

# Psychohistory News

**Newsletter of the International Psychohistorical Association**  
**Volume 33, Number 1 – Winter 2014**



## *Changing The World*

### **The Emotional Imprint Program** by Alice Maher

Human Understanding requires Empathic Imagination – the ability to imagine the emotional experience of the other. This is a task as complex as Shakespeare and rocket science to master, but it can be taught. And it must be taught, in an educational trajectory that's given the same weight as every other academic subject, from elementary through PhD programs. As a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, I bring a unique set of ideas and skills to the design of a curriculum that can accomplish this, nothing more and nothing less.

*continued on page two*

## **ALSO IN THIS ISSUE**

**IPA 2014 Conference, p. 3**

**Review of *From Trauma to Healing*, p. 5**

**Dialogue on Violence, p. 8**

## *From the Editor's Desk*

### **TEACHING PSYCHOHISTORY**

In this short essay, I provide ideas that can be used in a course description and recommend two classic books for an introductory course in psychohistory. Most broadly, our interdisciplinary field studies the interaction of psychological and historical processes. It

*continued on page four*



*The IPA board of directors invites you to contact us with feedback or ideas about this publication, our organization, or the field of psychohistory.*

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## EMOTIONAL IMPRINT

*continued from page one*

I am designing and implementing this educational track in emotional literacy—called Emotional Imprint (EI)—with Melissa Brand, PsyD, and the non-profit organization, Changing Our Consciousness. The Harlem after-school enrichment program, Street Squash, piloted the program in their 2012 summer camp. In 2013, EI classes were taught in the 7th and 8th grade academic program, with an internship offered to 9th graders. The program will be expanding to at least one other school in 2014.

The EI program differs from other social-emotional programs in two significant ways. The use of thought experiments—the invitation to use the skill of imagination to inhabit the world of the other—enables students to explore deep and complex feeling states without crossing into boundary-violating personal revelations and psychotherapy. In addition, the EI program can easily be integrated with the core curriculum in a way that enhances rather than distracts from academics, and motivates students to learn.

For example, one module assigns students “future selves” – careers and incomes across the socioeconomic spectrum. After discussing their feelings about their assigned character, they move on to imagining themselves as that character. They research their tax brackets, do the math, and write checks to the US Treasury. They create a budget and imagine the character’s lifestyle. Later they discuss how the government will use their tax money, and examine different political perspectives. Reading, writing, math and civics lessons are integrated seamlessly into a class discussion that helps students think about the world outside their own; the larger world that they will soon be entering.

Our writing class presents real-life scenarios, invites students to write from the perspective of different characters in the conflict, and then use their empathic imagination to solve the problem together.

Our interns were invited to interview political psychologist Vamik Volkan. They are researching his work, composing questions, and using what they learn to design a presentation or a new module.

In my introduction to the course, I typically say something like this: *Raise your hands and look around. From a distance our fingers and hands look almost exactly alike, but when you look closely you realize that every one of us has an entirely different set of prints. Each fingerprint is so unique that we use them as a way to identify people. Similarly, each of you has a unique set of life experiences, feelings, beliefs, hopes, dreams, and ways of coping that give you a singular identity and imprint on the world. This class is about exploring those imprints, and how to help people understand one another and work together the way our left and right hands do.*

*You know how adults always tell you to stop bullying? They’re right, but I’ll tell you a secret: adults aren’t much better at stopping than you are. When adults interact with people who are different, we often think about them in language that’s critical, dismissive, accusatory and ridiculing. If you turn on the TV you’ll hear people from different groups referring to people from the other groups as selfish, stupid, misguided, wrong, or bad. Adults have a lot of trouble working together, because we often tend to think that we’re right and the other side is wrong.*

*continued on page four*

# International Psychohistorical Association

266 Monroe Ave  
Wyckoff, New Jersey 07481-1915

## 2014 CONVENTION INFORMATION SHEET

Co-Sponsored by New York University

**June 4-6, 2014**  
**New York University**  
**Washington Square Campus**  
**Kimmel Center for University Life**  
**9<sup>th</sup> floor**  
**60 Washington Square South**



