

LEO HURWITZ'S TWO PSYCHOANALYST SISTERS
'MARIE H. BRIEHL and ROSETTA HURWITZ
Pioneers in Child Psychoanalysis

By Sandra E. Cohen

Leo Hurwitz was a pioneer in the development of documentary film in America, but he wasn't the only pioneer in the Hurwitz family. His older sisters Rosetta (Rose) and Marie were pioneers in bringing child psychoanalysis to the United States. They were among the first child analysts to train with Anna Freud in Vienna in the mid-1920s and, on return to New York City; they were the first child analysts in America. Yet, because of the controversy over lay analysts in this country, Marie and Rose's significant role in the history of child analysis is largely unrecognized. This is my tribute to them.

Rosetta Hurwitz and Marie Briebl were my great-aunts, my grandfather Bill's younger sisters. Bill was the oldest of eight Hurwitz siblings, the first four - Bill, Elizabeth, Rose, and Marie - born in the Ukraine to Solomon and Eva Hurwitz. Later, in America, Peter, Sophia, Eleanor, and Leo were born in New York City. I was closest to Marie, since we both lived in Los Angeles between 1969 and the early 1990's when she returned to New York.

I remember Marie as if I saw her yesterday; her long grey hair twisted in a braid on top of her head, and all 5 feet of her a powerhouse of energy. I admired her mind, quick as a whip, and her observations of people and the world around us were always strongly formed and interesting. Although fifty years my senior, she outpaced me, rushing ahead with a focus and determination to get exactly where we were going by the quickest and shortest route. This was often to a table at Musso and Frank's (one of our favorite neighborhood destinations) or our seats at the Mark Taper Forum. Rose, I didn't know well since she lived in New York City. She stood one inch taller than Marie, had coal black hair, and was warm and enthusiastic. She greeted me with a big hug whenever I did have the chance to see her.

Marie and Rose's love of children and learning took them to Freud and Vienna. Marie stayed for six years and Rose for one. Marie's determination to bring new ideas back to America impelled her immersion in Anna Freud's work and child psychoanalysis before others of her time. It was 1924 when Marie and Rose traveled to Vienna with Marie's husband, Walt. Walt attended and graduated from medical school at the University of Vienna, receiving his M.D. Concurrent with Marie and Rose's work with Anna Freud, Walt also trained as a psychoanalyst directly with Freud and Freud's disciples.

The climate in Vienna was welcoming to qualified lay people with an interest in psychoanalysis. But when Marie and Rose returned to New York they were caught in the medical profession's claim on psychoanalysis (see Wallerstein, 1998). What Marie and Rose faced was largely an American matter and out of concert with Freud's own sentiments about what qualifies someone for psychoanalytic work:

"I have assumed something that is still violently disputed ... that psychoanalysis is not a specialized branch of medicine ... anyone who has passed through a course of instruction, who has been analyzed himself, who has mastered what can be taught today of the psychology of the unconscious, who is at home in the science of sexual life, who has learnt the delicate technique of psycho-analysis, the art of interpretation, of fighting resistances and of handling the transferences anyone who has accomplished all of this *is no longer a layman in the field of psychoanalysis*" (Freud, *On The Lay Question*, p.228).

Freud trained many outside the medical profession - including Theodore Reik (a Ph.D. in Psychology), Erik Erickson (an itinerant artist without even a B.A. degree), Melanie Klein (with an incomplete university education), Victor Tausk and Hanns Sachs (from law), Ernest Krist (an art historian), Robert Waelder (from theoretical physics), Ella Sharpe (an English professor), and those from pedagogy - Siefried Bernfeld, Freud's own daughter Anna, and others, including Marie and Rose.

The Hurwitz Family and Psychoanalysis

Pedagogy was not the only influence that led Marie and Rose to psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis was part of the culture of 1920's New York City. As Marie tells my cousin Ellen Hawley, Pete's daughter: "Rose and I became interested in analysis ... because analysis began to spread among everybody; the novelists, the poets ... we were active in all the movements, along with a leftist group of scholars and public figures."

The Hurwitz family's intellectual and socially conscious nature (see Leo Hurwitz, Part 1, Family Influences) paved the way for both Marie and Rose to become child psychoanalysts. Even before the 1920s, all the Hurwitz's were open-minded about intellectual ideas, human rights, and social conditions. Attraction to the new psychoanalysis wasn't a stretch at all.

