

Interview with Warren Brodey  
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Rakow: Well, the other thing that's written, and I don't know if it fits here with our conversation, has to do with anxiety. I mean it's in Betty's paper, it's in other papers, about the fear of anxiety that these families had. That they would go to whatever length to avoid anxiety. Although it seems to me they lived in a well of it.

Brodey: They lived in a well of it, absolutely.

Rakow: But that- in addition to it, and maybe this gets to the equilibrium question, which is "What's so great about an equilibrium?" That they had- that there was a teaching that took place, that would say, "Anxiety isn't going to harm you, there's an anxiety that comes about with change, it's not necessary to fear it at the level that you fear it. Awareness of it is helpful." So this comes out in Betty's papers and in other papers, about this intense fear of upset. And I'm not sure if what's she's talking about there isn't what we were just talking about here in terms of

Brodey: I think so, but I'd like to go back to what I talked about in my paper, which was I started out with talking about this intense emotion, emotionalism. Plus, no closeness.

Rakow: No closeness, or less, you know closeness?

Brodey: No closeness. Plus distance. Because they didn't really know each other. So they were intensely attached, but if you think of objective relationship, they were extraordinarily distanced.

Rakow: Ephemeral, I mean that's how I think of it. That's how I view it. To me, that's always been a contrast. It's- it's ephemeral. Not-

Brodey: It's ephemeral relationship and intensity, intensely emotional with ephemeral relationship. That's where I started on this whole direction of the image/object narcissistic relationship. Because each person's not really relating to the other,

Rakow: Right, their image.

Brodey: They're relating to themselves. Their own, distanced image. And they actually have an intense relationship too but you don't see the other person.

Rakow: Well, it occurs to me that we've had some experience with that today!

[laughter] People relating to you [laughter] with an image! [laughter] that doesn't, isn't you! [laughter]

Brodey: They don't have any- they don't have any-

Rakow: I know, but it's, you know.

Brodey: We don't have any, any-

Rakow: In the first second of meeting who cares, but if it's twenty years later, [laughter] your in trouble

Brodey: Well, that's right, if we really want someone (new) - still I have in my book about families, and the family where there's one child who's young and healthy. A kid who's playing baseball, and football, and having a real athletic life, and they all consider him a sickly child, that was one of the families. And they need a sickly child, so here he is, you know. And they're talking about how he mustn't really do all these athletics, the worst thing in the world for him, and so on and so forth, and trying to protect him all the time, and at the same time, he doesn't fit the image. So he really doesn't get caught, in the narcissistic relationship but the projection is on him nonetheless. But it's not externalized. As, he doesn't- he doesn't, take the role of the projection but rejects it. Then he's safe.

Rakow: And how, you know, what do you think are the conditions that make it occur, or go that way, rather than it being a participatory...?

Brodey: I think it's partly biological, in that if the child, the child is born with, as you all know, a certain kind of nature, and if the nature of the child can be nourished in the direction of fitting the image, then do it. But if it's a misfit, they can't do it, one. Two, if there's an uncle or an aunt or a cousin or a somebody else who's relating to the child in a normal way, then, then a child gets nourishment from that person rather than needing to fit the role in order to get nourishment from the family. That's why I say that, in some respects, the extended family should, according to my theory anyway, have less schizophrenia than a- a nuclear family. Cause there is less opportunity to find support outside the family in a nuclear family.

Rakow: Well, when I have seen that, what I've seen is that it's at a different generation. When I have seen that and I've certainly seen what you're describing where the youngest child will say, "Well, if it weren't for my sister, I would have been really screwed up."

Brodey: Or my grandmother

Rakow: And "I always knew to check things out with her."

Brodey: Exactly

Rakow: And where you have then the mother's the one who's impaired. And it stays there, it doesn't move down. And that somehow

Brodey: That's often the case.

Rakow: I certainly have seen that.

