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***Cultural Diversity in Couple and Family Psychoanalysis***

**Introduction**

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Throughout history there have been numerous family structures within any given culture consisting of families with children who are reared by biological parents, adoptive parents or parents who may be relatives or designated carers acting in loco parentis (Attali, 2007).

In contemporary society one finds an even greater range of family structures as a result of globalisation and associated migration. These include families where children's parents may come from incompatible cultural backgrounds such that one parent may surrender their connection to their original traditions and values (Barbery, 2006, p. 325). There are also families which consist of a male with several female partners, a woman with several male partners or same-sex couples, all with children whom they raise who may or may not be the product of one partner's ova or sperm.

Reproductive technologies including "in vitro" fertilization and surrogacy or "rental uteri", have also facilitated a variety of possibilities for having a child. These possibilities also create many new ethical challenges as reproduction has thus become a rapidly

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changing context wherein these modes of reproduction makes it possible for babies be born not only outside of a biological coupling, but from a variety of sources of genetic material including relatives such as sisters and aunts or even grandparents.

These rapid changes in reproductive technology and the new family structures resulting from them have implications for the psycho-emotional development of infants related to the need to incorporate these new forms of parental coupling which impact on their primary processes of identification. The resultant psychic structures of such children have a combination of universal and distinct aspects not previously encountered in our consulting rooms. As clinicians, we need to respond to the challenges of these new psychic configurations without value judgement, but with a sense of challenge. These new and varied definitions of family and family structure bring new and unique challenges to our psychotherapeutic work which will manifest in our counter-transference. The challenge for contemporary couple and family psychoanalysis is therefore to bring deep “psychoanalytic listening” to the unconscious material of these new family configurations and their associated unique history, fantasies, myths, identifications and levels of symbolization. This can then lead to therapeutic action in the form of interferences and interpretations which can facilitate healthy family functioning.

This issue of the Review thus examines the complexity and challenge of working with such new forms of family structure, including those characterised by single, gay or transsexual parents which see traditional and new forms of family and identity links merge and become confused.

Blay Levisky (2017) notes that the contemporary family «is a social core of people united by affective bonds, who generally share the same space and maintain, among themselves, a relationship of solidarity» (p. 46). This is a broad definition that does not specify what types of “spaces” these people share or their political, social or emotional ideologies, rather it focuses on the fact that such families attempt to identify and develop links with each other in a way which promotes a sense of belonging.

In accepting the multiplicity of new family configurations, the couple and family psychoanalyst therefore needs to take a non-judgemental stance and expand her repertoire of psychoanalytic listening and comprehension and be aware of new forms of interference and means of interpreting.

In the current issue of the Association Journal you will find papers from the 7th International Congress of the International Association of Couple and Family Psychoanalysis, held in São Paulo, Brazil, in August of 2016, whose central theme was “Cultural Diversity in Couple and Family Psychoanalysis”.

In her article Olga B. Ruiz Correa considers the traumatic impact of forced migration on the family group. She notes that in considering this impact, we have to evaluate the various subjective and intersubjective resonances in the unconscious of the family.

Maria Cecília Fernandes Silva discusses the manner in which culture impacts on family functioning by examining the issue of families who are challenged by a need to re-locate to another country and who suffer difficulties in adapting to a new culture.

In their article, Flavia de Maria Gomes Schuler and Cristina Maria de Souza Brito Dias report their findings regarding the impact of the maternal migration of six mothers in the

lives of seven adolescents. They particularly highlight the strategies adopted to cope with the family breakdown caused by the migration, the challenges of their new living conditions and their anticipation of future challenges

The article by Ondina Greco examines two couples in which one partner has recently migrated. She highlights the use of projective identification by the mother of one member of the couple with her child. She also notes the importance of the response of the husbands, each of whom responds to the conflict of his wife. Both women are seen to experience a conflict between nostalgia concerning their lost culture and the need to adapt to the new one. This painful conflict is seen to result in a split which is partly projected onto their children.

Rosa Jaitin discusses in her article issues related to the transmission of knowledge and cultural affiliation. She discusses how such transmission can ensure the continuity of generational links in the absence of family affiliation or bodily affiliation that might otherwise guarantee this.

Aline Vilhena Lisboa and Teresa Cristina Carreteiro in their article discuss the impact of a family member required to work offshore (on the coast of Rio de Janeiro) on their family ties. The authors argue that there is a new way of connecting family members during the absence period of the person working on an oil rig at challenging times such as childbirth. The authors highlight the importance for such families of what they refer to as a “shared coexistence” in maintaining their family ties.

Marie-Gina Leconte discusses a case of family linked to a migration context. It is highlighted how the use of the analyst’s own cultural references in working with this family made it possible to support the withdrawal of the mortal links and to emerge from a state of generational confusion.

Daniela Lucarelli and Gabriela Tavazza discuss the process of parenting and identity formation, and the interplay of psyche and culture in these processes. From this perspective they consider both the complex themes of affiliation and transformation in families in contemporary society.

Looking specifically at issues of indigenous culture, Pamela Nathan discusses the role of psychoanalysis in the care of Aboriginal families in Australia in the context of the traumatic legacy of colonization. The author emphasizes that the successful application of couples and family psychoanalysis with this cultural group emphasises the particular need to take into account intergenerational (vertical) links and (horizontal) links with their communities.

## References

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