

PACE

Papers that could potentially be helpful in the Ukraine-Russia situation

- Boulanger, G (2005) *From voyeur to witness: recapturing symbolic function after massive psychic trauma*. In *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, 22:21-31

Review:

In this article Boulanger stresses the difficult internal process that the analyst must undertake within him- or herself so as to move from the position of a passive voyeur to an active witness. This psychic work mirrors the process through which the patient must also pass. Survivors of massive psychic trauma experience a narrowing of perception and a rigidification of mental processes. As a result, with the result that the symbolic function is compromised, damaging affecting the capacity to dream and to think effectively. Survivors may feel they "have lost their minds." In such states, paranoid-schizoid functioning predominates and meaning is lost. Working with such patients the mental health worker, like the patient, may feel a loss in his or her capacity to think and reflect. As a result, the mental health worker may find him or herself moving into a passive voyeuristic position vis a vis the patient with accompanying feelings of dissociation. The task of the mental health worker, according to Boulanger, is to abandon the passive position of the voyeur so as to become an active witness to the patient's trauma.

Reviewed by Eva Yakubov (Israel)

- Bragin, M 2019 *Pour a libation for us: restoring the sense of a moral universe to children affected by violence.* *Journal of Infant, Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy* 18:201-211

Review:

This article would be useful for psychoanalysts working with organizations to develop treatment programs for children and adolescents traumatized by violence. It is especially useful for thinking about treatment for children and adolescents who have experienced violence, not only as victims, but as perpetrators as well. Drawing on the work of Melanie Klein, Jessica Benjamin and theorists in both Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa, Bragin offers a model of intervention that goes beyond an individual based trauma model to one that situates violence and its traumatic aftereffects within broader structures of social organization and interpersonal relationships. She describes the way in which children who have participated in the violence, are often unable to reintegrate into their communities and families, feeling that the atrocities they have committed forever exile them from the human community and its moral universe. Using an example of her work with former child soldiers in Sierra Leone, she describes how a treatment team, in collaboration with a community, designed an intervention in which children, community members and staff participated in acts of reparation with the aim of restoring a moral universe that had been torn apart by violence. Through the

performance of ritual, the atrocities of war were rendered a collective trauma that must be borne by all.

Reviewed by Marianna Adler (EEUU)

- Jovic, V. (2018). *Working with traumatized refugees on the balkan route*. In *International journal of applied psychoanalytic studies*. 15:187-201

Review:

Interesting paper on the emotional life and bonds of the refugees in Serbia who emigrate from the Middle East and Central Asia to Europe through the so-called "Balkan Route". The author describes his own valuable experience through his NGO, carrying out committed psychosocial work with this population in permanent crisis and emergency which often suffers, as a sad addition, abuse and violence in the borders from the authorities of the different governments. The paper provides alarming current data about the situation and the problems involved in providing psychoanalytic and social assistance to this type of population, which, facing the closure of the historical "Balkan Route" for non- Europeans in 2016, has developed a new migratory behavior, a new way of 'being' in the streets, the squares, the train and bus stations linked to a more prolonged permanence in Serbia. Large groups of children, women and men with a different social behavior, which generates and awakens different anxieties in the stable population. To the conceptualization known by psychoanalysis regarding trauma and its symptomatology, the author adds a less known form of intervention and assistance, describing its pros and cons. An extremely contemporary paper, in my opinion, well worth reading.

Reviewed by Mónica Cardenal (Argentina)

- Katz, C.L., & Nathaniel, R (2002). *Disasters, psychiatry, and psychodynamics*. In *Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis*, 30:519-529

Review:

This article, based on the work of the Disaster Psychiatric Outreach (DPO), a New York City based charitable organization, examines the experience of trauma from the perspectives of ego psychology, defenses, personal meaning and grief work. It argues that immediate attention to the traumatized subject can reduce symptoms and prevent the subsequent development of mental disorders. The authors emphasize the importance of working with traumatized subjects to develop a personally meaningful narrative to explain the appearance of particular symptoms, a narrative that aids the ego in its attempts to reorganize itself following traumatic events. The article includes a discussion of the ways in which countertransference issues among the "helpers" can re-traumatize those they mean to help, leading to what the authors refer to as a "second disaster." The importance of identifying problems in the counter-transference in advance and helping the helpers is emphasized.

Reviewed by Eva Yakubov (Israel)

- Miller, I.S. (2008) *Preparation for Psychodynamic Consultation following Community Trauma: Learning from the "Firehouse Project."* International Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies, 5:68-79

"...how do we as clinicians, ensure for ourselves the greatest capability we can muster, for relatively clear thinking under unbearable circumstances?" (p75). This 2008 article, based on Miller's experience as a clinician consultant for the NY fire department following the events of 9/11, is his attempt to answer that question. In the process Miller describes what it is like for a clinician to enter into a traumatized community, in this instance, the community of New York firefighters, in an effort to discover how to be of use. It is an effort that, using Miller's words once again, consists of "finding one's professional and personal way in chaos" (76). Miller discusses the challenge of adapting clinical skills to an unfamiliar context and setting, as well as the challenges of gaining the trust of a community, often skeptical of the outsider, particularly of an outsider who wants to talk about "feelings." He describes the multiple pressures the clinician faces, the difficulty of managing an ambiguous role identity as well as the secondary trauma suffered by those clinician who allow themselves to be used as containers for the horror and grief suffered by others, In the process Miller details the pressures on the clinician in such situations that make it difficult to sustain an analytic mind and go on thinking in the context of the unbearable. Miller concludes the article with some specific suggestions for clinicians who would undertake this kind of work. This article is useful for clinicians considering working with traumatized communities or clinicians trying to make sense of their experience of such work in the past.

