



NEWSLETTER  
SUMMER 2016

## President's Message

**Eric Ornstein**

These are challenging, difficult and scary times to be a clinical social worker. Recent violent incidents in our country and abroad are deeply troubling and disturbing, and we are challenged to manage our own upset feelings as we try to help clients make sense of their feelings and reactions to these events. I do not feel there are any magic bullets or quick fixes for handling these types of complex situations.

In our work, each of us must struggle to marshal our capacities for self-awareness, affect regulation and empathy, in order to allow ourselves to be fully present, receptive and responsive to our clients' needs and feelings while practicing self-care and burnout prevention techniques. This is indeed a difficult balancing act for any of us to manage and sustain.

Another aspect of this challenge is to help our clients with tact and sensitivity to explore and understand how they might be filtering current traumatic reactions and experiences through their unique personal histories in order to identify possible unexpected meanings and connections. Trauma experts remind us to be vigilant about the possibility of retraumatization of our clients and ourselves. This involves situations in which a current stress or trauma rekindles unresolved and unprocessed feelings and reactions from previous traumas.

Implicit in the above discussion are two fundamental features that undergird all effective clinical work: good supervision and countertransference awareness, both of which are necessary and sufficient conditions for competent clinical work in these difficult situations. My concern, especially in the current social service and mental health environment in Illinois – typified by scarce resources, expanding caseloads and dehumanizing work conditions – is that the potential therapeutic space necessary to support clinical social workers working in this way, with these vulnerable clients is in danger of collapsing, if it has not already collapsed.

In a world of billable hours, punitive insurance companies and rationed care, it has become increasingly challenging for social workers, whether in agencies or private practice, to obtain good supervision and to become aware of how their countertransference issues are affecting work with clients. In this climate, it becomes more important than ever for clinical social workers to participate in organizations like our Society in order to find nurturance, support and sources of resilience to sustain ourselves in our work.

For many years, one source of renewal and reenergizing for our members and the wider clinical social work community has been the Jane Roiter Sunday Morning Seminars. Last year was our most successful series ever, with outstanding clinical presentations by top clinicians in our community. Our seminar committee is hard at work planning the next round of seminars, which will begin in the fall. Please watch for emails and check our website for the full schedule of seminars.

Despite these stressful times, I sincerely hope that all of you were able to have a restful and relaxing summer and that you are ready for a productive and satisfying fall!

## “Hello, I must be going...”

...*Groucho Marx*

It's time to pass the baton. A wonderful and enlightening eight years have passed since I first became editor of the *ISCSW Newsletter*, and all good things must come to an end. When I first joined the board those eight years ago, a point person had already been designated for the position, but for personal reasons had to step down. I basically just slid into the editorial position with no previous experience and unaware of what I was getting myself into.

That year was filled with lots of improvising and a few sleepless nights filled with questions. Where do I find people to write original clinical articles? What other articles should be included? What if someone objects to something written in the newsletter? It was all a bit intimidating at first, but then I began to understand what the Illinois Society for Clinical Social Work was all about and that my job was to announce the details of its mission – to provide a support network for clinicians of all types, and to continue educating providers in order to promote the maintenance of high standards of both office-bound treatment and crucial therapeutic community interventions.

The *ISCSW Newsletter* is a very important platform for sharing a diverse cross-section of conceptualizations of social work. As editor, I have enjoyed providing many types of help. At times, I have served as mentor to someone who passionately wants to put life-changing personal experiences into words. In those cases, the sharing of personal issues, difficulties and sometimes tragic circumstances in an original article has been instructive to clinicians working with clients having similar experiences. At other times, I have been merely an overseer to a fine writer who wants to share his or her expert, in-depth exploration of professional theory and how it applies to various populations. In yet other cases, I have helped someone who is anxious to express treatment ideas to a professional audience, but who needs the help of an editor to sculpt a coherent article from chaotic sentences. And I've even included an article of my own from time to time.

I have loved this job. It has been incredibly gratifying both to help our various contributors tell their stories, and to serve as a liaison between author and readership. So, it is with mixed feelings that I step down from my position, but mostly I feel both honored and accomplished to have had the opportunity to serve the Society and all of its members in such a vital role.

Please continue to enjoy all of the upcoming newsletters overseen by our new editor, Ben Goldberger. I bid you all *adieu*.

