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The Family Psychologist is a quarterly publication devoted to news and issues in the delivery of services to individuals and families. Articles pertaining to family psychology and policy are invited. Authors or publishers may send books for potential review directly to the editors of the Clinical Corner, Research Corner, Reference Corner, and Family Forensic Psychology column.

Unless otherwise stated, opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not represent the official position of Division 43.

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**On behalf of TFP editorial staff, I am opening this letter with warm wishes for the New Year 2012. I also would like to thank the editors and authors of TFP columns for their valuable contribution to the Bulletin in 2011. I look forward to another productive year of collaboration with the Society’s members and board of directors.**

In this winter issue of TFP, readers will find thought-provoking articles about the evolution and challenges of family psychology (FP) in our present times. Articulating the significance and distinctiveness of FP is essential to its formal recognition and future growth as a specialty of psychology. Inspired by the history of Jazz, Marianne Celano, President of the Society, describes what we can do to revive the excitement and interest FP once produced as it called for an ecosystemic vision of mental health and clinical practice. Each Vice-President was invited to respond to Marianne’s article. In their address, they not only reflect on the current challenges of our field but also identify opportunities for promoting the practice and science of FP with diverse populations. They all concur with the importance of attracting and fostering new talents that represent the future of family psychology.

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These quotes about jazz together capture both the bright promise and the primary limitation of the field of Family Psychology (FP) today. Jazz, a musical form characterized by improvisation, has been used as a metaphor to describe the role of the family therapist (Sexton & van Dam, 2010) and the tension between research and practice in FP (Lebow, 2009). Here I compare the history of jazz as a strong musical tradition with our evolving professional specialty. Both jazz and FP are innovative (some say revolutionary) paradigms that evolved from a mix of cultural traditions in the U.S., gained wide acceptance and popularity, yet face an uncertain future.

Evolution of Jazz and FP

Both jazz and FP are easier to recognize than describe; as Louis Armstrong once said, “if you gotta ask, you’ll never know!” Although the etymology of the word “jazz” is in dispute, most scholars agree it was first used to describe music in Chicago around 1915. Currently, jazz refers to the musical genre originating in the U.S. at the beginning of the 20th century from a confluence of European and West African musical traditions (Stearns, 1975). Characterized by rhythmic complexity, blue tonality, improvisation, and a unique performance practice (the “swung note”), jazz is considered by many to be the greatest, most original American export to the world.

FP also developed from a confluence of disparate traditions in the U.S. The primary precursor was the systemic view, exemplified by the pioneering efforts of Bateson and colleagues. Another strong influence was behaviorism, which emphasized observable human spirituality in family therapy; family life in French Polynesia; the 20th congress of the International Family Therapy Association; divorce and its impact on the family life cycle; and book reviews of the most current literature in our field.

Best wishes,
Corinne Datchi
behavior rather than intrapsychic dynamics. The behavioral view fanned the flame of systemic thinking as it applied to family interaction patterns (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2009). Over time, the melding of a focus on behavior and systemic patterns evolved into the epistemology we know today as FP: a broad and general orientation to psychology that uses a systemic paradigm as an alternative to the individual focus.

### Complexity

Jazz is characterized by its complexity. The musical components are complicated, particularly as compared to other popular genres, like blues and rock. As Lou Reed once quipped, “If it has more than three chords, it’s jazz.” But what really sets jazz apart from other musical forms is the power and freedom given to the performer in interpreting the musical composition. A skilled jazz musician interprets a tune in very individual ways, altering the harmonies or time signature depending on his or her mood, interactions with fellow musicians, or even members of the audience. In fact, the appeal of live jazz is the discovery of unique improvisations arising out of the musical interplay among a group of musicians.

Complexity is one of the key concepts defining the systemic paradigm of FP. To understand human behavior within the interacting contexts of individual, interpersonal and macrosystemic factors is to embrace complexity. Family psychologists recognize complexity in their conceptualizations and strive to become comfortable with the ambiguity and unpredictability that exist in real-life systems rather than seek simplistic or reductionistic solutions (Stanton, 2009).