As Rose tells it: "... we went to a Socialist Sunday School ... I had an educational background that was liberal and wasn't closed ... I heard about psychoanalysis in my adolescence, Jung and Adler and Freud and I selected

Freud as the person I believed was the best of the three.” (Nancy Chodorow’s 1980 interviews, noted hereafter as NC)

Solomon, their father, was an activist and a Socialist intellectual. Their mother, Eva, a midwife, “a sort of Florence Nightingale. She was a good nurse, and I think all the young couples must have come to her for all sorts of advice about sexuality...” (Marie to NC)

Yet, in the family as children: “about sexuality, practically nothing was spoken. Attitudes filtered out of the air. It was not a sin.” (Leo in his interview with Ellen Hawley) There were no messages, even indirect ones, from Solomon and Eva that induced guilt about sexual matters. Freud and his sexual theories came more clearly into the open when Marie and Rose returned from Vienna.

Psychoanalysis, and especially infantile sexuality, hadn’t yet gained widespread acceptance. Leo was only twenty-one when Marie and Rose came home. He speaks about the impact of their studies on both him and the entire family: “Freud came into the picture with Rose, Marie and Walt coming back from Vienna. So, we [too] were pioneers in psychoanalysis ... in our family, [psychoanalysis] began to feel normal. The idea of the sex drive as a basic instinct became part of the environment.”

Education and intellectual thought were primary values in the Hurwitz family for all eight children. Teaching children is what most moved Marie and Rose to study psychoanalysis: “It was 1923. I was devoted to teaching ... it was the way to change the world. You start with the children.” (Marie to Ellen Hawley)

From Teaching To Psychoanalysis

Marie and Rose went to college to become teachers. They were both dedicated to children. Rose graduated from City College, becoming a teacher in about 1915. After teaching for a number of years: “I wrote to Professor Freud and told him that I think psychoanalysis could be applied to work with children ... He said, “Come!”... Freud was perfectly liberal. Somebody says they were interested ... and he says, ‘Come and find out!’ So, you come and find out. ...” (Ellen Hawley’s interview)

Marie graduated from Hunter College in 1917. She was a talented teacher, but: “I knew there was something deeper than the conscious level which pedagogy approached ... what was not dealt with was the whole, the strata and the substratum of feeling, and of the givens, you might say, what a child is born with and what he developed.” (NC)

She found some children inaccessible: “I tried to get at children through literature, but there were always one or two or three you couldn’t reach, even when they had a crush [on you] ... delinquent, sullen, nervous kids. Told you all was not well... they were unhappy kids.” (Marie to Ellen Hawley)

Reaching and understanding these unhappy children seemed essential. Freud and his Vienna were the natural progression for both Marie and Rose’s commitment to the development of children.

To Vienna

It was 1924. From the intellectually rich atmosphere of their childhood, Marie and Rose entered Freud’s circle of free thinkers and people interested in the deep workings of the mind. Here, in their own words, is a window into how their training unfolded:

Rose: “the clinic at the hospital in Vienna, the Pirquet clinic ... accepted me to observe children, and I never felt any resistance. Either against me as an American, as a nonmedical, or as a woman.”

“They (the Viennese circle of analysts) permitted me to take all the courses ... I studied privately with Bernfeld and with Aichorn ... There were no child analysts. Bernfeld wasn’t doing children either. Anna Freud, I worked with, too, privately. I went to talk to her about how she approached [her cases] and I talked to her theoretically ... I had no cases in Vienna.” (NC)

When Marie began her psychoanalytic training in Vienna in 1925, she attended the lectures of Dr. Paul Schilder, which she continued to attend until 1928.

Marie: “He gave Friday night lectures ... the most extraordinary psychiatric cases were presented ... he interviewed them ... he spoke about them ... he gave theory and everything else that had to do with the great collection of psychotic and neurotic people that they had in Vienna at the time.” (NC)

In the late 1920s, Marie became a member of Anna Freud’s first seminar on working with children: “Marianne Kris was a member of that seminar, Edith Sterba ... Edith Buxbaum, and Dorothy Burlingham.” (NC) These seminars, a significant part of Marie’s training, also led to other involvements.