*Ruth Sterlin*

# ORIGINAL CLINICAL ARTICLE

## A Relational Approach to Employee Management

Christina James

According to the *2015 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement* report of U.S. employees conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management, three out of six of the most important factors in employee job satisfaction are relational – defined in this article as “interpersonal and relationship-focused” (Fonagy, Gergely, & Target 2008, 787). The specific factors are respectful treatment (#1), trust between workers and senior management (#2), and employees’ relationships with their supervisors (#6). These factors outranked job security, the content of the work itself, and the organization’s financial stability, among many other factors (Society for Human Resource Management 2015). Moreover, the report found that the percentage of employees reporting satisfaction with these factors was less than 50% for all three top factors: 33% of employees reported being satisfied with the level of respectful treatment in their organization; 28% were satisfied with the trust between workers and senior management; and 40% were satisfied with the relationship between themselves and their supervisors. As the report summarizes, there is increased evidence that relationships between co-workers and managers are highly important to employee satisfaction (2015). Furthermore, that same 2015 report on Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement Optimizing Organizational Culture for

Success indicates that problematic management issues are a major source of employee turnover.

The relational aspect of job satisfaction reported by the Society for Human Resource Management is in line with the results of the Dale Carnegie Training white paper written in 2012. Specifically, the Dale Carnegie Training white paper determined that the key factors that impact employee engagement are 1) employees’ relationships with their immediate supervisors; 2) belief in senior management; 3) pride in working for their organization; 4) being treated with respect; and 5) feeling that the organization cares about how employees feel. Again, these factors were found to be more important to employees than more pragmatic factors such as salary and benefits.

Despite the importance of relational aspects in employee satisfaction, the management culture in our country tends to focus on more logistical, measurable and conscious aspects of employee performance and satisfaction at the expense of the more unconscious, relational dynamics. As Kets de Vries and Engellau note in their article, “A Clinical Approach to the Dynamics of Leadership and Executive Transformation”, management scholars tend to believe that “mechanistic, predictable and easy-to-understand phenomena” are most important in employee behavior; and that psychodynamic theo-

ry, clinical psychology, and other relational theories have no place in the management world (2010, 4).

Given the disconnect between employees' desire for strong relational dynamics at work and management's lack of focus on its importance, this article seeks to identify the (minimal) existing research and theory on relational approaches to management and expand on it by introducing the idea that taking an attachment perspective to management/employee relationships may help to increase job satisfaction.

### Definitions

*Employees:* In this paper, the focus is on U.S. employees in general fields, given that the research on job satisfaction presented is based on that population. One might imagine different factors contributing to job satisfaction, as well as varying levels of job satisfaction, in different cultures.

*Management:* The immediate supervisors and senior management of an organization.

*Job Satisfaction:* Subjective self-report of how satisfied employees are in their place of employment.

*Relational:* As stated earlier in the paper, one definition of relational is "interpersonal and relationship-focused" (Fonagy, Gergely, & Target 2008, 787). According to Mitchell (1988), the ingredients of a relational framework are "the self, the other, and the relatedness they co-construct" (Fonagy, Gergely, & Target 2008, 787). These two frameworks are what will be used to define the word *relational* in this article.

*Attachment Theory:* Specific elements will be defined later.

### Existing Research on Relational and/or Psychodynamic Approaches to Management

A search on the topic of psychodynamic and/or

relational approach to management brought up limited research and articles. Some exceptions include Kets de Vries' book, *The Leader on the Couch: A Clinical Approach to Changing People and Organizations* (2006) and Kets de Vries and Engellau's article, "A Clinical Approach to the Dynamics of Leadership and Executive Transformation" (2010). The former seeks to guide leaders to move beyond a strictly rational approach to management and understand the importance of both management's and employees' inner life in organizational processes. The author brings in elements of psychoanalysis and Buddhism to make his argument, noting the importance of emotional intelligence in the workplace.

The latter article outlines the role of motivational systems, unconscious systems, narcissism, and transference - among other psychological and psychodynamic themes - in leadership. They describe common factors in "leader derailment", which include conflict avoidance, power and control issues, paranoia, micromanagement, hypomania, and "generational envy" (2010, 16). They also describe their leadership program in which senior executives are asked to engage in self-exploration and reflect on their own behavioral patterns. Naturally, this creates a selection bias of participants who must be willing and able to engage in this sort of reflection. In addition, the program requires that participants be relatively healthy, have relatively strong emotional management skills, and have interpersonal flexibility in order to create a safe environment for all participants.

