

BEYOND THE CONSULTING ROOM: HOW COUNTERTRANSFERENCE INFUSES THE BIOGRAPHER'S WRITING

JAMES W. ANDERSON, PHD

Wednesday, September 17th, 2025 7:00 PM -9:00 PM EDT

In Person & Virtual via Zoom

Rockland - East Fairmount Park 3810 Mt Pleasant Dr. Philadelphia, PA

Dr. Anderson's book on psychobiography explores how the authors' relationships with and feelings about the people written about impact the biographical account. From a psychoanalytic perspective, then, the author's countertransference infiltrates the biographical account. For example, Sigmund Freud co-authored a psychobiography of Woodrow Wilson, whom Freud admitted he hated. One can only imagine how this was reflected in this particular psychobiography. Or, in his writing about Gandhi, Erik Erikson started out idealizing him but suffered from writer's block when he encountered some of Gandhi's hypocritical, mean behaviors. Margot Duxler knew and liked Anaïs Nin, but after the diarist's death she learned that Nin had often lied to her and others. Duxler wrote a psychobiography of Nin in large part to come to grips with her feelings about this deception. Dr. Anderson will discuss how his studies of various psychobiographies enlivened and deepened his insight and appreciation of countertransference, and helped refine his work with patients in psychotherapy. In this presentation, Dr. Anderson will help us to understand how to use our countertransference, to better understand our patients. He will underscore the ways that countertransference can be both our greatest ally and our greatest challenge in conducting psychoanalytic psychotherapy and psychoanalysis.

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SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY

James W. Anderson, PhD, is a former President of the Chicago Psychoanalytic Society and a faculty member of the Chicago Psychoanalytic Institute. A Professor of Clinical Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Northwestern University, Dr. Anderson specializes in psychobiography, using a psychological perspective, of historical, political, literary, and artistic figures. His book, *Psychobiography: In Search of the Inner Life* (Oxford University Press), was published last year.

MODERATOR BIOGRAPHY

Ann Eichen, PhD, is a Licensed Clinical Psychologist and Adult Psychoanalyst. She received her PhD from the Derner Institute of Advanced Psychological Studies, and she completed her analytic training at the Psychoanalytic Center of Philadelphia. Dr. Eichen is on the Faculty at PCOP, where she teaches classes in adult and female development and also serves as the PCOP Programming Director. She has a private practice in Wynnewood, where she provides individual, couples, and group psychotherapy. Dr. Eichen has recently completed a book entitled, *Marriage and its Discontents* with Dr. Salman Akhtar and Dr. Andrew Smolar.

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

At the end of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Describe how a study of psychobiography contributes to an understanding of the countertransference that a therapist has for a patient, and understand how countertransference is situated in the creative realm of the human mind, and can influence the work of biographers in their pursuit of psychobiography or the therapist's pursuit of an effective treatment.
2. List ways that working through countertransference feelings is essential for the clinician in their goal of promoting effective treatment and protecting the patient from enactments that can run the risk of harming the treatment and patient.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the manner in which countertransference feelings emerge from the unconscious of the clinician/biographer, and can lead to complicated feelings that can be harnessed to promote an effective treatment/compelling biographical account.

CONTINUING MEDICAL EDUCATION/CONTINUING EDUCATION

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For more information, please contact the Psychoanalytic Center of Philadelphia:
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