The complexity inherent in jazz and FP provide fertile ground for innovation. Jazz has spawned a number of new musical styles as musicians absorb other influences and seek new ways to express themselves; witness the dissonant harmonies introduced by Thelonious Monk, or the development of Latin jazz. FP also has seen considerable innovation in theory, research methodology, and clinical practice over the last several decades.

The challenge posed by complexity is that it is difficult to master. For many modern musicians, jazz is a genre attempted only after learning another musical form, such as classical music or blues. Indeed, the general level of musicianship in jazz is higher now than ever (Giddins, 1998). Similarly, family psychologists are required to be competent in a number of areas, including conceptual and scientific foundations, interpersonal interactions, individual and cultural diversity, and consultation (Stanton & Welsh, 2011). Many of the essential skills comprising these competencies are more advanced than what is typically taught in a professional psychology graduate program. For example, graduate students learn that it is important to be empathic and validate client concerns in developing a therapeutic alliance. For a family psychologist, a systemic therapeutic alliance requires these same skills plus simultaneous consideration of how interactions between the therapist and any one family member affect interactions between the therapist and other members, and/or those between family members.

### Uncertain Future

Both jazz and FP sparked excitement, enjoyed meteoric rises in popularity, and now look back on their heydays. Jazz began as “race music,” moved quickly to become the popular music in America, only to become an avant-garde, marginalized music once again, sustained by a small but dedicated following. In short, jazz has become a victim of its own success. Its influence on American culture is undeniable; once just a noun, “jazz” is now also a verb and an adjective (“jazzy”). Despite the tremendous influence of jazz on music and culture, successful venues for live jazz performances diminished as other popular musical forms became dominant. According to an old saying, a rock guitarist plays three chords to a thousand people, while a jazz guitarist plays three chords to a thousand people. Jazz critic Gary Giddins (1998) put it best: jazz faced “a perilous future of respectability and disinterested acceptance.”

FP, too, has been a victim of its own success. As Bill Watson observed, the family systems viewpoint is now “part of the therapeutic mainstream rather than the maverick vanguard” (Watson, 2007). Once a revolutionary movement (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2009), consideration of individuals in context has become part of the status quo in professional psychology. Graduate programs claim a “biopsychosocial” framework or a “multi-level conceptualization” of psychopathology, and many include courses that present systems theory. According to the APPIC online directory, 90% of APA accredited internships have at least a minor rotation in couple or family therapy, and 33% have
a major rotation. While FP should be defined more by epistemology than population (Thoburn, 2010), couple/family therapy still constitutes the core treatment modality associated with the field. The tenets of FP are everywhere, hidden in plain sight.

Although the influence of FP on professional psychology is indisputable, the future of its distinctive voice is threatened. For example, internship and postdoctoral training programs offering training in family psychology (as opposed to family therapy) are rare, and there are comparatively few psychologists with board certification in Couple and Family Psychology, as compared to those boarded in clinical or counseling psychology. In addition, the clinical practice of FP continues to face challenges posed by the lack of reimbursement for couple and family therapy in traditional health insurance plans.

Follow the Lead of Jazz

What is to become of jazz and FP? Will their success in influencing the broader culture – artistic or professional – cost them their integrity and distinctiveness? A number of steps have been taken to ensure that jazz remains vibrant, innovative, and relevant to each new generation. FP would do well to follow this lead. We must take the initiative to expand our audience (consumer base), identify and nurture young talent, and seek formal recognition of our specialty.

Expand the consumer base. Jazz has expanded its audience via radio programming and free concerts. We can expand our consumer base in FP by informing others about our services and unique contributions. We can educate administrators, funding agencies, referring physicians, trainees and potential clients about how services offered by a family psychologist differ from those offered by a clinical or counseling psychologist. These efforts can be done via APA publications; our Division 43 website; state psychological association activities; and our personal interactions with students, researchers, policymakers, and clients.