Reviewed by Marianna Adler (USA)

- Pupavac, V. (2001) *Therapeutic governance: psycho-social intervention and trauma risk management.* In Disasters. 25(4):358-372

Review:

This writer takes a critical look at the way in which international aid agencies dedicated to crisis intervention have adopted a psycho-social, trauma based model focused on psychological suffering. The author argues that such models of psychosocial intervention are rooted in the Anglo-American therapeutic ethos that has come to dominate western cultures since the Second World War. These models effectively function as a form of what she calls "therapeutic governance," a way in which strategies of power and control are exercised through therapeutic strategies under the guise of "helping." She warns that agency based psycho-social interventions based around trauma counseling, life skills or self-esteem building may actually harm communities by undermining local coping strategies embedded in traditional forms of social organization. While psychoanalysts hoping to provide help in the wake of immediate catastrophe may not find this article immediately useful, it nonetheless offers a critical perspective on our therapeutic culture and the ubiquity of the use of the concept of "trauma" to explain human suffering. In the process she calls our attention to the ways in which power infuses even our best intentions to help when we are dealing with

populations in positions of inequality vis a vis the major centers of world power. Most importantly, it reminds all of those who work in the field of crisis intervention to begin with a question, "What do you need from us?" rather than declaring, "this is what we are here to give you."

Reviewed by Marianna Adler (USA)

- Straker, G. (1994). *The interface between refugee groups and assistance groups: an exploration of dynamics and the design of a treatment program*, *Free Association*: 4(3):320-337

Review:

This article discusses the author's experience working in refugee centers in South Africa designed to shelter black youth fleeing violence in their townships. Noting that a similar pattern of problematic interactions between refugees and staff has recurred in multiple refugee centers, she argues that the behavior of young militants can't be sufficiently understood by referencing only our clinical understanding of trauma. Instead, drawing on Bion's theory of Basic Assumption groups (i.e, dependence, fight-flight and pairing) as well as data from Vietnam veteran's groups, she demonstrates how an understanding of group behavior can help make sense of the antagonistic relationships that may develop between staff and refugees. Using Bion's model, she describes typical stages of interaction between center staff and refugees that characterize the evolution of group behavior inside the Center, demonstrating how the understanding of basic assumption groups can assist staff in developing intervention protocols that fosters cooperation between refugee groups and staff as well as aid in the planning for smoother transitions for refugees transiting into and out of the Center. She follows with a discussion of the specific interventions designed by staff to address potential problems arising in each one of these three phases. Her discussion is not only an interesting case study, but a potentially useful tool to assist staff in similar settings to anticipate and plan for the difficulties that both staff and refugees face in these complex conditions.

Reviewed by Marianna Adler (USA)

- Taylor, D. (2017). The psychodynamic assessment of post-traumatic states. In *Understanding Trauma: A Psychoanalytic Approach*, 47-62. Routledge: London & New York

Review:

With illustrations from two clinical case studies, Taylor describes a psychodynamic assessment interview process designed for use with subjects suffering the after-effects of trauma. He argues that the capacity of the interviewer to engage deeply with the subject's suffering is a first step in the recovery process. Such capacity requires a psychoanalytic understanding of early infantile states and their development as described by Freud, Melanie Klein and Bion. Similar to what an infant might feel, Taylor suggests that the traumatized self feels invaded, an invasion experienced as an external attack in the form of un-metabolized and unsymbolized physical blows. The mind must then work to process the heretofore indigestible events so as to form usable mental

representations. Taylor argues that the interview process itself is a critical step in this process, providing a containing function that allows painful and overwhelming events to be internalized in a meaningful and bearable manner. When this does not occur, such unbearable states are likely to be extruded into the external world of objects in the form of projective identifications. This chapter can be helpful for those working with traumatized subjects who want to understand the internal world of the traumatized self as opposed to focusing more narrowly on the symptomatology and classifiable mental disorders. It highlights the importance of the initial assessment phase.

Reviewed by Banu Ismail (Israel)

- Volkan, V. (2017). *Psychoanalytic Thoughts on the European Refugee Crisis and the other*. In *Psychoanalytic Review*, 104(6): 661-685

Vamik Volkan is a psychoanalyst who emigrated from Cyprus to the United States as a young adult and devoted himself to the subject of immigration both as a private analyst and as a researcher who visited refugee camps in various parts of the world, observing and interviewing children and adolescents orphaned by wars and national and racial conflicts. Immigration imposes the work of mourning, and on the other hand, it summons in both immigrants and hosts the mobilization of the subjects' nuclear identity networks and their relations with their group identity layers. For the work of mourning, Volkan highlights the linking objects as an impasse or aid in its elaboration as well as in the implantation of the implied conflicts from one generation to another, in an intergenerational transmission. As for identifications, he highlights the externalization of object characteristics onto the other, immigrant or host other. Volkan's work with immigration is of great value in psychoanalytic observation and treatment of the individual and the community.

Reviewed by Daniel Delouya (Brazil)

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