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# The 2008 SCHOLARS' GRANTS AWARD ABSTRACTS

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conferred at

## The Psychoanalytic Society's Gala Cocktail Party

March 7, 2008

The Harmonie Club ~ NYC

This is the fourth year that the Psychoanalytic Society of the Postdoctoral Program, Inc. is awarding annual grants totaling up to \$5,000 to Society members in the form of Individual and Group Scholars' Grants. These grants were originally conceived as a way to both encourage, and financially support Society members interested in pursuing psychoanalytic research, writing, and/or education. Some of the awarded Scholars' Grants have impact on the ways analysts listen to and conceptualize their patients' material in the consultation room. Other Scholars' Grants aim at ways to introduce and integrate psychoanalytic theory and understanding outside the consultation room and into the broader venue of everyday life. The overall and arching goal of the Scholars' Grants Project is to support our members and to demonstrate to the general population the continued relevance and efficacy of psychoanalytic theory and practice in the 21st century. Below you will find author written abstracts from this year's grant recipients. We are sure the grantees will be happy to discuss their projects with you if you wish.

*– The Scholars' Grants Committee: Dr. Pat Vitacco, Chair; Drs. Patrick Lane, Zarin Mody & Maureen O'Reilly-Landry*

### **“Perversion and the Internet”**

Helen B. Levine, Ph.D. and Isaac Tylim, Psy.D., ABPP

Although the inter-net is ubiquitous in ours and our patients' lives and commands considerable interest among psychoanalysts, the published psychoanalytic material on the topic is meager. We believe the inter-net (with its virtual or simulated processes) already may facilitate transformation of the ways in which some individuals access and express their sexual needs, erotic longings, and the nature of the ensuing on-line relationships.

Psychoanalysts may be relatively silent on the topic but a large and growing literature comes from sociology, non-psychoanalytic psychology, philosophy, and computer technology. Sexuality always represents a powerful monetary force capitalizing on, indeed generating technological development. We shall survey the inter-net's immense cornucopia of perverse sites and their accompanying chat rooms, most of which require payment for full access. Today's web-master must develop a sexual niche (e.g., “BDSM,” “Tranny,” “Zoo,” and “Scat” sites) – a virtual boutique business. Via the inter-net what once was deviant, closeted activity often cloaked in shame, is now seemingly democratized by its global accessibility and inherent anonymity.

Contemporary Freudians generally require consideration of the corporeal body as central to notions of gender identity and sexuality. Relational psychoanalysts (e.g. Benjamin, Dimen, Harris, Goldner and others) whose theoretical sources include postmodern theorists such as Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault and “second wave” feminists such as Flax and Butler take issue with these views on gender and sexuality. For them, gender and sexuality are constructed and defined by multiplicity and multiple subjectivities. The corporeal body and its sexual markers play a much less central role. Our aim is to parse those differences as we explore the perverse in cyber-space.

We conclude with questions: Are we eliciting and normalizing perversion via the inter-net? Or has the inter-net-itself a postmodern phenomena – challenged traditional definitions of perversion? Does this challenge herald a next wave sexual revolution?

## **“Using the Interpersonal Therapeutic Relationship to Reactivate Dormant Creativity In Depressed and Dementing Patients”**

Alvin L. Atkins, Ph.D., ABPP

This project grew out of my ten-year experience as a consultant at the Hebrew Home for the Aged in Riverdale, New York, a residential nursing facility. Rachel, a depressed resident with whom I had forged a five-year relationship, began to experience major cognitive changes, which ultimately led to her placement on a dementia unit. During this time, I observed fascinating developments within the context of this dementing personality. I asked myself, “Can psychotherapeutic processes counteract the ravages of dementia? Or is biology really destiny?”

Now ninety-seven, this feisty, intelligent college graduate, teacher, and Yiddishist had earlier conducted classes and written Yiddish songs and poetry. I, too, have a background in Yiddish, which added to our rapport. With failing memory and a growing disorientation to place and time, Rachel became withdrawn, often not recognizing me. However, when I reminded her of the Yiddish songs she had written, a remarkable transformation took place. Her voice became animated; she began to sing again, and asked me to compose a song with her. This collaboration strengthened our therapeutic bond and served as an associative anchor in her otherwise fragile memory. A quick reminder of our song re-engaged her memory and creative impulses. It is as though she awakened and emerged from a dark abyss and was rejuvenated.

I hope to enlarge the pool of such patients in my care to determine if we can generalize these findings. Interviews with psychoanalysts and neurologists, together with a review of the related literature will provide the context for understanding how a positive transference relationship can foster the accessing and reactivation of earlier creative energy in depressed persons who begin to dement in later years.

## **“The Impossible Bond: Challenges of Being a Psychoanalyst Parent of a Difficult Child”**

Judith Schweiger Levy, Ph.D.

While many analysts have suffered the anguish of parenting a difficult or troubled child, this issue appears to be regarded as a very private matter. My aim is to explore and understand the interlinked effects on one's personal and professional lives when analysts find themselves as parents to emotionally troubled children.

I will interview colleagues who have experienced such challenges. The content of the interviews will involve three broad areas of inquiry:

1. How does being an analyst affect the relationship to and management of one's own difficult child? How does one's analytic training help or hinder the management of boundaries, attachment, and loss, emotional regulation, and the attainment of wisdom, hope, equanimity, and acceptance?
2. How does being the parent of a difficult child affect the analyst's work? e.g. choice of patients, choice of theoretical perspective on a patient's problem, choice of technique, management of transference and countertransference?
3. What are the larger social and/or institutional implications regarding self-disclosure of one's family situation, and the practical career consequences of resulting perceptions by others?  
In preparation for the ultimate goal of producing a book, I envision my findings providing a conceptual framework for professional support, and a potential resource for advice to non-analyst parents.