To expand its audience, the Columbia/Legacy label set out to deliver a comprehensive review of jazz artists with their “This is Jazz” series in the 1990s. I propose a “This is Family Psychology” series for the general public, consisting of brief (500 words) case examples or anecdotal descriptions that capture the distinctiveness of a FP approach to a specific situation, question, or problem. These could be available on our website for anyone to read. The advantage of this approach is that the case examples are easily accessible and digestible, and available to those outside the Society.

Identify and nurture young talent. Jazz promotes young musicians via middle school and high school bands, community youth ensembles, “all state” competitions, summer camps, and local jazz jams open to musicians of all ages. By the time they attend college, most jazz musicians have already played gigs in a variety of venues. FP may be introduced to undergraduate psychology majors, but is typically not part of the curriculum until graduate school. Opportunities for supervised practice in FP often don’t emerge until internship and postdoctoral training; by this time, many trainees have identified themselves with a specialty or theoretical perspective that they perceive to be incompatible with FP. Relatively few young psychologists join the Society for Family Psychology; less than 10% of our membership is under age 40, and only 15% are early career psychologists (ECPs).

To nurture interest and talent in FP, we should introduce FP into psychology courses at the high school and undergraduate level. There should be graduate programs, or tracks within programs, dedicated to training students in the core competencies of family psychology (Stanton & Welsh, 2011). Internships and postdoctoral fellowships should offer intensive and comprehensive FP training in a clinical or applied setting in preparation for board certification. ECPs should receive mentoring from senior family psychologists in providing clinical supervision, conducting clinical programs and research projects, and writing and reviewing manuscripts.

There are many paths to FP. Some psychologists discover the value of a systemic paradigm well after graduate school, as their clinical practices or capacities for complexity grow. The Division 43 leadership should try to identify these FP “late bloomers,” nurture their interests in systemic thinking, and encourage them to contribute to the field. In addition, psychologists who choose a professional identity based on their practice setting should be invited to join the Society and consider specialization in FP. Who says you can’t be both a pediatric psychologist and a family psychologist?

Perhaps most important, we should examine the structures, relationships, and procedures of the Society itself, as Sexton (2009) recommended, to discover and implement activities that engage ECPs who practice family psychology. In short, we need
to think systemically about how to increase the voice of the Division’s future leaders.

**Formal recognition.** In 1987, Congress passed House Congressional Resolution 57, which designated jazz as “a rare and valuable national American treasure to which we should devote our attention, support and resources to make certain it is preserved, understood and promulgated.” Jazz education and performance programs are eligible to receive federal grants, and students can major in jazz studies at universities.

Although FP was recognized as a specialty by the Commission for the Recognition of Specialties and Proficiencies in Professional Psychology (CRSPPP) in 2002, it is not yet considered a Developed Practice Area (like clinical psychology or counseling psychology) by the Commission on Accreditation of the APA. Nor is there an international standard for FP (Bray & Stanton, 2009). If FP is to progress in its growth and influence, yet retain its integrity as a unique orientation to psychology, it must follow the example of jazz in achieving formal recognition of its specialty status.

As Miller wrote in the forward to Janus’ (2010) book on jazz, “The one thing that’s kept jazz from disappearing is its ability to embrace new elements and influences and still, somehow, keep its essence.” Jazz remains alive because it is inventive, absorbing other musical influences and reflecting life as we live it. FP has followed a similar path, incorporating new considerations of context and spawning evidence-based treatment models. The future of FP will depend on our success in remaining vibrant and innovative, allowing each generation to bring its own “lived experience” to the field.

**References**


Ours new president, Dr. Marianne Celano, has written a compelling article about important issues in Family Psychology and the continued development of the Society of Family Psychology. She asked me to use this column to further that discussion particularly as it relates to practice. Since I lived in New Orleans for many years, I particularly appreciated her discussion about jazz and Family Psychology, and concur with the importance of nurturing new talents from an early age. We can provide a similar experience for graduate students and ECPs that will solidify their identity as family psychologists. Practice is intricately interwoven with education, training and research so my comments and recommendations scan across these areas.