Brodey: It could be. I had a girlfriend once, whose, hah, her mother was quite a good person, her father was a psychopath. And, you know, terrible man. And she couldn't go in the home at night because he would beat her up. And so, she would stay with a woman who had a little stand selling cookies and chocolate bars and things like that. And she'd sleep under the counter until her father went to sleep then she'd go home and go to bed. You know you run across these kinds of things. The woman with the candy bars was her guardian angel. She was scarred anyway, but still-

Rakow: But there has to be something, something about that individual from the very beginning though, that - that that is consistent- I mean,

Brodey: Well, I call it matching. If the person in their nature and in their development, in their need, because again, if a (maid) comes along and he presents the other reality you know, it can be- that can save a person. Certainly, its in their need and in their nature, in the absence of other nourishment, other source of nourishment, then, then the child, if those three combine, they match the, the projection, then it externalizes. And it's a continuous force to externalize it to manipulate that child into that position into that role in the theater. But the theater is makeup. And you and all of us, at some times, certainly you know, your mother she not only knew how it was (inaudible)

Rakow: [laughter]

Brodey: And we all feel that way sometimes. And when you, when you get older you say,

Rakow: But we don't say, "And I kept it from her." [laughter] [laughter]

Brodey: No, but that's, that was part of-, sure, and we don't say, you know, "She did the best she could." Because, she's- to understand I always think of my mother to understand me, would take- would've taken her a, a- a ton of horses, because it was pretty damn difficult. But I didn't realize that then.

Rakow: Well now here, let me go back to this, [sigh] this is again from that same paper, this is something that comes up over and over and over again. It goes back, to this discussion we were having this morning, about what is it about, recognition of reality, or suggestions or whatever you want to call it, occurring within the family. And, its ability to bring about change more rapidly and more effectively than any outsider. And what is that? So, this goes back to that discussion. So here's, here's the quote. "There have

been some striking experiences in supporting the one who motivates the family action. They can do things that look traumatic and things that we could call schizophrenogenic, but the patients can respond favorably to these things. In the early days of this study, we avoided suggesting ways for parents to proceed but when they did something that looked traumatic, we would question it. This resulted in the family dropping the lead and doing nothing. Now we would say to support the one who motivates the situation, no matter how illogical it might seem." Now, I mean I think this is really describing

Brodey: It's a beautiful thing.

Rakow: It- it's- it's really describing the beast. And

Brodey: Exactly. I think that's- that's a very powerful statement. Is this from one of Murray's papers?

Rakow: Yes. "Family Relationships in Schizophrenia."

Brodey: Yeah. I think that's very powerful.

Rakow: But I guess, you know what I'm asking about is how you- he's describing an observation, a question of it, what was learned from that, and then not interfering. I'm just, again, back to is it, is- do we just say, it's biology, How something traumatic, schizophrenogenic, can actually be- now this is taking place in an environment, I don't think we should rule that out, the environment in which this is taking place. But, you know, how could you relate, maybe this is the way to ask, how could you relate this to others without them saying well you're crazy. I mean, we have to stop all those people doing those traumatic things in the family, schizophrenogenic things in the family. I mean, what's the difference between those families that get put in jail, or kids get removed, or something like that, from, from this? And is it the environment in which it was occurring? I don't know, there's like, a number of questions in there.

Brodey: Mmm. [silence]

Rakow: That you support the one who motivates the situation.

Brodey: You support the one, who, who is, who is helping everyone to leave the status quo.

Rakow: Okay.

Brodey: Here is- here is a situation which is stuck. Right? You take a big- somebody takes a big stick and hits it. It becomes more likely to get unstuck than somebody saying, you know, saying something that they've heard a thousand times.

Rakow: But how do you recognize that as going in the right direction from that behavior maintaining the status quo?

Brodey: [long silence] Well, you know, I don't know the answer, number one. And number two, I do know the answer. That's what we were talking about it at lunch. With my head, I don't know the answer. With my heart, if I'm really relating to the family as a whole, I can sense that this is an unusual behavior. This doesn't fit the pattern. And it can be positive or negative, doesn't matter. If it doesn't fit the pattern, then you are shaking up a situation' that's stuck.

Rakow: Okay.

Brodey: And you could say, "Well, it's going to make it worse." But, chances are of making it worse, when somebody's- when people are already that stuck, is, it's not that important whether it makes it worse or better. It's just the fact is that it shakes it up enough that- that in the looseness of things, there can be some movement. Because there may be a lot of positive energy around too. Often there is when there's a lot of negative energy, there's positive energy too, so you don't find one without the other as a rule.

Rakow: Oh, I know that the other way, when there's positive energy you should look for the negative! [laughter]

Brodey: Well, when the negative-

Rakow: Cause it's always there. [laughter] You know it's going to come. So.

