

Missing in action: Reflections on the employment of the paternal function in therapeutic practice

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Abstract

There is reasonable sized body of international literature addressing the paternal function in the clinical setting. Nevertheless there appears to be a relative absence of this function in clinical practice locally as well as globally. This article seeks to explore how South African psychoanalytically oriented therapists think about the paternal function in terms of their clinical interventions and patient formulations. Drawing on material from individual interviews with clinicians the author highlights six themes. Based on these themes an apparently ambivalent and disrupted relationship with the paternal functionary is suggested and possible reasons for this proposed.