Although I agree that many ECPs come later to family therapy as they develop more experience and can tolerate complexity in their skill development, I have also experienced an almost opposite phenomenon. In my private practice I do a great deal of professional training in a systemic approach to couples and family therapy. Although my workshops are geared to the post-doctoral level of training, I have also had numerous and somewhat unique opportunities to train doctoral level psychology students. Lo and behold, it often seems that these students actually get the shift to systemic thinking and the complexity of a family psychology approach more easily than people with many years of training in traditional, linear models. Several of my colleagues who train with me have noted this same experience. This experience further argues for earlier exposure in undergraduate and graduate school to a family systems approach.

Here are some suggestions about courses of action to expand our Society and to encourage other psychologists to incorporate a systemic, Family Psychology approach in their work.

Proposal for a speakers bureau. In order to introduce Family Psychology to doctoral students early in their training, I propose the creation of a Speakers Bureau staffed by volunteers from the Society who would offer presentations on the practice of Family Psychology in graduate programs. These Division 43 volunteers would be paired up with graduate programs requesting speakers. Updates about the Bureau and suggestions for volunteer speakers could be posted on our members’ website page.

Retaining and expanding ECP membership in Division 43 through special free programming. This could be accomplished by offering ECPs monthly teleconference discussions presented by seasoned practitioners in Division 43. These discussions may be ongoing or include 4 to 8 sessions. They could include case staffing, new developments in Family Psychology, consultation on promoting a systemic approach in their particular work environments, and guidance on developing private practice opportunities.

Quarterly continuing education programming through teleconferencing. These programs would be available to members and non-members, would be run by one or two senior individuals, and involve case reviews and demonstrations of how to apply family systems thinking.
Launching of the James W. Maddock Awards. Sexuality and Sexual Therapy are areas of focus where a systemic, family psychology approach can be particularly useful (Schnarch & Morehouse, 2010). Psychologists from a variety of settings and interests could benefit from our emphasis on the systemic aspects of sexuality. The Human Sexuality Committee of Division 43 is establishing two awards that will be given out each year beginning in 2012. There is one award for graduate students for a research project or service or programming project that relates to an area of sexuality. A second award will be given yearly to a psychologist who demonstrates excellence in teaching human sexuality or sex therapy in a graduate or post-graduate venue, either as a stand-alone course or as part of broader course on couples, family, or therapy skills. Nominations will be solicited through graduate psychology programs in the United States as well as various online and print publications. The winners can either be family psychologists or represent other aspects of psychology. The Society of Family Psychology’s involvement in recognizing these individuals will help other psychologists appreciate the role of Family Psychology. Additional information about the nominating process will be forthcoming.

James W. Maddock, Ph.D., was a psychologist who taught in the Family Studies Program at the University of Minnesota. He was a member of Division 43 and was also a well-known sex therapist, author, and exceptionally gifted teacher. He died in 2009 and this award is being established in his name to emphasize the importance of including sexuality in doctoral level psychology programs.

If you would like further information about any of the above projects or to volunteer to participate, please contact me at ruth@passionatemarriage.com. Become a part of the process and contribute to the expansion of our Division!

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*Stephen Cheung, Psy.D.*

Family Psychology Education:
Proposed Plans for 2012

I would like to share my 2012 plans as your V.P. for Education. Some of my plans are in sync with the agenda Marianne Celano (2012) describes in her President’s address. Marianne and I share a common vision that I discuss in the following paragraphs.

