

Remembering Anne Alonso, 1933- 2007

An Appreciation by Fielding Faculty, Alums, and Students

Anne received her PhD from Fielding in 1980. At that time, all incoming students were asked to demonstrate their clinical skills one-on-one during an orientation week. This was high-anxiety for most. For Anne it was an opportunity: she demonstrated her skills by doing a demonstration of group therapy in front of the entire psychology community. She soon of course became a group facilitator for the entire faculty, and for the University as well.

That was Anne: weaving a community together and never unnerved by a challenge.

Anne brought with her a passionate commitment to human dignity. In all her many endeavors—as a Fielding faculty member, her work for the American Group Psychotherapy Association, for the Endowment for Psychotherapy at MGH, her



Dr. Anne Alonso

“The Unconscious never sleeps”

--Anne Alonso

The Village Well was a guiding image for her: a central gathering place where all could come together, mingle, talk, gossip, and thus feel part

of the community. Anne knew that there was a large element of luck (and the unconscious) in every human life and so we should not take ourselves too seriously in our successes, nor

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Did the readers of the Ladies Home Journal create psychoanalysis?

Professorship at Harvard—Anne tried to remember the essential worth of every individual life. She believed very strongly in relationships, that human life is built on our ability to befriend and support each other.

At Fielding’s Summer Session in Kansas City, Jessamyn Hatcher, Ph.D., a member of the faculty of the General Studies Program at New York University, gave a lively and engaging talk sponsored by the Alonso Center and the Kansas City Psychoanalytic Institute. The talk, titled, “Dear Dr. Menninger: Karl Menninger, The Readers of the Ladies Home Journal, and the Invention of Psychoanalysis,” was about an advice column that Karl Menninger conducted in the Journal during the Depression, and the many readers who responded to the magazine’s invitation to readers to conduct psychoanalysis by mail with Menninger. Dr. Irv Rosen, a Supervising and Training Psychoanalyst with the Greater Kansas City Psychoanalytic Institute, responded to the

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...*Ladies Home Journal* (continued from cover)

paper. Dr. Rosen was the first Post-doctoral fellow in clinical psychology at the Menninger Clinic. In his almost 50 year career there Dr. Rosen eventually became director of the Adult Outpatient Department of the Clinic.

Following the talk, Dr. Sherry Hatcher interviewed Jessamyn Hatcher about her work.

Q: As an American Literature scholar, how did you get interested in this topic?

A: I'm interested in the cultural history of psychoanalysis. What interested me the most was the tension between the fact that, from the 1920s on, social commentators have been given to proclaiming that "we are all Freudians," and the fact that so very few people have ever been exposed to psychoanalysis in a clinical setting. I wanted to know more about the interplay between these two things. How were all these people "becoming Freudian"? And who were "these people" anyway? It seemed to me that the answers available in the literature on the history of psychoanalysis were often not much more specific than a theory of zeitgeist; a theory that "psychoanalysis was in the air." I wanted to know: What air? Whose air? At the root of these questions is my deep, on-going interest in how mass publics in America encountered psychoanalysis outside of the clinic and what they did with it.

Q: How did you learn about the column that Menninger did for the Ladies Home Journal?

A: During the historical period I study, roughly 1910-1935, one of the most important forms of mass culture was the magazine. People still like reading magazines, but during the time I'm talking about, magazines were hugely influential and meaningful in everyday American life. It seemed to me one of the ways of getting at this question of the relay between psychoanalysis in the clinic and psychoanalysis on the street was to read these magazines and see what the life of psychoanalysis was like in their pages. So I sat in the basement of Perkins Library at Duke University, where I was studying for my degree, and read twenty-five years of ten or so of the top-circulating magazines from this time. Karl Menninger's psychoanalytic advice column was one of the things I came across.

Q: What typified the women who chose to write to Menninger at that time and what kinds of problems did they write about? Can you give us an example?

A: The editor of the column once published a sidebar that accompanied the column that said this:

Each day there passes over my desk, on the way to Doctor Menninger, a big bundle of letters from readers. They come from everywhere—from great cities and small towns. Many of them are thick letters, and I sometimes wonder, as I finger the unopened envelopes, just what worries and troubles and

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The Alonso Center Newsletter invites submissions from Fielding faculty, students, and alums. Manuela Waddell is an advanced graduate student at Fielding and Dr. Susan Goldberg is a recent graduate. Both offer creative speculations from their recent scholarship at Fielding.