Dorothy Burlingham, an American, had moved to Vienna with her four children. All four were in analysis with Anna Freud. Burlingham herself

undertook an analysis with Sigmund Freud and became a lay analyst. She and Anna Freud founded the Hamstead Clinic and also set up a nursery school, along with Eva Rosenfeld, called The Freud-Burlingham School.

Marie was involved in the School's early years. The School's first teachers were Peter Blos, as head teacher, Erik Erickson "who I think had had no pedagogical experience but was a good teacher ... and I, who took charge of the English learning on the part of all the students, both German and English ..." (NC)

Along with Dr. Schilder's lectures, Marie joined in on various seminars with many of Freud's disciples: "You were invited. Freud was already retired at that time, but ... I had occasion to talk to him ... when it was arranged by Anna Freud ... when my son was born and I brought him to see Anna Freud, he [Freud] came out to see him, held him in his arms, and we talked." (NC)

Personal Psychoanalysis:

Of course, in any psychoanalytic training, learning about one's own unconscious fantasies, conflicts, and defenses is necessary to the work with patients. Marie and Rose were candid with Nancy Chodorow, in her 1980 interviews, about their experiences in psychoanalysis.

Rose: "I went into psychoanalysis myself before I went to Europe ... for my own curiosity and because I was interested in it. I didn't see it as a therapy. I saw it as an educational thing, because when the doctor [Monroe Meyer] asked what my neurosis was, I said I didn't know, but if he could find it, it was ok with me. I eventually discovered what my neurotic aspects were. And, so when I wrote to Freud, it was already the end of my analysis ..." (NC)

Because Rose had completed an analysis in New York City with Monroe Meyer before arriving in Vienna for training, she was not asked to do a second analysis. Marie, though, had her personal psychoanalyses there.

Marie: Paul Schilder "undertook to do [analysis] with me. He was in every way a maverick, a brilliant man ...he did analyses for only three months, that was his thing ... we got to the end of the period and ... he suggested that if I was interested in children, which he wasn't, I should go to Anna Freud ... who undertook to treat me and was interested in my motives and my purposes." (NC).

The analysis with Anna Freud lasted for two years, from 1928 to 1930, when Marie returned to New York.

New York and Lay Analysis

When the two sisters returned to New York City (Rose in 1925 and Marie in 1930,) they brought child psychoanalysis back to America. It wasn't an easy time to be a lay analyst in New York. The New York Psychoanalytic Institute's official position maintained that psychoanalysis was a part of medicine. This position originated with changes in New York state law after the Flexner report in 1910 had exposed substandard medical education. But Marie and Rose did find some acceptance by those who knew that children needed competent analysts to treat them.

Rose: "Margaret Fries accepted me and let me come to her clinic. And she was interested in ... my point of view, which was different because I was the first one to come back [from Vienna] with the idea of working psychoanalytically with a play technique with children ... Anna Freud was doing it in Vienna. Nobody was doing it here." (NC)

Without many referrals for analytic work, Rose taught for a year. Then, an aunt asked her to see a child cousin who was having problems: "I said, 'Sure, let her come.' I thought to myself, I have nothing to lose, I'll only learn. She wouldn't talk ... but eventually she did. And eventually she played with the technique. I did help her and she functioned very well for many years." (NC) Later, a pediatrician sent Rose a child who had deep problems: "It started very naturally from the fact that people didn't know what to do ... and then they found out the child was improving and the child was coming to life, and something was happening ..." (NC)

Marie: "I came home in 1930. So there was a considerable period where there were no child analysts, except Rose and I ..." (NC)

Children needed analysts. Even A.A. Brill, a major voice in the New York Psychoanalytic Institute's official opposition to lay analysts, accepted Marie and Rose privately (Wallerstein, 1998). He and many other New York analysts made referrals to them and supported their work.

The New York Psychoanalytic Society and Institute

Although the New York Psychoanalytic Society and Institute couldn't extend membership, they did allow Marie and Rose a certain level of involvement. In their own words, this is what they found:

Rose: “Because of Anna Freud’s recommendation, I was permitted to ... listen in on the courses and the lectures here, which was a great concession for them.” (NC)

Marie: “... non-medical people were not allowed to be part of the Institute and Society except possibly as guests ... I presented in one of the larger seminars with Dr. Rado when he came ... we didn’t find any personal discrimination, but official discrimination, there was ...” (NC)