In August 2011, I proposed the creation of an Education Committee (EC) composed of 7 members, i.e., two seasoned family psychologists, two early career psychologists (ECPs), two second- or third-year doctoral students, and me. So far we have filled more than half of the positions. In an effort to increase the representation of graduate students and ECPs, we encourage the latters to contact me about their interest in serving on the Committee. We welcome division members and students from different parts of the country. In addition, we would like to form several subcommittees with specific functions. For example, our Continuing Education (CE) subcommittee consists of Chris Tobey (CE Chair), Ruth
Morehouse (VP for Practice), John Thoburn (2011 Past President), and me. Our CE subcommittee has collaborated with the APA Pre-conference Continuing Education Committee in organizing CE workshops for Division 43 and APA members. The first of these APA workshops took place during the 2011 APA convention and featured David Schnarch and Ruth Morehouse’s training on “Treating Difficult Cases of Sexual and Marital Problems”. It was an enormous success! More APA-approved CE workshops will be organized in this coming year. Consider joining the CE subcommittee; we are looking for two to three division members that will help enrich our workshop planning.

In addition, we would like to create a subcommittee on the teaching and training of family psychology students. As supervisors and educators, we often find it challenging to help first- and second-year graduate students get a good grasp of systemic concepts. Some suggest that it is because students have not gained enough life and/or clinical experience to relate to the complex reality of relational systems. Others observe that students have difficulty adopting a circular view of causality after having been exposed to linear models of human behaviors in their undergraduate and graduate programs. In an effort to enhance students’ practical understanding of family psychology’s systemic epistemology, we use audiovisual aides such as movies, soap operas, and family therapy demonstration DVDs as well as novels, plays, clinical cases, and personal experiences that illustrate abstract concepts. I also propose that we, family psychology educators and supervisors, hold periodic discussions on how to effectively educate the future generation of family psychologists; the subcommittee on the pedagogy and training of family psychology would be responsible for organizing and scheduling these conversations.

Both Marianne and I wish to expand our consumer base by reaching out to the public and psychological organizations, using our personal contacts and the Division’s website. For example, I will use my relationship with members of NCSPPP (National Council on Schools and Programs in Professional Psychology), a home for Training Directors and other administrators of professional psychology schools and programs, to advertise the unique contributions of family psychology. I will encourage NCSPPP members to develop a family psychology emphasis in their programs.

Bray and Stanton (2009) have called attention to the importance of supporting the creation of new family psychology training programs. This is essential to the formal recognition of family psychology as a Developed Practice Area by the Commission for the Recognition of Specialties and Proficiencies in Professional Psychology (CRSPPP). I propose to form a subcommittee that will work with the Family Psychology Specialty Council towards that goal. This subcommittee will also be responsible for informing the public about the specialty of family psychology, through publications and modern technology.

Last, I wish to extend a warm welcome to doctoral students, interns, early career psychologists (ECPs) and full members who are interested in the activities of our Education Committee and subcommittees. It is my hope that the EC will grow and accomplish most of its goals in 2012, to meet the educational and training needs of our division. If you are interested, please email me at scheung@apu.edu as soon as possible! Thanks!

References
Family Psychology Science
...And All That Jazz

“It don’t mean a thing if it ain’t got that swing.”

—Duke Ellington

Following Marianne Celano’s metaphor of jazz and family psychology, we might ask what part does science play in the jazz of family psychology?

“Science and jazz” at first blush, seems to be an oxymoronic notion. “Science” is “a systematic enterprise that builds and organizes knowledge in the form of testable explanations and predictions about the universe.”(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Science) “Jazz” is “the ethereal atmosphere of the dimensional harmony created by kaleidoscope of chromatic tones … the pulsating back beat of syncopating African rhythms through the rumble of the drums, or soft sound of the brush to the snare…personal…from the soul…” (http://www.jazz123.info/the-essence-of-jazz-music.php). Hmm…

It is likely that many see science and research as dampening the power and freedom of the “jazz practitioner” of family therapy. Science and research can be truly boring, repetitive and stultifying as a process. There is a lot of bean counting and data analysis … but the practical necessities of the field of family psychology makes science an obligation. It can serve to demonstrate the efficacy of family treatment and thus provide credibility for family therapy as an evidenced based practice. Perhaps the family researcher is a drummer who keeps a steady beat and strings together the integrity of the jazz of family psychology. Surely this is an instrumental role.