Projective Identification in Stepfamily relationships

Manuela Waddell

Cultural introjects found in stories like Cinderella, Snow White, and Hansel and Gretel, emphasize the destructive effects of stepparent cruelty. The evil stepparent myth arose in reaction to behaviors that resembled rejection, jealousy, and demeaning role allocations between stepchild and stepparent. The competitive power struggle in the stepchild / stepparent relationship may actually be thought of as projective identification in its pure form. Understanding this dynamic can increase therapeutic options for the therapist.

Conventional wisdom says that 1) children prefer to have two loving biological parents in the same home and 2) after biological parents divorce, the child maintains, sometimes indefinitely, a fantasy for reunification between his/her parents. These themes

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We welcome suggestions about possible future Center offerings. Contact Dr. Sam Osherson with ideas and suggestions (sosherson@fielding.edu/617-354-1330). To discuss gifts and contributions to the Center contact either Dr. Sam Osherson or Anne Kratz, Director of Development (akratz@fielding.edu / 805-898-2926).

The Alonso Center
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...An Appreciation (continued from cover)

should we be too harsh on ourselves in our failures. She kept a motto on her kitchen refrigerator door which captured her deep and generous commitment to social justice: “comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.”

Anne understood the destructive power of shame in individual life and in communities: She was a master at helping to resolve conflict and to foster community by avoiding putting anyone in a corner.

As a teacher, Anne’s students treasured cluster meetings in the homey welcome of her house on Lakeview Avenue in Cambridge. Shared meals were a very important part of the meetings, as was everyone sitting around her dining room table. Usually one person volunteered to do lunch, and then sometimes Anne would cook, which was fabulous. Some students traveled quite a distance to get to cluster meetings, leaving very early on a Saturday morning to arrive by 9 a.m.—you just didn’t want to be late. You might grouse all the way but EVERY time after cluster, you’d be so glad you went. Anne made it a safe, comforting group. Anne’s husband Ramon was often a presence during and after cluster meetings, as might be partners and children. Anne’s cluster meetings were not just meetings—they were a community.

Anne brought her special sense of play and creativity as well to faculty life at Fielding. Who can forget the late night poker games, with their laughter and gossip, with the joy and despair of five-cent winnings or losses? Or the stream of jokes over FELIX? At faculty retreats, Anne encouraged us to stop the “bean counting” (her term for our mistaken attempts to solve interpersonal differences/problems through rules and regulations) and figure out how to trust each other, always recognizing that the faculty usually had to find *something* to fight about in order to move along toward a better functioning community.

Anne was a master at seeing the hopeful/attachment-seeking side of even the most dysfunctional behavior. She was the creator of the “exploding sleeve,” that special piece of attire that you wish you had during demanding meetings when one more person asks for “just a minute of your time.” She reached across disciplines, with a wary eye for overly hardened professional positions. For many of us a highlight of our time at Fielding was the open “debate” between Anne and two equally illustrious faculty representing CBT and Existential-Phenomenology. Our respect for each other as faculty grew by virtue of her ability to listen to and value even positions she herself didn’t hold.

“Don’t just do something, sit there”

(Anne Alonso to overanxious therapists, who become too action-focused, too quickly)

During her tenure at Fielding, Anne established the Frieda Fromm Reichmann Award, named after the pioneering psychoanalyst whom Anne so admired, which—in her words—“honors a great woman for her extraordinary contribution to the application of psychoanalytic concepts in working with seriously disturbed patients, and who made an impact as a stellar supervisor and theoretician as well. I hope it will provide a place in Fielding for recognizing excellence in the general area of psychoanalytic psychotherapy, to support research and scholarship in psychodynamic pursuit, and to publicly applaud a graduating student’s achievements.” She helped make the Psychology Honors Fund an endowed part of Fielding.