*Please direct presentation proposals, questions regarding lodging, or navigating NYU surroundings to Denis O’Keefe, IPA President, [djo212@nyu.edu](mailto:djo212@nyu.edu), office phone 845-446-9013*

### PAYMENT INFORMATION

CONVENTION COSTS	IPA Members	Non-Members	Presenter	NYU Faculty /Alumni
3 Days	\$160	\$190	\$100	\$100
Single Day	\$90	\$110	\$60	\$60

**STUDENTS (graduate and undergraduate) FREE with current ID**

**Member Dues \$40 [in addition to Convention fees]**  
**All payments are to be in US dollars.**

*Mail check payable to International Psychohistorical Association to*  
*Henry Lawton*  
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## EMOTIONAL IMPRINT

*continued from page two*

*The solution to this problem is going to come from you. Twenty years from now you're going to be in charge of the world. You're going to have to deal with your jobs and your families, you're going to have to take care of the people in my generation who will be getting too old to care for ourselves, and you're going to live in a world where there is prejudice, conflict, and war, and the emotional and financial toll of fighting. You're going to have a lot of problems to solve. If you can start to imagine what some of those problems are going to be, and imagine the perspectives of people who may think and feel differently from the way that you do, you'll be better equipped to find creative solutions to those problems. Your teachers' generation has made remarkable leaps in technology that you're going to inherit. If you continue to bully each other in the way that my generation does, you might use that technology to kill each other.*

*I'm convinced that you have the capacity to change this. Our program is designed to give you some of the tools you're going to need to develop those creative solutions.*

The Emotional Imprint program is hoping to expand to other schools, but it is difficult to sell an education program without “hard data” proving effectiveness. If readers are intrigued and might be interested in collaborating on the design of a course, please explore the [www.emotionalimprint](http://www.emotionalimprint) website, share your comments, and contact me at [alicelmaher@gmail.com](mailto:alicelmaher@gmail.com).



***Dr. Alice Lombardo Maher, a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst in New York City, is the founder of Changing Our Consciousness, the foundation responsible for Emotional Imprint.***

## TEACHING PSYCHOHISTORY

*continued from page one*

includes, for example, the psychobiography of important historical figures (which predates psychoanalysis), the effects of early childhood experience on group identity and behavior, and the effects of macrohistorical traumas such as wars and genocides on human psychology.

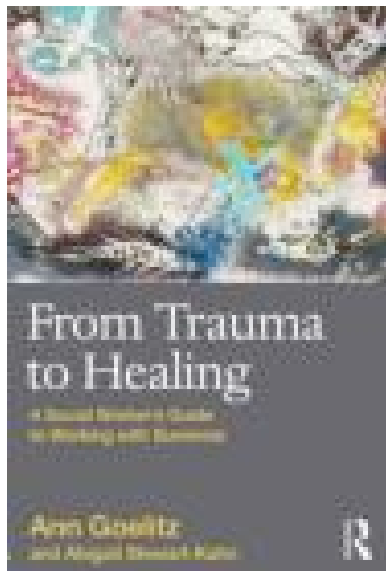
Psychohistory emerged as a distinct field of study with Freud and developed alongside the closely related discipline of political psychology, for example, the work of Harold Lasswell and Theodore Adorno et al's *The Authoritarian Personality*. While psychohistorical thinking is more diachronic and political psychology more synchronic, there is no clear boundary between the two fields and some thinkers, such as Wilhelm Reich, contributed to both and defy

classification. Psychoanalysis and psychohistory attained legitimacy among mainstream historians in the United States in the 1950s.