But to quote the Duke (and I don’t mean John Wayne) … “It don’t mean a thing if it ain’t got that swing”.

Science can swing. Marianne notes that the “appeal of live jazz is the discovery of unique improvisations arising out of the musical interplay among a group of musicians.” I would propose that family science and research ought to strive not only to demonstrate efficacy of family treatment, but to inspire the “discovery of unique improvisations, arising out of the interplay of diverse groups of musicians.” “Unique improvisations?” Yes… new observations and vibrant innovative theory and practice. How might that work? Through “the musical interplay among a group of musicians”, i.e., from “jazzy” improvisation of family psychology artists and scientists.

Family science and research can, and should, be the steady vibrant drumbeat that drives along the process of inspiration and improvisation. It can also be the wailing sax soaring to new heights of excitement and promise of transformation and transcendence of current theory. But how?

I propose that the key to the “swing” in jazz and in the progression of the art and science of family psychology, is in the diversity of the players, the playing and new talent. Creativity in science has always come from cross-fertilization of ideas from diverse fields, and from being in the right place at the right time, with the right people. I will unpack this metaphor.

In jazz, innovation and inspiration comes in part from the fusion with other types of music. I believe that family psychology would thrive from interfacing clinically and in scientific collaboration with those from other specialties. I propose that in the next few years, members of Division 43, and the Division as a whole, reach out to connect with other divisions that
may be fertile ground for family and systems ideas and practice, and also seminal influences on family psychology through the inspiration of alternative theories, methods of inquiry, and approaches to the human condition. But I wouldn’t stop there. I believe that looking beyond, and inviting connections beyond APA is important. Family psychiatry has finally taken at least a toe-hold in the “other APA” and in AACAP (American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry). The young professionals and students in those professions are hungry for knowledge about family theory and practice, and there is food for thought for family psychologists available in these professions, too. Pediatrics and geriatrics are also natural avenues for innovative exchange. The Society for Research in Child Development does some of the most exciting developmental family systems research. Cultural anthropology and ethnography are also fertile grounds. I am sure there are others. I would like to invite each of you reading this article to think about one division, organization, or individual in some field of inquiry that you think could foster jazzy improvisation for family psychology. Then facilitate that connection yourself, and let us at Division 43 have your suggestions.

Who would be the most likely “players” to bring “swing” to the jazz of family psychology science? In addition to those who think differently from us, I suggest that enticing new young talent is crucial: Those who have not already been channeled into conventional ways of thinking and theorizing about family psychology; those who have diverse training and personal backgrounds. I am under the impression that young family scientists see Division 43 as primarily a clinically focused organization, and therefore may not see the division as a place to come together to improvise. They may not realize that they are welcome, and that engaging with other researchers and clinicians in family psychology jazz improvisation can inspire both the art of the science and the science of the art of family psychology. Division 43 can be “the right place at the right time” for great jazz.

As incoming VP for science, I would ask each one of you reading this article to think of one young investigator, in a family or family-relevant research discipline, and take them to lunch or coffee to have a little “jazz” session of your own with them. See how the conversation may be inspiring to you and your work and see how you might be able to entice them help orchestrate an even more vibrant Division of Family Psychology.

Finally, I invite you all to email me (Bwood@buffalo.edu) any ideas or suggestions for how to bring the “swing” to family psychology science... and all that jazz.