When she retired from Fielding in 2000, Anne endowed a Center for Psychodynamic Studies at the University, which was named by the faculty in her honor. Anne created the Center to foster one of greatest passions: psychodynamic theory, research, and scholarship. Anne believed in the importance of the “talking therapies.” She strongly supported the Center’s mission of educating the public and professional community about the power of dynamic psychotherapy and the centrality of the doctor-patient relationship in dealing with developmental problems, life conflicts and vulnerabilities, and the impact of biologically driven mental illness. The vibrancy of the Alonso Center at Fielding is due in part to her and her husband Ramon’s generosity.

Anne was our Village Well. She loved Fielding very much, with its vision of making graduate education available to underserved adult populations that might not otherwise have the opportunity. *AE*

Alonso Center Event Winter Session, January 2008

51 Birch Street

A Screening and Discussion of the award-winning documentary on love, marriage, secrets, fidelity, and the mystery of family

Both unexpectedly funny and heartbreaking, **51 Birch Street** is the first-person account of filmmaker Doug Block’s unpredictable journey through a whirlwind of dramatic life-changing events: the death of his mother, the uncovering of decades of family secrets, and the ensuing reconciliation with his father. What begins as his intimate, autobiographical story soon evolves into a broader meditation on the universal themes of love, marriage, fidelity and the mystery of family. Fielding faculty member Sam Osherson was interviewed for the film and appears in it. He will lead a discussion after the screening.

Friday night, January 18th at 7 p.m.
 Doubletree Hotel in Santa Barbara
 Free and open to the public

...*Ladies Home Journal* (from page 2)

heartbreaks they contain. Just what unhappiness has made this person write; whether it is a husband or a wife or children or parents, or perhaps a lover about whom this *Journal* reader is seeking advice.

This sounds romantic, but it was true that the letters were “from everywhere.” They were coming from tiny towns like Stem, North Carolina as well as from New York City and every other place in the United States. They mainly came from women, although some men also wrote. Almost all of the women were white, although some were foreign-born, and many had parents who were first-generation immigrants. Many of them were middle class; others were people who yearned to be middle class. Women in every age bracket were represented. They occupied the rather narrow number of professions available to women: office work, teaching, farming. Many were housewives.

And they wrote about every problem under the sun. Mainly they wrote about the perennial problems women face, with the special historical inflections of the Depression. They wrote about marriage, sexuality, dating, parenting, being parented, work, school. Most of the letters are long. Some of them tell amazing stories. There is one from a woman who writes about how she turned to prostitution to support her family and the shame she feels about it. There is a letter I love that talks about how the letter-writer’s problem is the

magazine itself. She writes about how she spends so much time trying to follow the magazine’s elaborate instructions about how to be a good housewife that she keeps burning the potatoes. Typically, the letter-writers talk about their troubles choosing and inhabiting relationships and occupations that make them happy.

And you also feel powerfully when reading this correspondence that the letter-writers faced limitations and difficulties because they were women. One letter-writer

“No good deed goes unpunished”

--Anne Alonso

speaks for the whole when she says she is writing to Menninger because she wants to answer the question: “How do I live the everyday life I HAVE to live?”

Q: How do you think the column may have helped the women who wrote to Dr. Menninger?

A: One of the most fascinating things about the letters is that they show the letter-writers adopting psychoanalytic terminology, narratives, diagnostic categories, and styles of thinking. This is what I tried to illustrate in my talk: that people began using psychoanalysis—as they had learned about it from Menninger’s column and other sources in mass culture—as a way of “explaining

themselves to themselves,” as one of the letter-writers puts it. The letters are filled with women sitting at their kitchen tables in California or their office desks in Ohio writing long letters in which they deftly—I almost want to say “expertly”—psychoanalyze themselves. My argument is that people’s everyday uses of popularized forms of psychoanalysis gave rise to a new kind of subjectivity, what I call “psychoanalytic personhood.” Psychoanalytic personhood was something that could be bought for the price of a magazine.

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Bob Hatcher, Sherry Hatcher, Irv Rosen, Jessamyn Hatcher, Judy Kuipers

...*Ladies Home Journal* (from page 4)

Whether it helped people to think about themselves in this way or not is a complicated question. Adam Phillips says something I like about how what matters is “the finding of languages for what matter most to us; for what we suffer from and for, for how and why we take our pleasures.” He goes on to say that, “Sometimes, for

“If it’s not one thing, it’s your mother”

--Anne Alonso

some people, psychoanalysis can be one of these languages.”¹ I think psychoanalysis became one of these languages for some of the readers of the *Ladies’ Home Journal*.

