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PSYCHOANALYTIC PARENT-INFANT PSYCHOTHERAPY IN SOUTH AFRICA: OPENING PORTS OF ENTRY AND FLEXING THE FRAME

By
Nicola A. Dugmore

Parent-infant psychotherapy is a small but growing field in South Africa. Its potential to contribute to mental health services in South Africa is, by contrast, vast. This thesis contributes towards much-needed research on the state of the field in the country and its potential applications across different sectors. Drawing on Daniel Stern's concept of ports of entry, it is argued that an expansion of ports of entry offers an important integrating tool through which different aspects of parent-infant psychotherapy can be examined and adapted to the South African context. A history of parent-infant psychotherapy in South Africa is offered, together with an analysis of the experiences of current practitioners in the field. These aspects of the thesis draw on interviews with key stakeholders. The dominant context of private practice is then explored through two case study based papers. The first explores the meaning of symptoms in parent-infant psychotherapy. The second introduces the 'grandmaternal transference' as an important but under developed port of entry. These different aspects of parent-infant psychotherapy in South Africa are then considered through the prism of ports of entry in order to argue for a flexing of the psychoanalytic frame. Implications for the growth of the parent-infant psychotherapy field in South Africa are considered.

Keywords: parent-infant psychotherapy, parent-child psychotherapy, under fives counselling, ports of entry, motherhood constellation, psychoanalytic psychotherapy in South Africa, grandmother, grandmaternal transference, code of ethics.