“Dr. Clarence Oberndorf ... Dr. Sandor Lorand ... Dr. Lawrence Kubie (he was a doll!), Dr. A.A. Brill ... Bert Lewin ... were not only encouraging but they used our material for their discussions and work, and Dr. Sandor Rado ... they sent patients, sometimes their children or their relatives ... we were not fighting anybody, we were only interested in making progress in our own field.” (NC)

Pioneers in Child Psychoanalysis

Making progress in their chosen field of child psychoanalysis was a commitment both Marie Briebl and Rosetta Hurwitz upheld throughout their long careers. Rose continued to work quietly in New York City until her death in 1981. Marie practiced in New York City through the end of World War II before moving to Los Angeles. While still in New York, she conducted the very first group therapy, with mothers of children under five whose husbands were away in the army:

“In that situation of anxiety ... and with young children in a phase of their lives we considered psychologically and developmentally important ... {the group] worked its way into a kind of therapy so that when a mother ... was filled with anxiety, this group could work out its problems...” (NC) Later, similar groups formed in Cleveland and Detroit and then in other cities across the country.

Marie also made the first longitudinal study of a child in daily life within his home. Her study, although never published, was completed before the studies of Hartmann, Kris, and Lowenstein, who did not observe children within a family setting. Marie’s observational work was presented in the seminar with Dr. Sandor Rado at The New York Psychoanalytic Institute.

Marie and her husband Walter Briebl moved to Los Angeles in 1948. Walt was one of a small group of psychoanalysts who founded the Southern California Psychoanalytic Society and Institute (SCPI). SCPI, in its beginnings, was “a pure medical society.” However, Marie was made chairman of the Child

Analytic Section and stayed in that position for almost twenty years. This position allowed her to carry out one of the most important goals of her life: her commitment to the development of psychoanalytic work with children.

Los Angeles, SCPI, and Child Psychoanalysis

Marie and Rose were the only practicing child psychoanalysts in the United States and there were none in California at this time. Marie's position as chairman of the Child Analytic Section at SCPI, which evolved out of her work with children, made it possible for her to develop the profession of child psychoanalysis. This position also gave her a hands-on forum for creating a program to train other analysts to do the child work she knew was vitally important and loved.

Marie says of those early years at SCPI: "I had my own goals, which was child analysis. I had to give it my all because nobody else was there ... Child analysis was my thing. I brought up my society; I started our movement there. I organized the society and the courses and curriculum and did all the supervision in the beginning until we had others who were trained." (NC)

In her training and supervision, Marie held very strong standards about the qualities that make a good child analyst: "... An ability to communicate with the child on a feeling level that is the equivalent of where the child is in his development, normal and pathological; it is equivalent to the unanswerable question of what makes for creativity ... It involves talking their language ... it involves how you deal with the actions directed at you, aggressive or non-aggressive. All of it means that somewhere from the wellsprings of your own being there is a feeling of understanding. Not necessarily of identification, but an empathic feeling of understanding and an intellectual ability to get there, because you have that feeling, and then to talk on that child's level." (NC)

Marie's words embody the qualities necessary for any good analyst, adult and child alike. Her life work carried a deep commitment to children, the reason she went to Vienna. Her capacity to understand children at a deep empathic level made her able to reach, just as sensitively, the child still living in her adult patients. Although she never expected recognition, nor did Rose, they both deserve more acknowledgment than either received for their contributions.

The APsaA - Finally

Rose did her work quietly and independently and was never a member of any psychoanalytic institute or association. Marie, though, became a member and

Training Analyst at the Southern California Psychoanalytic Society and Institute where she was granted an honorary Ph.D. and Emeritus status. She was finally elected to the originally very medical (and non-lay psychoanalysis) American Psychoanalytic Association (APsaA) in 1971.

When it came to being put on the APsaA ballot, Marie's position was this: "I have gone this far, and whatever my age is, and whatever the resistance is, I'm going all the way. They can vote for me or not ... I'm used to being accepted for what I am, and not accepted for things I don't give a hoot about ... so, I was elected ... I could say, as I thought then: too little too late. My sister could certainly say that ... I'd like that pre-history to be mentioned. How long it took." (NC)

So, Marie, I have mentioned that pre-history in detail here. What you had to battle in this country to make a place for the child and for child psychoanalysis took great courage and great resolve. I hope I've played my part in giving you and Rose, my great-aunts, your rightful place in psychoanalytic history.

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