But there is also a case to be made that psychoanalysis functioned in the pages of the *Ladies’ Home Journal* as an attempt to manage women’s desires. The column was published from 1930-1932—right at the onset of the Great Depression. This is a moment in American women’s lives when many of the cultural promises made to them—about marriage, about work, about consumer culture—were under extraordinary pressure. As such, it might have been a moment in which women demanded radical social change. One could argue that what made psychoanalysis appealing to the stewards of the *Ladies’ Home Journal* was that it asked readers to think about these cultural fissures as individual problems and not as broader social crises.

Q: Do you think that the column altered how Dr. Menninger thought about women and/or about psychoanalysis?

A: The letter-writers really gave Menninger a run for his money. I think Menninger imagined writing the column would be a piece of cake; or, if not a piece of cake, at least a plum in his pudding. There is an amazing letter Menninger wrote to one of his colleagues explaining how what *he* hoped to get from the column was not only a dollar per word (which was an enormous sum during the Depression) but also “world adulation.” World adulation! The letter-writers were perfectly happy to adulate, but they were also sending Menninger hundreds and hundreds of letters weighing in at ten or twelve or fourteen pages long, each of which took seriously his offer to make them “happier” through psychoanalysis. In both Menninger’s published column and in his responses, you can see that as time goes on, he had much more difficulty answering his readers’ questions with the same bombast. The women challenge some of his most basic assumptions, and gradually he was forced to revise some of his more grandiose hopes for psychoanalysis and his own expertise.

This is particularly true around questions of gender. Menninger maintained a split that’s strange for contemporary readers, who tend to think of gender and sexuality as continuous discourses: He was quite good on sexuality and often appalling on gender. For example, one of the letter-writers wrote to say that she was going

crazy from masturbating too much. Menninger has a shining moment where he assures her that all the readers of the *Ladies’ Home Journal* masturbate, and some of them are masturbating right now. But when a group of women write him to tell him that the advice he gave to a reader about tolerating her husband’s boys-will-be-boys behavior is not only anti-women but also anti-psychoanalytic, and offer their own sophisticated psychoanalytic interpretation instead, he’s apoplectic. To put it somewhat more theoretically, one can see in studying this material that Menninger has not thought through the question of the relationship between gender and psychoanalysis and that the letter-writers make this failure visible.

Q: Why did Menninger stop the column and has anything taken its place since?

A: It became clear to the editors of the *Journal* that no matter how much they edited the letters they published, they could never revise them in such a way as to erase the fact that women’s lives were not going according to the life-plan set out for them by the magazine. In other words, the ways the letter-writers were using the column meant that psychoanalysis was not going to serve reliably as a technology for regulating social change, as the administration of the magazine had hoped. (This doesn’t mean, however, that it wasn’t functioning this way for individual letter-writers.) The magazine pulled the plug on the column—



Irv Rosen, Ph. D., Jessamyn Hatcher, Ph.D.

which they did abruptly—because they couldn’t tailor women’s use of the column to suit their own interests.

Menninger continued to write a local advice column, and, as I learned from Dr. Rosen at the talk, to serve as an advisor to Dear Abby. It’s not my field of expertise, but I think one could make an argument that the whole culture of self-help grows out of experiments like the one Menninger conducted in the *Ladies’ Home Journal*.

Q: How did reading the letters affect you and your thoughts about women, psychoanalysis and/or cultural literature?

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...*Ladies Home Journal* (from page 5)

A: One of the surprises for me working on this project was about the way we date the rise of psychoanalytic culture. People usually think of the hey-day of psychoanalysis in the United States as a post-war phenomenon. These women were writing during the Depression—not a time usually associated with psychoanalysis. It's also not a generation of women people tend to think of as psychoanalytically-minded. But the letters prove that this is untrue.

