

The *bpf* Annual Conference: Schedule

<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Speakers & Events</i>
Thursday 25th March	17.30 18.00 – 20.00	Welcome & Introduction from Tim Fox Stanley Ruszczyński - <i>'The Psychosocial Roots of Violence'</i> Presentation and Discussion <i>Discussant: Professor Brett Kahr</i>
Friday 26th March	10.00 – 11.00	'Afterthoughts' - An open discussion on yesterday's presentation
	11.00 – 13.00	Ann Horne & Teresa Bailey - <i>'But They're Only Children'</i>
	14.00 – 15.20	Dr. Anthony Gunter - <i>'Race, Gangs & Youth Violence'</i>
	15.40 – 17.00	Ariel Nathanson - <i>'Community psychotherapy: creating a therapeutic culture in frontline care organisations'</i>
	18.00 – 20.00	Professor Paul Hoggett - <i>'The Psychology of Ecocide'</i>
Saturday 27th March	09.30 – 10.30	'Afterthoughts' - An open discussion on yesterday's presentations
	10.30 – 12.30	Angela Foster & Jessica Collier - <i>'Telling Stories: Enabling Violent Mothers To Progress From Enactment to Psychotherapeutic Engagement'</i>
	14.00 - 15.30	Christine Van Duuren - <i>'Contextualising Violence; Power, Resistance & Logical Bedazzlement'</i>
	16.00 - 17.30	Coline Covington - <i>'Who's To Blame? Personal & Collective Guilt on Trial'</i>
	18.00 - 20.00	David Morgan - Conference Overview - <i>'Do the ends justify the means? Pathological and Justifiable Violence'</i> <i>Discussant: Michael Topolski QC</i>

Full Schedule & Abstracts



Stanley Rusczyński – Thursday the 25th | 18.00 - 20.00

'The Psycho-Social Roots of Violence'

In this presentation, Stanley Rusczyński will outline how, in his view, violence might be understood as the result of the failure of the early containment of the ordinary and necessary aggression present in the instincts and object relations of the infant. Containment is best understood as a psycho-social process, involving the psycho-somatic needs of the infant and the active availability of the mind and body of the parental figure(s). The feelings generated in the infant by inconsistent or absent containment, will be more or less toxic and destructive according to the developmental phase at which the containment is flawed or absent. In both clinical and socio-political domains, violent feelings and violence need to be understood, in most part, as the unconscious expression of the unmanageable anxiety attached to a perceived, internal or external, threat. We might therefore say that violence is an expression of anxiety looking for containment.

Ann Horne & Teresa Bailey – Friday the 26th | 11.00 - 13.00

'But They're Only Children'



In this presentation, we will reflect on the experiences of childhood that can preclude children and young people from finding other than violent or delinquent pathways. Psychoanalytically, the focus will include the growing child's developing sense of agency/aggression; being a part-object; reliance on the body rather than enabling thought; the role of ideal states; and the presence/absence of the facilitating environment. Case material will inform this introduction which will be followed by a dramatisation of the situation of one adolescent and the choices available to him.

The teenage boy in the drama finds a solution of his own to the devastation he is faced with when his mother dies. To his shame, his grief is complicated by a sense of relief. His isolation in mourning leads to a fantasy of bringing his mother back to life by dressing in her clothes. His shame generates a warding off of connection or vulnerability by means of violence. The arrival of his estranged father threatens to destroy his brittle, untenable defences.



Full Schedule & Abstracts



Dr. Anthony Gunter – Friday the 26th | 14.00 - 15.20

'Race, Gangs and Youth Violence'

Drawing on research undertaken in the USA, Jamaica and in the UK, I will argue that it is important to locate urban youth violence within a broader social and political economic context. In reality, the violence and other risky behaviours that young people growing up in poor disenfranchised neighbourhoods engage in “makes perfect sense”. Firstly, these attitudes and actions [or psycho social strategies] are required for day to day survival and lastly, they are formed due to the things that these young people have witnessed and continue to experience on a daily basis.



Ariel Nathanson – Friday the 26th | 15.40 - 17.00

'Community psychotherapy: creating a therapeutic culture in frontline care organizations'

My talk will focus on my work as an organisational / therapeutic consultant to frontline organisations. I will describe a model of long-term therapeutic consultancy that focuses on the experience of frontline workers as they describe it, linking personal, professional and organisational dynamics. Over time, the consultancy creates a therapeutic culture that changes the quality of the relationships frontline workers make with the young people they work with. In my view, they are then able to provide therapeutic work to those who need it where they need it. As a result, deeply meaningful therapeutic work can reach young people who are extremely unlikely to ever be in a position to access it themselves.