Brodey: Yeah. And the negative is, well that's, you know, when all this adoration, of-of Murray gets to its zenith, then-then, you know, there's a lot of people who are sort of, get tired of it, I'm sure.

Rakow: Well, there-there's been a, you know, I don't know if it balances, but the negative/positive has been mighty on both sides.

Brodey: Good.

Rakow: So, you can get- you know, away from who he was, and just go with these ideas. Then perhaps,

Brodey: Then his contribution follows

Rakow: Then his contribution will stand on its own.

Brodey: His contribution is not his ego, or

Rakow: Right. And,

Brodey: plus or minus. It's a very brilliant expression.

Rakow: and I think, you know, becau- I really think the contribution, moving toward that, is people owning their part of it. You know, your part of it, Betty's part of it. I think that's a piece of it.

Brodey: Yeah. Oh, I think so.

Rakow: The thing I was thinking about, with this, when I first read it, was I remember working, when I was at the Mental Health Center, and one woman in particular, who had a diagnosis of schizophrenia, that at some point something had occurred in the family. And she was telling me that at a very heightened emotional state, she finally said the thing to her mother that she's wanted to say, and I said to her, "Did, did you need all that emotion behind that to be able to say that?" And she said, "Oh, yeah, I would never have done it otherwise." But that's what I was thinking about here. The one who motivates the action may, it may take a level of that emotional intensity to actually say something that should have been said and dealt with.

Brodey: Sure.

Rakow: And I was wondering if it wasn't talking about that very thing.

Brodey: Well, it sounds familiar, it sounds right, you know, I was just thinking that okay, you've got all the actors on the stage, and they're all going through the usual lines, and everything else, and they're feeding the stage with having the audience in the exactly right position, everything's positioned exactly right. But that positioning is in a sense, hard to maintain, because it's artificial. It doesn't really relate to the people's beings, it relates to [tape cut] Sometimes the actors, we push so hard on the stage, that they just can't utter the ordinary lines, they have to say who they are. They have to express themselves from their guts, from who they really are, and not just as, as, you know, puppets in the theater. You ask who's the puppeteer and (inaudible). Ah, And when they express their lines then it breaks down the theater, and that's what we're trying to do. Course, when the theater breaks down, some people might get physically sick. And let's ask them this question, "Who's the puppet? Who's the puppeteer?" And, I would say it's not in any one of the individuals. I would say the family organism is the puppeteer. And that puppeteer may go, actually, you know, be related to another puppeteering from the previous family organism

Rakow: Yeah, I was thinking, it's not a

Brodey: and be in -in three generations a beast of family organisms going back.

Rakow: It's not two generations.

Brodey: Yeah, so. And, these puppeteers are, sort of, partly inherited, when I was doing my work I used to call it the family escutcheon. Because, you know, it's-it's like in the old days, the each of the families had their own emblem with all its signals on it, it's- and,

you know there could be a murder, four year, four generations back and the murderer could still be setting up the stage. Some dramatic happening can also set up the stage, a murderer, or somebody steals all the family inheritance, and these are things which can do it, there can be other things that do it. Or you know, a wealthy family, and then the father drinks it all up, and the mother then squanders the rest, and

Rakow: I think it's hard to know.

Brodey: It's hard to know if that's true or not

Rakow: Well, whatever, that's not what I was going to say.

Brodey: Okay, go ahead.

Rakow: I think it's hard to know how people participate in the perpetuation of that. And, I mean, I spent a long time looking at my son's death and the connections back in the generations. And- just as the variables, as part of his death. And believe me, I didn't even go into, you know, my father's side of the family, my husband, his sides of the family, I just did one, one piece of the family, one little branch. And looked at, at that. But, you know, I would say, in terms of my being part of something that went down the generations

Brodey: Mmm.

Rakow: it wasn't until he was dead that I began to put things together that I was able to see an emotional process from my grandmother, to my mother, to me, to my son. And how do you even get a sense of being part of a process like that. I mean there were things that I pulled out from years, years ago that all plugged in here. Because I track things. I could pull them out and put them in place

Brodey: Well, I'd say about that, the Indians, again, is my answer is, they asked me, "Well, who are your ancestors?" Ancestors? I never thought I had any ancestors.