The letters also have revised my ideas about psychoanalysis and class. My most recent research project is to try to track down some of the letter-writers to see what happened to them. One of the surprises of this research is that the women are not exclusively or primarily middle class; rather they are often lower-middle and working class. Each of these "discoveries" changes my ideas about who, historically, as been part of the life of psychoanalysis in the United States.

Q: Do you think that psychoanalysis is equally relevant to the sorts of problems these women wrote about and to contemporary versions of these concerns?

A: I tend to think about psychoanalysis in an historical way. The reasons why the readers of the *Ladies' Home Journal* turned to psychoanalysis—and what the psychoanalysis they turned to was like—can't map smoothly on to the contemporary scene.

Certainly the big things at stake in psychoanalysis—the questions of what a human being is; of the sources, limits, and powers of knowledge about our selves and one another; about what it's like to live life in a particular body and in a particular constellation of relationships; about sexuality; gender; power; about the question of what a good life is; about how we think about health and illness—certainly all of that stuff still seems urgent to women's lives.

Q: How was it to have members of the Menninger family and psychoanalytic community in your audience at your talk?

A: Giving this talk in Kansas City was a very interesting experience for me. Because of KC's proximity to Topeka and the historic Menninger campus, the story I was telling is

part of a local history, and for some members of the audience part a familial history, in addition to a national one. The interrelationship between these three different planes or places of history was fascinating. I'm used to giving the talk in settings where people are interested in the national story, but don't have the same sense of the texture of a local, lived history. Certainly, it was an occasion where I felt like I learned as much about my subject as I was imparting. And I thought it was great of the Menningers to come and join in the conversation in the frank and passionate way they did.

These women were writing during the Depression—not a time usually associated with psychoanalysis

If there was any feeling that Dr. Irv Rosen and I would have to be somehow more cautious or diplomatic because of the presence of Karl Menninger's family, they set a tone of intellectual frankness and engagement.

Q: What are your further plans for this research?

A: I'm working on a book in which I try to find out what happened to some of the letter-writers—the story of how Depression-era women helped to invent psychoanalysis in the United States, and what happened to them.

¹Adam Phillips, *Terrors and Experts*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995, xvi.

...recent scholarship (continued from page 2)

manifest in many contemporary movies where the children of a divorced couple try to sabotage the future or current relationship of the biological parent, especially when re-marriage of one or the other seems a possibility. Film examples include: *Man of the House*, *Stepmom*, and *The Parent Trap*.

Once the parent remarries, the child's fantasy of parent reunification seems less likely to be overt and anger may arise within the child. Scharff and Scharff (1987) note that the child of remarried parents experiences jealousy and may therefore unconsciously sabotage bonding with the parent's new spouse.

When a child is confronted with destruction of his or her desires and fantasies, he/she may unconsciously react in defensive ways that provoke others to collude unconsciously (as in projective identification). In this scenario, the stepparent is the recipient of the child's negative projections. The child is angry with the biological parent for not reuniting with his/her other parent, but can not express this anger directly for fear that the available present

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Jessamyn Hatcher, Ph.D.

...recent scholarship (continued from page 6)

parent may leave. Instead, the child displaces anger onto the stepparent.

Being a target for constant anger is draining for even the kindest and most empathic adult. Eventually, therefore, the stepparent may unconsciously collude with the child's projections, behaving in assertive aggressive ways that, to the child, feels hurtful and uncaring. "Even a well adjusted adult with good intentions toward the child may feel increasingly nasty and behave in punitive ways that soon lead to the feeling that the Cinderella myth is true" (Scharff and Scharff, 1987 p.385). If the stepparent can come to understand the projective identification occurring in the relationship he or she is then more likely to avoid entering into this dynamic.

Object relations family therapy can provide a therapeutic model



Manuela Waddell

for working with step-families. This model recommends meeting with both families as well as individual sessions with the child. During the child sessions, concerns regarding moving between both families and other social system issues can be addressed. This process allows the child to utilize the therapist in order to learn to move effectively between two family systems that are often very different. After all, if the parents were

compatible, the divorce would likely have never occurred in the first place. Now, each household may have its own governing set of boundaries, rules, and hierarchies, much different one from the other.