While it may be more effective and helpful for leaders to engage in long-term therapy to address their underlying issues, Kets de Vries and Engellau (perhaps unsurprisingly) have found that it is unlikely that many senior executives will engage in individual therapy for various reasons. Thus, their

leadership program takes place in a business school setting and is presented as a seminar for senior executives. The program's strategies include the process of confrontation (exploring probing yet safe issues within the group setting such as the secondary gains of changing patterns of behaviors, and the sharing of similar experiences as a group) and clarification (analyzing the problems identified in the confrontation stage more fully). Perhaps more important than the specific strategies themselves is the fact that the program fosters a safe environment where group participants listen and share empathically, which models the importance of relational aspects of change, the very thing that will help them be better managers to their employees. Such management trainings programs – rooted in psychodynamic theory – will most likely result in stronger relational experiences for management and employees alike. Unfortunately, in the current management climate, they seem to be the exception rather than the rule.

### **Attachment Theory**

Given that some of the crucial aspects of employees' job satisfaction specifically involve employees' relationships with management (*e.g.*, trust between workers and senior management, employees' relationships with their supervisors, belief in senior management, feeling that the organization cares about how employees feel) it follows that concepts from attachment theory will help shed light on the specific relationship between managers and employees.

Attachment theory was originally developed by John Bowlby, who found that infants who were separated from their caregivers would engage in attachment behaviors (*e.g.*, crying, searching) in order to reestablish their connection, and that these behaviors were evolutionary given that infants are dependent on their caregivers to survive. As Fraley

summarizes from Bowlby's work, "These [attachment] behaviors continue until either the child is able to reestablish a desirable level of physical or psychological proximity, or until the child 'wears down,' as may happen in the context of a prolonged separation or loss" (2010, 1). Caregivers can react positively to their children's attachment behaviors by responding with their own attachment behaviors, by being sensitive and attuned to what their child needs (McLeod 2009).

Mary Ainsworth further elucidated the importance of children's attachment to their caregivers by studying and categorizing different types of attachment styles between children and caregivers through her "strange situation" laboratory study in which twelve-month-old infants were temporarily separated from their caregivers and then reunited. Once reunited, Ainsworth and her colleagues observed the infants' attachment behaviors towards their caregivers. Based on these behaviors, Ainsworth and her colleagues developed categories of different types of attachment, *i.e.*, secure, anxious-resistant, and anxious-avoidant (Fraley 2010; Ainsworth 1970). Children who are securely attached to their caregiver become anxious and upset when their caregiver leaves and are able to be soothed once their caregiver returns. Children in the other categories have more difficulties being soothed.

More recent research suggests that attachment relationships continue to be important to the health and well-being of adults (Spiegel, Severino, & Morrison 2000; McCluskey, Roger, & Nash 1997; Cozzolino 2010). Given the amount of time adults spend at their jobs and the previously stated importance of employees' relationships with management, looking to concepts of attachment theory can help shed light on how managers can strengthen their relationships with their employees. However, since there is limited research on relational and

psychodynamic approaches to management, there is even less research on attachment theory and management. Below is an attempt to summarize ways in which attachment theory concepts might help strengthen the management/employee relationship in order to increase job satisfaction among employees.

### **Using Attachment Theory Concepts to Improve Management / Employee Relationships**

*Initial Engagement/Orientation for New Employees:* Organizations often miss the opportunity to engage and orient new employees in a way that might make new employees feel safe and secure, thus creating an immediate sense of trust and security in the organization. One way to instill this immediate sense of trust includes efforts that, on the surface, may seem obvious or basic, but which can help to create a sense of predictability and safety in one's working environment (e.g., providing a clear and safe workspace, and asking if new employees have any immediate needs for their workspace). Management should also identify key personnel immediately and designate a point person that a new employee will meet with on a regular basis to help decrease any anxiety the new employee may feel. This point person (ideally, the immediate supervisor) can be seen as the "secure base" that Ainsworth talks about: the attachment figure that infants and children go to when something frightening is introduced.

*Continued Employee Engagement:* While orientation is important, employees' need for a sense of security in the organization continues after the initial engagement stage. This relates to the attachment concept of *affect attunement*. Stern (1985), a psychoanalytic theorist who observed interactions between mothers and their children, describes affect attunement as 1) The "parent being able to

'read' the feeling-state from an infant's overt behavior, 2) That the parent's behavior in some way corresponds to the infant's behavior and 3) The infant is able to recognize that the parent's behavior is a response to the infant's own original feeling experience and is not just mimicry" (McCluskey, Roger, & Nash 1997, 1262-1263 ). Relating this to management's treatment of employees, as noted in the research above, employees have a continued need for a good relationship with their immediate supervisors and to feel that the organization cares about how they feel and is attuned to how their employees are feeling and what their behavior may indicate. Furthermore, according to the 2015 *Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement* report, employees often feel in the dark regarding senior management decisions, which creates anxiety and a sense that management does not care how employees feel about major decisions. This could be likened to children's anxiety when caregivers are misattuned and do not read their feeling states.