Rakow: [laughter] You're the person who came from Mars, right? [laughter]

Brodey: I didn't have any ancestors. And then, I thought to myself, "Well, I guess I do. Everybody has ancestors." So then, I started pulling up my, you know, father, mother, grandfather, going back in the family tree.

Rakow: Mmhmm.

Brodey: And I didn't really feel much like they were my ancestors, but anyway, that's what I did. But in the normal circumstances, um, in many- from many different tribes and very many different kind- if we go around the earth, and try and you know, test as many people as we can from Mars, we'll find that most people have ancestors who know their ancestral heritage. And they know that there was a murder here, or somebody's

committed suicide there, or somebody did that. And then, also, the- the- the old woman in the community would know all this. And she would transfer it in her own way, too -to people. So all this tradition, so the three, four generation tradition has been there in the past. But it's in the recent, um, distance between generations, because so much has happened. Cause we're in a time of -of-of-of-of- shift. Time where things are not continuous but they're in a big bulge of change.

Rakow: You know, I mean it's helpful to - to be close to know the information to start with. Because, you know, this would just be a blank to me if I hadn't listened and knew as much as I knew. I had to have known information to have been able to put this together.

Brodey: You have to have the event before you can put together the history.

Rakow: That's right. But I had to have had the information of the history, to have gone with the event also. I mean, they- I didn't put it together until two years after Danny died. But because I had the information it then all came together. Because my question was, how is this possible, how did this happen? And it wasn't until I could put all that together, and not in a causal way, but I can say that there were, there was enough similarity to variables here, as there were to variables here.

Brodey: Mmm. A different generation-

Rakow: and-and then you put in the other factors, fog, whatever, to it and they all play a part.

Brodey: Yep.

Rakow: So, you know, I can't say that- how my grandmother was with her husband and her son is any weightier than the fog on the road where he was driving but they all were there. It's like, you know, those times where everything comes in to alignment in some way. And, and, I think there was a vulnerability then when you have a repeat of factors, variables from the past. Anyhow, I'll send you that; I'll send you that paper sometime.

Brodey: Good. So we are talking about tendencies now. Predispositions.

Rakow: Well and we're-we're also talking about the repetition of conditions within a relationship system recurring.

Brodey: Right.

Rakow: And when, in his case, something that had occurred seventy years earlier became active at that time. And then the conditions became similar. And everything came together, at that point. And, what had been said about my uncle was, ah, his life ended when his wife left him. But, I have often said, well, I wonder if his life had ended then, if you know, if Danny would have ever been born! Would have ever been born and



died, you know, but it didn't end then. So, that, whatever that would have absorbed of the upset was left to come down. But, by being able to track it, to find it, then I could make some sense of it. But you had to have that information and I think what happens lots of times, this goes to the point you're saying, how can we ever prove it, is because the facts, what's occurring down here gets so far removed from this, that it's a quantum leap to connect it. That everybody would knock you off your seat for saying there's a connection. You have to have a way to directly connect it down, which is what I had done here. So, I think that's what happens, is it-it gets either too far removed or you lose the facts and you have no way of connecting it back. Other than if you tend to start to think this way, you begin to think, there has to be some, it has to be back there, somewhere.

Brodey: And-then-then you're already assuming

Rakow: Right. Right.

Brodey: [yawn] It has to be there, [yawn] so it's- this is, you know, we come here to this game, the quantum leap that we're, that's between generations, between histories, between that- this interconnectedness is so intense, But, what we're saying is if in these schizophrenic families, the interconnectedness gets so that it, it's much more intense. Because the people are, sort of, these roles are being vitalized, or, I wouldn't say vitalized but they're externalized let's say.

Rakow: Is it different with schizophrenia than cancer, or diabetes, or- Is it? I mean, I don't know if cancer's a good one, because cancer's not **different** chronic disease, but schizophrenia's a chronic disease. Diabetes is a chronic disease. Alcoholism is a chronic disease.

Brodey: The tendency is there, I think, again, if you look with this perspective that you find lots of transfer of symptoms down the generations.

Rakow: I think it's **(inaudible)** and it's intense. With other symptoms, we just don't, somehow people don't associate physical illness with the relationship system much.

Brodey: Yeah. Then-Then that started with the beginning of somatic- psychosomatic medicine. Again, which was a long time ago.

