Distinguished Scholars in the National Academy of Practice in Social Work, honors well-deserved.

As they began their charge, Professors Bennett and Nelson quickly realized that they had an embarrassment of riches from which to draw as there are so many clinician-scholars who are doing innovative research and theory development. They wisely chose to confine their scope to work with adult populations and, as a result, a separate issue on attachment with children and adolescents is in the process of being born. Professors Joanna Bettmann and Donna Friedman will serve as guest editors for this future issue. If they can match the dedication, diligence and enthusiasm of the current guest editors, and the caliber of this issue content, then their mission will be deemed a success. Our job as clinicians, readers, educators, and advocates for the clinical social work profession is to get the word out to our psychoanalytic and social work colleagues that our profession goes well beyond the articulation of attachment theory. Thanks to the guest editors, the current issue speaks to the commitment to

insure that future James Robertsons and Clare Winnicotts receive all the accolades befitting their better-known non-social work collaborators.

This issue also marks the transition of book review editors, from Dr. Elizabeth King Keenan who has served admirably since 2002, under the editorship of my predecessor Dr. Carolyn Saari, to Drs. Cathy Siebold and Joanna Bettmann who begin their work with this issue. It is a bittersweet transition because Dr. Keenan is a difficult act to follow. I have found her professionalism unsurpassed, and I look forward to working with her in the capacity of a member of the editorial board. I also look forward to reading her research on the use of psychological and social theories to understand the nature of change and common factors in social work practice. She will also continue to serve as an associate professor at Southern Connecticut State University. Her responsibilities will be assumed by Dr. Cathy Siebold who serves as President Elect of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis and Clinical Social Work, and is an adjunct faculty member at New York University Silver School of Social Work. She is also a long-standing Distinguished Practitioner in the National Academy of Practice in Social Work. Her co-book review editor is Joanna Bettmann, an Assistant Professor of Social Work at the University of Utah. She teaches practice and human behavior theory in the MSW program, and researches attachment issues in a range of populations. She is also Research Director at Open Sky Wilderness Therapy, a wilderness therapy program for adolescents and young adults. I could not be more pleased than to have these outstanding colleagues serve in Elizabeth King Keenan's footsteps. So thank you Liz and welcome aboard Cathy and Joanna.

References

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