One way for management to continually demonstrate attunement to their employees is to institute regular "reflective supervision." Reflective supervision was originally developed for practitioners working in the field of early childhood as a response to the complex issues that come up in this work, and is separate from administrative or clinical supervision (Minnesota Association for Children's Mental Health 2010). It focuses on all relationships the practitioner is affected by - including that between the practitioner and their employer and the practitioner and the organization - in order to explore any possible parallel processes that may be occurring. Reflective supervision also focuses on personal growth for the employee and includes check-ins regarding how they feel about their role in the organization. One can easily see how helpful reflective supervision might be in all organizations,

in order to increase employees' sense that management cares about and is attuned to their needs.

*Creating a Safe Base:* As noted above, a secure base is an attachment figure that infants and children go to when something frightening is introduced. When children feel confident that they have a secure base to come back to, they can freely explore the world around them. A parallel can be made with employees with their supervisors. If employees feel that they can trust management and *vice versa* that management serves as a secure base for them, this may increase their independence and ability to explore and be creative, knowing that they can come back to management when something frightening or anxiety-producing comes up. Furthermore, this can serve to improve employees' sense of trust and respect in management.

### Conclusion

This paper has outlined the importance of relational aspects of employees' job satisfaction and has briefly reviewed existing research on relational and psychodynamic approaches to management. In addition, it presented ideas about how attachment theory – a crucial concept in relational experiences – may help shed light on how management can instill a sense of trust, respect, and attunement in its relationships with employees. Further exploration of how attachment theory can improve employees' job satisfaction is warranted.

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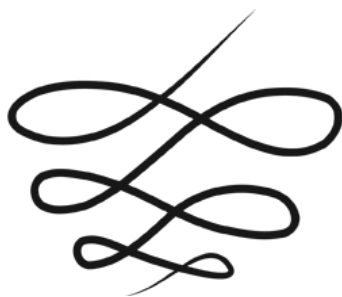
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### ***About the Author***

*Christina James* is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker at UIC Medical Center's Department of Psychiatry, where she does group therapy in the Community Reintegration Program (CRP), an Intensive Outpatient Psychiatric program for adults. She received a Dual Masters from the University of Chicago in Social Work and Public Policy in 2007. Most of Christina's clinical experience has been working with individuals with various issues, including depression, anxiety, psychotic disorders, and trauma. She has gained this experience through group work and individual psychotherapy with adults, children, and adolescents.



## **Board Positions Available**

This has been a very busy and productive year, given that ISCSW has hosted two conferences, four Sunday Morning Seminars and an important Networking Event. While our Society remains quite productive, the board has said a number of sad goodbyes to board members who have left due to relocation, new parenthood, and job pressures. As a result, we are looking for new board members to fill the following positions:

Vice President (Ruth Sterlin is Interim until the position is filled)

Secretary

Legislation and Policy

Public Relations

New Professionals

Cultural Competence

Student Liaison (to be filled by a social work student)

Member-at-large

The board meets on the third Tuesday of every month at 1300 W. Belmont from 7:30 to 9 p.m., and the meetings are both fun and productive. If you would like to be part of our board, please contact ISCSW at [ilscsw@ilclinical.com](mailto:ilscsw@ilclinical.com), or 312-346-6991.

Get ready for a rewarding experience!



# The Cutting Edge...

## Reviews of Recent Literature

**Joel Kanter. (2000). Beyond psychotherapy: Therapeutic relationships in community care. *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, 70(3): pp. 397-426.**

This interesting paper is a more recent addition to a series of papers by the author about the care of mentally ill in the community. When published in 2000, the author noted the difference between case management in community care where a therapist “acts as both a therapeutic agent and a participant in their clients’ daily lives” versus the more structured, comfortable arrangements in outpatient, consulting room psychotherapy based on verbal interchange. Referring to the community care provider or case manager as a “therapist,” the crossover of skills and theory from both ends of the care-treatment spectrum from community-based case management to consulting room psychotherapy is considered. The author’s extensive citing of Donald and Clare Winnicott’s work explains and differentiates this crossover.