I recommend building an introductory course in psychohistory around two classic works which complement each other. Jacques Szaluta's *Psychohistory: Theory and Practice* (1999) provides authoritative introductions to psychoanalysis, a number of important psychohistorical thinkers, and the debate in the 1970s and '80s over the rigor and value psychohistorical research. Lloyd deMause's *Foundations of Psychohistory* (1982) stakes out ambitious claims for a “psychogenic theory of history” according to which the evolution of childrearing practices is the single most important causal factor explaining the shape and direction of macrohistorical evolution.

*continued on page six*

**Book Review** *From Trauma to Healing: A Social Worker's Guide to Working with Survivors* by Ann Goelitz and Abigail Stewart-Kahn. New York: Routledge 2013, 304 pages \$15.95 (paperback). Reviewed by Maria Mini.



It is a pleasure for me to write about the book *From Trauma to Healing* by Ann Goelitz and Abigail Stewart-Kahn. It is also an act of gratitude, and an opportunity to express my appreciation for the gift that this book represents.

*From Trauma to Healing* is a careful, honest and unpretentious offering of knowledge and experience in the field of trauma work. From the very first contact with the book, be it a reading of the introduction, a curiosity-guided browsing, or a chapter to chapter study, the reader will perceive Goelitz's and Stewart-Kahn's humility, respect, and empathy towards both therapists and trauma survivors.

Guided by genuine concern for the therapist seeking learning and

resources in the field of trauma, the authors conscientiously reviewed the literature in order to identify where a contribution would be most needed and useful, deciding finally to provide the field with a beautifully structured and comprehensive guide to working with trauma survivors. The authors succeeded in making this work "accessible, clear and as easy to read as possible". It starts by providing relevant content in the areas of safety, vulnerable populations and cultural factors. It continues to describe the experience of trauma, both from the position of the survivor and the witness. The following chapters focus on three specific types of trauma: child abuse and neglect, life threatening illness and intimate partner violence. Then, a series of chapters on interventions and alternative methodologies for working with survivors, including work with individuals, couples,



families and groups. Finally, a section devoted to program development, advocacy, prevention and community organizing.

A feature of *From Trauma to Healing* that makes it especially attractive is the fact that each chapter is designed to stand alone, so the reader can choose to read about a subject of interest without the need to refer to previous chapters. This makes the book a tool for reference or focused consultation in addition to its value as an integrated presentation.

The world of trauma is emotionally and psychologically difficult. As therapists, how do we even begin to understand a person who has experienced trauma? How do we attune to the patient and at the same time take care of ourselves in the learning process of trauma work? As an offering born of sensibility, Goelitz and Stewart incorporate at the beginning of each chapter an invitation and guide to the subject that will follow. These very brief paragraphs awaken the reader's curiosity and inspire greater self- and other-directed empathy, contributing to meaningful reading.

"From Trauma to Healing" is a truly valuable contribution to the Social Work profession. It is a highly professional work, useful for therapists, researchers, students, trauma survivors, friends and family. It combines relevance, breadth, empathy, and clarity. It is a genuine act of giving.

## TEACHING PSYCHOHISTORY

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Szaluta's book was reprinted by Peter Lang Publishers in 2010. De Mause's is unfortunately out of print, but permission to copy it can be obtained from the author. These two books need each other. Szaluta's is solid and provides a balanced overview of the field, a work that one reviewer described as broad but not deep. De Mause's book is deep but speculative (even more than most psychohistory), reductionistic, and controversial. The juxtaposition of such starkly different but complementary psychohistorical classics will provide ample stimulation for exciting class discussions. Both books were written for the general reader and presuppose no specialized knowledge, making them perfect for an introductory college course.

After outlining the fundamentals of Freudian theory, *Psychohistory: Theory and Practice* reviews the debate between critics of psychohistory such as Jacques Barzun, Gertrude Himmelfarb, and David Stannard and proponents including William L. Langer, Rudolph Binion, and Peter Gay. Szaluta then outlines the key ideas of major psychohistorians, especially Erik Erikson, British and French post-Freudians, and Heinz Kohut. He concludes with the genres of psychohistory—biographical studies, group dynamics, childhood, and the family—and an essay on the future

of the field. Peter Loewenberg called Szaluta's book "the very best survey of the exciting field of psychohistory available in any language" and David J. Fisher said of the book, "There is no comparable systematic and encompassing examination of the field of psychohistory."