Professor Paul Hoggett - Friday the 26th | 18.00 - 20.00

'The Psychology of Ecocide'

Ecocide refers to human actions that violate ecosystems or harm the health and well-being of species including the human species. Fossil fuel companies, extraction industries (mining, logging), industrialised agriculture and the finance and insurance industries that support them are all complicit in ecocide. How do these organisations and the people who work for them manage their knowledge of their destructiveness?

What processes of denial, disavowal, splitting and compartmentalisation occur which enable them to carry on with their business as usual and how are these processes supported by a particular culturally embedded form of 'realism' which says that no other way is possible?



Full Schedule & Abstracts

Angela Foster & Jessica Collier

Saturday the 27th | 10.30 - 12.30

'Telling stories: Enabling violent mothers to progress from enactment to psychotherapeutic engagement'

Mothers who harm and, in some instances, kill their children are viewed as undeserving aberrations, vilified and marginalized in the press and abandoned once the children have been rescued. They rarely get to tell their stories yet these are women, who, almost without exception, were neglected and abused during their own childhoods, and in perpetuating their neglect we protect ourselves from facing the generational problem in our midst. As James Baldwin wrote 'Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.'



In this presentation, Angela Foster and Jessica Collier will talk about the challenges to therapists as they struggle to 'face' this problem and hear the stories. Angela will address some common themes: humiliation and shame; severe personality disorder and experience of repeated toxic relationships in which care and abuse are undifferentiated and Jessica, an art psychotherapist, will describe her work in a prison setting with a woman who had killed her child. Angela will finish with some recent examples of how the media can be helpful in changing attitudes towards mothers who are both the victims and perpetrators of violence.



Christine van Duuren - Saturday the 27th | 14.00 - 15.30

'Contextualising violence; Power, Resistance & "Logical bedazzlement"'

In situations of asymmetrical power relationships, the different parties have different motivations, justifications and responsibilities for resorting to violence. I will consider what it might mean to employ psychoanalytic concepts of the internal world and unconscious functioning if critical aspects of the external world are not taken into account.

I will suggest that the perception and definition of violence alters depending on the vantage point taken within power relationships, taking as my starting point the State's claim to a monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force. This will lead to a review of psychoanalytic responses to the concept of 'terrorism'. I will illustrate the challenge of integrating external/internal perspectives and a recognition of power inequalities by exploring examples from the Dutch resistance in WWII, Extinction Rebellion and inter-community relationships in Israel/Palestine.

I will return to the notion of 'soul murder', a concept developed by the psychoanalyst Shengold, and will consider its usefulness in understanding large group phenomena.



Full Schedule & Abstracts



Dr. Coline Covington - Saturday the 27th | 16.00 - 17.30

'Who's to Blame? Personal and Collective Guilt on Trial'

Our initial reaction to loss or injury, of any kind, is to ask who or what has caused it? Who is to blame? The person who's been harmed wants to find the culprit in order to set things right again, to restore justice and a world of moral order. Blame also assumes a certain degree of agency on the part of the offender and this assures us some sense of control over our world – bad things happen for a reason, not just randomly. Nothing is so frightening as being at the mercy of forces more powerful than us that do not conform to our social norms and rupture our world view. Even in the case of natural disasters, we look for someone to blame. When the COVID-19 pandemic broke, the Chinese were blamed and held responsible. Identifying who is to blame is important not only in terms of punishment and restoration but more significantly as a way of understanding and accounting for a collective experience that has been chaotic and destructive. The more extreme the destructiveness is, the greater is the need to apportion blame.

Just as individually we tend to blame our parents for the difficulties and obstacles we have had in our lives, large groups also use blame to make sense of their suffering and to regain a sense of power. While this is a natural – and justifiable – emotional reaction to injury, it raises fundamental psychological questions about guilt, responsibility, and how we resolve or live with irresolvable conflicts. Using clinical material and political examples, I will illustrate how our Judeo-Christian morality reinforces and perpetuates a blame culture, stigmatizing others while exonerating ourselves.



David Morgan - Saturday the 27th | 18.00 - 20.00

'Do the ends justify the means? Pathological and Justifiable Violence'

Violence as explored in this conference is mainly understood as pathological, a somatic externalisation of psychic conflict, using projective identification into individuals and groups representing the other, or into other species and the planet. Violence as an evacuation and mastery of pain through locating it elsewhere. But can violence ever be justified, a necessary response to political issues?

We are living in an era suffering from massive global inequality and environmental catastrophe. The rise of political activism, (and its most extreme form, terrorism), can be seen as a response to extreme humiliation and helplessness in the face of a relentless global fundamentalism. These political origins in some ways mirror the environmental cruelties suffered by the violent individual. It will be argued however that psychoanalysis needs a way of engaging with political manifestations of violence as constructive and not only pathological?