The author describes in fairly meticulous detail his community-based eight-year case management of a chaotic family of three: a father, a successful

retired orthopedist who is severely cognitively impaired following a stroke five years before; a mother, a former fashion model now alcoholic with alcohol-related dementia and other physical conditions; and a son in his mid-30’s struggling with chronic paranoid schizophrenia and substance abuse. A fourth family member, a son, reappears following a tour of military service, but he is not a prominent focus in this case report. The course of this case concludes after the deaths of both parents; and the schizophrenic son’s grieving and gradual but successful progress into rehabilitation, and moving to a supportive community group-living setting.

During an eight-year involvement with this family and in order to help them remain living in their home, the author must intervene in many ways and at many levels. He specifies appropriate treatment goals to guide his work. He assists by coordinating multiple social service agencies, interacting on the family’s behalf with diverse agencies and providers, helping with medication management, helping with money management, assisting with shopping, and so on. The range of interventions employed offer a wide range of strategies that may be useful in community case management. While community care for mentally and physically impaired people in this country—this state—has evolved as a goal, the resources and service networks envisioned to accomplish this have too often not materialized. The reader may surmise that this family has substantial means, enough to retain a private social work practitioner (the author), to devote the necessary time and effort to successfully manage them. The reader might wonder about how community case management unfolds with those of lesser means, the other 99%, or 80%, or 50%. The author underscores this by noting how high staff turnover in mental health rehabilitation programs undermines clients’ continuity of care.

Beyond psychotherapy, but on relationship and

what psychological support the therapist-case manager provides, the author refers to the theory of Donald and Clare Winnicott who endorse two aspects in the case management process: first, the concrete or environmental support aspects of case management that ensure clients' physical survival, and second, the case manager as a "transitional participant" who enhances clients' coping skills, and facilitates psychological stability and growth. Case management is active, concrete intervention developmentally determined to be appropriate for a person. In other words, concrete assistance for the survival of a child is different from providing environmental support to ensure the survival of a disabled or impaired older person. The author cites Clare Winnicott's elucidation of case managers' psychological ego support such as bridging relationships by interpreting and articulating needs, helping people stay connected with others, providing clients with a sense of psychic continuity, helping them integrate experience, and helping them to "internalize the social worker as the embodiment of life experience". Clare Winnicott characterizes the ego-supportive and object relations role of the case manager as the "transitional participant." As a transitional participant, the case manager becomes a bridge between environmental support and the client's inner world. In this way the case manager promotes better client coping skills, emotional stability, and growth.

About how he manages his feelings, his countertransference, the author is a little cryptic when he states, "Transference and countertransference were irrelevant. These phenomena were like oxygen; omnipresent, yet invisible—hardly worthy of analysis." The author might have discussed how he possibly regarded his countertransference as communication and information from and about his clients. The author writes that countertransference

was mostly a matter of just surviving it with a sense of humor. Though he mentions using contemporary psychotherapy models, "interpersonal... and constructivist approaches... [where] the transference and countertransference is continuously examined," this reader was at times left wondering specifically how these contemporary models inform the author's work since he draws almost exclusively on the object relations and ego-oriented insights of the Winnicotts. What he draws from the Winnicott's insights, nevertheless, is compelling and to this reviewer, timeless.

Finally, the author discussed the essential role of playfulness in therapeutic relationships. While he considered humor "critical to [his] survival," the author noted how playfulness can develop a better connection with a client. Having flexible boundaries and not worrying too much about finding meaning while keeping a professional stance was also considered.

In sum, reading this paper is a rich, informative account about case management in the community setting, which psychodynamically-oriented practitioners, as the author points out, have not adequately addressed. On re-readings of this paper, this reviewer found thought provoking ideas and issues in each subsequent re-reading. The paper is recommended for community case managers who also have a psychotherapeutic orientation.

*William Kinnaird*



## A Farewell to Christina James

For the last four years, Christina James has served our board in two positions simultaneously, those of Secretary and Legislative Chair. She has loaned our board her competent skills with both generosity and conviction, and her ability to multi-task effectively has been something to behold. Thanks to her efforts, we now have an archive of board meeting minutes, as well as organized folders of legislative, conference and membership materials that will allow us to find information necessary to the running of our Society quickly by going online.

Christina is going to leave the Chicago area for another job, and has put the finishing touches on her work with us by making sure all necessary information for the next Secretary and Legislative Chair will be easily at hand. We have been very lucky to have had such a skilled and thoughtful person filling both of these positions, and we will really miss her!

With some sadness, we say, Goodbye Christina, and the very best of luck to you in your new home and your new job!



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