Lloyd deMause, boldly going where no one has gone before, begins with a disturbing and eye opening history of the bizarre fantasies displaced onto children since antiquity and the cruel practices that routinely accompanied them. His "psychogenic theory of history" makes a compelling case that the large scale violence and oppression that adults have enacted on the stage of history are the inexorable consequences of this appalling history of abusive child rearing. But the theory also shows an evolution through six distinct stages towards ever more humane and enlightened childrearing, an evolution to which DeMause attributes macrohistorical progress in its many forms. *Foundations of Psychohistory* concludes with essays on American history, group fantasies, and the effects on individual and group psychology of perianal trauma. Eric Fromm said of this book "Just magnificent—an extremely important contribution to the knowledge of man," and *Foundations of Psychohistory* also got rave reviews from William L. Langer, Rudolph Binion and others.

—Brian D'Agostino

## DIALOGUE ON VIOLENCE

*continued from page eight*

Beyond this, individual psychohistorians may disagree about what methods are most suitable for investigating specific instances of violence or patterns of violence in specific cultures. Florian clearly prefers group fantasy analysis, but other psychohistorians bring other methods to the table. For example, the same issue of the IPA Newsletter that contained the Statement on Violence (Winter 2013) also contained articles by Charles Strozier and Harriet Fraad that approached the 2012 Newtown school shooting in other ways. Strozier examined the historical roots of America's contemporary gun culture and Fraad examined the economic and sociological context that may account for a dramatic increase in mass shootings in the United States in the

past three decades. Neither of these aspects of the Newtown shooting can be explained by group fantasy analysis, yet they need to be explained, which is why multiple psychohistorical approaches are necessary.

Group fantasy analysis has other limitations, which become apparent when seeking to understand national policies. War, for example, is not in the first instance a spontaneous outburst of mass violence. State elites plan, fund, and administer war-fighting capabilities for many years before actually launching wars, and these preparations are undertaken during "normal" times, not when the populace is gripped by national, perinatal group fantasies. They also systematically manipulate mass psychology, and their propaganda is generally not truthful about the real security issues confronting the country or the political and economic agendas served by military power.

To be sure, such lies only provide a rationalization for aggressive actions that militarists in the population are already predisposed to support. But opinion research shows that the majority of people are not dogmatic militarists; they think about the information presented to them, and form policy preferences that are rational given the information to which they are exposed (see Page and Shapiro, *The Rational Public*). So as John Milton put it in the 17th century, “They who have put out the people’s eyes, reproach them for their blindness.”



In any robust democracy, different psychoclasses pull public policy in different directions. There is normally no monolithic national group fantasy, nor is there a monolithic “reasonable” value system. What is reasonable to members of the Tea Party is clearly not reasonable to the American left. I therefore don’t know who Florian means when he says “we” delegate “our” dissociated rage and hatred to war-making elites, which presupposes a monolithic national psyche.

Mass psychology plays a significant but limited role in explaining militarism and armed conflict. Wars are either waged by states against other states, or by armed factions (in civil wars) when a state is no longer capable of containing political conflict. While mass psychology may play an important role in civil wars driven by ethnic conflict, it is still only one of several factors. In the case of Syria, for example, ethnic tensions between Sunni and Alawite Shi’a Muslims have existed for centuries, but erupted into civil war only under specific historical conditions, namely the partial disintegration of the Bashar al-Assad regime. Given the same ethnic tensions, it is possible to imagine scenarios in which this war might never have occurred. Without the support of Russia and Iran, for

example, Assad’s regime might have completely and rapidly collapsed in 2011. A unified U.N. Security Council might then have stationed peacekeeping forces in the country to facilitate a political transition to democracy, as it did in some other successful peacekeeping missions.