Rakow: Yeah, but, you know , **(inaudible)**

Brodey: The Bowen people (don't- also) but if you go- if you go to India, places where people have extended families and if you track who were their, their forefathers, I think you'll find, that these things are just ABCs. It's just that we have, we have come into the mechanistic world where- where flesh and the spirit are-separated, flesh and the history are separated, flesh and tradition are separated, and you know, you're sort of become pieces of skin and bones. And all, all our sensitivities have been denied. And this is, this is the change which now has to somehow be modified and taken up a level

rather than reversed. You can't go back, which we (had to change) (inaudible) go backwards and find something new.

Rakow: (There's more-) I mean, this project began looking at symbiosis but in the later papers and that- it's not- it's not written, and not in terms of symbiosis. So, did that go away, that wasn't what was being investigated anymore, what happened to that idea?

Brodey: Well, I think it continued really. It just- we didn't talk about it, it sort of moved into the background. It was just as important,. The symbiosis means that these people who are living off each other. And, ah-

Rakow: There's no talk about the symbiotic family.

Brodey: No, but that's, but we moved to interconnectedness. They're- they're all, the family unit, sort of, the idea of the family unit absorbed the symbiosis. The symbiosis was again two people or three people who were symbiotic relationship. Then we moved from symbiotic people to the family unit, in describing the family unit which included the symbiosis. The symbiosis was its intensity. And the fact that they had no independent – very little independent life in the family.

Rakow: Would you, you know, when you talk about this process of externalization, you didn't use the term symbiosis in (inaudible)?

Brodey: No, I don't. Well, we the word symbiosis is, again, to me, it's a word which- which doesn't really- it's not, it's not a process word, it's- it's for describing a state. Externalization is describing a - a process. But, externalization is an action. Symbiosis is a, is a description of a state which is, a state which has occurred.

Rakow: Dependency.

Brodey: Yeah, an extreme dependency. Ah, so we got away from labelling things, people, and all that. That was one of the things we absolutely had a rule, no labelling.

Rakow: I wondered, if that, if that was considered too emotional a word, too (inaudible) or what happened to it, because it's there in the beginning, it's not their later.

Brodey: Well, I think it got absorbed.

Rakow: Okay

Brodey: It got absorbed into this other family unit That you were describing, the family unit, and the family unit you could say was a symbiotic family unit. But, you're more in, you're more describing the intensity of relationship among these people. And that the relationship was not a genuine relationship. It was something that, where they were relating to parts of each other but not the wholeness. They didn't know the wholeness.

Rakow: I was going to ask you about outpatient groups but you didn't know about-

Brodey: I really didn't, and that was part of- also very strange to me.

Rakow: That you weren't involved with them?. [tape cut]

Brodey: But, No, I could have been involved, I think I was invited to be, but I said I'd got enough to do here. It seemed to me that- that Murray was able to keep things separate in his unusual way.

Rakow: I wondered if anything about the outpatient families - cause I don't know who they are, I know who some of them, I don't know- but if that came into the research meetings at all.

Brodey: Occasionally, but very little.

Rakow: Cause Dr. Bowen was clear in saying that his theory, the concepts of the theory came from the direct research of the inpatient families. And that the outpatient families were supplemental to that. He clearly separates them.

Brodey: Clearly separated. And I never understood why or wherefore. But, you know, because I don't- a relation- setting up boundaries is not something that is a strong point in our family. But, but he was very clear about setting up his boundary. This is inpatient, this is outpatient. If I wanted to work with inpatient, with outpatient, I could, but then I was working with outpatient as well as inpatient, these were not connected. And this was his way, I think, of trying to keep a pure culture inside the, inside the family unit.

Rakow: I think so. I think it wasn't a research structure. I think.

Brodey: I think so too. And you know, he didn't share much of this. So there's a lot that he didn't share.

Rakow: And the only thing that's written about the outpatients, other than they were supplemental is that they did a little better. That as much as the effort went to not having the hospital take over that is inherent with living on a ward in the hospital. And that the families who were outpatients had to depend on their own resources more. And they did a little better. So really, it's the only thing that's written about it. The-the work with the out patients. I don't know. I would- I'm at the point now where I really could talk to some of these families [tape cut] But in terms of down the generations, you know my question of, "Did this project make any difference? How would you know it? Was any permanent change a result of being part of this project? And how would you know it? And that's- that would be kind of an interesting question to me.