The Scharffs (1987) note unresolved mourning, boundary issues, couple problems, role stress, and financial conditions characteristic of step families, prime them for problematic interactions. Important therapeutic goals include 1) realization, in both families, that the child plays an important role, 2) helping the child to face the reality of the new situation, and 3) recognize projective identifications that occur in each family's subset of relationships. Accomplishing these goals can encourage the family to adequately support the growth of their members while providing a strong holding environment.

Stepfamilies are a prominent feature of modern society. As therapists we need to be aware of our preexisting notions as to what constitutes a "family" so we can prevent imposing value judgments. Personal therapy can alert the therapist to unresolved issues that may otherwise cloud an unbiased stance, as can regular supervision and consultation with colleagues.

Reference

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The Inability to Mourn and Possible Origins of Bipolar Disorder: Post-dissertation speculations

Susan G. Goldberg, PhD

My dissertation was a narrative study, interviewing in depth six people who were diagnosed in adulthood as having bipolar disorder. I was surprised that all six participants told narratives about very difficult childhoods. This was surprising because my primary interview question was about the experience of getting diagnosed with bipolar disorder in adulthood. I came away from my dissertation wondering about the possible role in the origin of bipolar disorders of a difficulty in mourning childhood losses.

Recent thinking in biological psychology and attachment theory suggests that early life experience has both a physiological and emotional impact on adult emotional functioning. With regard to bipolar disorder, most current epidemiological theories recognize a close biology-environment relationship (Reiser & Thompson, 2005). Yet psychodynamic theory proposed connections between childhood experience and adult psychological functioning long before there was knowledge about the actual biochemical processes involved in these interactions. Based on clinical observation, Freud and his followers hypothesized about the origin of depression, hypomania, and mania. Freud (1917/1989) postulated that melancholia (what is now known as depression) can be analogized to the process of mourning. In Freud's analysis, both mourning and melancholia involve psychological reactions to the experience of loss of a loved person. In mourning, the depressive symptoms are a reaction to the death of a loved one. In depression, the person has experienced some kind of loss, through death or otherwise, but anger at the lost person becomes directed towards one's self.

Psychodynamic theorists today still view depression as related to a child's experience of early loss or abandonment. The child may experience loss or abandonment even if the child is not actually abandoned. McWilliams (1994) discusses possible early experiences that may increase the likelihood that someone will develop depression in adulthood: an early loss or experience of abandonment, a family atmosphere that engages in denial of mourning, parental criticism of the child who had an early loss, having a parent who is depressed, and having parents who use drugs to self-medicate their denial of mourning.

(Continued on back cover)

Don't Miss!

Psychoanalytic Faculty-Alumni Reunion

Boston, October 24-26, 2008!

For more information go to

<http://www.fielding.edu/about/alonso.htm>



Susan Goldberg, Ph.D.

It is striking to me that the participants in my dissertation experienced *all* of these circumstances. Three of the participants had *actual* early losses (e.g., death of an infant brother) and the other three experienced early emotional loss or abandonment. As adults, all were diagnosed with bipolar disorder after experiencing symptoms of depression, hypomania, and/or mania. In other words, each experienced a kind of un-

mourned loss, an experience that psychodynamic theory suggests may lead to a depressive personality structure, or what today might be called bipolar disorder.

The participants recognized that aspects of their childhood impacted their adult experience, including their mood fluctuations and other symptoms of bipolar disorder. They did not necessarily make the connection between an inability to mourn and later symptoms of depression and hypomania, so this is simply theory-based hypothesizing. What is important is that this theory

suggests a way to think clinically about someone who has a diagnosis of bipolar disorder or symptoms of depression or hypomania. It suggests that it may be worthwhile to inquire into early experiences of loss or abandonment and how well losses could be mourned in the client's family of origin. *AC*

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Susan G. Goldberg, Ph.D., JD, graduated from Fielding's Clinical Psychology Program in July 2007. Susan is interested in psychodynamic theory, narrative research, group relations ideas, and forensic assessment, among other areas. Susan also has intellectual interests and work experience in other fields including law, anthropology, African studies, and disability studies. As a psychologist, Susan plans to work as a teacher, writer, researcher, presenter, clinician, and forensic evaluator, integrating ideas across diverse fields.

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