The notion that elites who go to war are only doing the bidding of their populations confers democratic legitimacy on policies that are actually planned and implemented on behalf of the rich and powerful few at the expense of the many. In order for ordinary people to rise up and put an end to war, they need to understand the real economic and political agendas being served by war and how they have been kept in the dark about these agendas by their own ruling elites. I don’t see any contradiction between this kind of class analysis and psychohistory; in combining them, the IPA Statement on Violence follows in a tradition that includes Wilhelm Reich, Theodore Adorno, Erich Fromm, and others. While Lloyd deMause has always focused on the psychohistorical causes of war, I don’t think he views that as excluding a class analysis, or at least he did not express any such view to me when I circulated a draft of the Statement on Violence to the IPA Board.

Notwithstanding the limitations of group fantasy analysis, I want to conclude by acknowledging the positive contribution of Florian Galler’s ideas and work to the IPA’s ongoing efforts to understand the causes and cures of violence. In focusing on the displacement of unconscious material by at least part of the mass public and how it can empower violence by lone gunmen and militarist elites, he has identified an important causal factor. This was a significant omission from the original IPA Statement on Violence but is compatible with the multifactorial view we presented and should be incorporated into it.

***Brian D’Agostino is Communications Director and a board member of the International Psychohistorical Association and edits the IPA Newsletter. He is the author of peer-reviewed research on the psychology of militarism and of The Middle Class Fights Back: How Progressive Movements Can Restore Democracy in America (Praeger 2012) ([www.middleclassfightsback.org](http://www.middleclassfightsback.org))***

***Dialogue on Violence***  
**Reply to Florian Galler**  
**by Brian D'Agostino**

In the last issue of this newsletter (Fall 2013), Florian Galler provides a helpful summary of Lloyd deMause's group fantasy analysis and correctly notes that the IPA's Statement on Violence (published in the Winter 2013 issue) does not explain violence in these terms. As the person who drafted the statement on behalf of the IPA Board and in consultation with Lloyd and the other board members, I want to respond to some of the issues Florian raises.

To begin with, group fantasy analysis is one method among others in the psychohistorical toolkit. While it is a method that deMause himself has frequently used, it is not the only one, nor is it used by all psychohistorians. Since the International Psychohistorical Association is a diverse organization of historians, political psychologists, clinicians, and practitioners from many other disciplines, I did not consider it appropriate to feature this one method in a statement that aimed to speak for the organization as a whole.

In my view, the most important and enduring contributions of deMause to the field of psychohistory are his work on the history of childhood, on the effects of childhood trauma on adult behavior, and on the ways that evolving patterns of child-rearing practices shape "psychoclasses," and through them wars, social movements, and other macro-historical phenomena. While most of this was beyond the scope of the Statement, the fundamental role of trauma in the etiology of violence is apparent in the following paragraph:

*What, then, causes individuals to be violently aggressive or self-destructive? In short, such behavior is generally learned from experience. When an infant cries, the response of care-givers will profoundly shape the personality of the adult that the*

*infant will become. Persons whose needs were met in infancy and early childhood will generally feel empowered to meet their own needs in non-destructive ways as adults. Persons who experience love and empathy will in most cases become loving and empathetic. By contrast, a person who was punished for crying as an infant and whose developmental needs were not met will most likely grow up into a troubled adult who will cause suffering to themselves and others. In some cases, this will take the form of violent aggression. This is of course a simplification of how individual personality and motivation develop, but it is the least misleading simplification we know for explaining individual destructiveness.*



Gunman George Zimmerman, who fatally shot unarmed teenager Trayvon Martin in February 2012

This is far from "conventional thinking," in Florian's words. Especially in the United States, mainstream culture generally blames the individuals who act violently and refuses to reflect on their histories of trauma. Even most psychiatrists neglect the role of trauma in favor of a pharmacological model of mental disorders. In this paragraph, by contrast, the Statement provides a distinctively psychohistorical analysis of violence.

*continued on page six*