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Vice-President for Public Interest & Diversity:
Gonzalo Bacigalupe, Ed.D., MPH

Adding, Not the Same as Including:
Making Family Research Relevant for All

This article is in response to Marianne Celano’s address. It describes my personal reflections on the idea of jamming and playing jazz as it relates to the plight of the most vulnerable communities. As a researcher that holds a strong allegiance to a non-dominant group, I have had the opportunity to become a member of the privileged. However, I am often reminded that I am truly not a part of the ruling class. Despite being
a highly educated tenured faculty member, I can still be a subaltern—the other. Every now and then, a university adjunct professor will automatically assume that I am one of the cleaning staff and will address me as such if I speak Spanish with the Dominican janitor who picks up the trash every evening at my office. In the struggle with marginalization, as one of the few professors in my college who can claim a similar heritage to the janitor (although he cannot claim some of my privileges), I am often compelled to name reality, to deconstruct it, and to be attentive to what is silencing the vulnerable. Being a subaltern, therefore, makes me particularly aware of institutionalized “isms” and being able to see what is generally invisible to the privileged is nothing less than a privilege too. It teaches me to pay attention to how stereotypes define people and how institutionalized racism continues to play a role in educational and healthcare institutions. Indeed, the social events following Katrina in New Orleans has taught us that we are still struggling with the basic constituting elements of institutionalized racism in which researchers and clinicians continue to participate.

My role as peer reviewer, regular editorial board member, ad-hoc reviewer, or associate editor of *Family, System, & Health* (an APA publication), is one of my privileges. Reviewing submissions offers an extraordinary opportunity to learn about the cutting edge of clinical practice, theory, and research, and to determine in large measure what we think is relevant knowledge in our field. Submitting a manuscript for publication is daunting for most of us. Editing and peer reviewing, although easier, does not constitute a lesser challenge. Reviewing requires evaluating the appropriateness of an article for a particular journal, and establishing the significance of the problem, the soundness of the proposed research, the rigor of the methods, as well as the potential contribution of the proposed article to the field that the journal readers represent. Does the proposed paper make a difference in the daily lives of people? Will it have an impact on their actual circumstances? To what extent does the knowledge it contains contribute to our understanding of the most vulnerable and to what extent does the research respond to the needs of non-majority families? These are core questions that lead me to share a few thoughts about the identity of our research participants, our approach towards the communities they belong to, and the inclusion of non-majority researchers and consultants.

Most researchers are aware that being color or race blind is not admissible anymore in social science research. However, it is common to read in the discussion section of scientific articles that more research is needed to determine whether the results (or program, measure, approach) are applicable to non-majority populations. In most cases, the research participants are either White middle class families and/or the minority populations have been collapsed into a large sub-group. The inclusive nature of a sample, however, does not only depend on adding members of a minority group and then claiming that the sample is representative of human diversity.

Research seldom provides a nuanced analysis of the intersection of social, economic, and cultural markers. Grouping largely heterogeneous communities under one identity label is one of the most pervasive methodological and epistemological errors I have encountered. Latinos and Asian Americans are identified as one population and compared to White families regardless of social class, skin color, ethnic identity, and immigration status. For instance, families in which several members are English language learners are wrongly or inconsistently identified and characterized as part of one population (i.e., Latinos). Errors of this kind could be prevented if from the start of a research project, researchers consulted and included scientists who know or have a close relationship with non-majority groups. These scientists would most likely contribute to enhance the validity of scientific interpretations. In addition, inclusive research may require the use of qualitative methods in traditional quantitative studies, in order to assess the generalizability of the results and to determine whether research measures have an alienating effect on diverse communities. Research methods that only emphasize internal validity—which often translates into recruiting very homogeneous non-minority samples—run the risk of neglecting the historical context and actual needs of families. Mixed methods that triangulate the data and address the nuanced differences that exist among minority groups are not only sound methodologically but also ethically necessary.
Qualitative research designs are not free from some of the same errors. The purpose of qualitative research is to learn from the lived experience of participants and to develop an in-depth understanding of the meaning attached to that experience. However, we need to be aware of the potential bias associated with the socio-cultural composition of the research team. A team that is not representative of the sample may have a biased view of normality defined by the experience of dominant social groups. They may not be able to interpret the data from the perspective of the families they study. The hermeneutic and reflexive dialogue that qualitative research calls for is muted, as the researchers describe the other without consideration of their own social positioning in the research project. This has serious implications not only for the validity of the research findings but also for the development of culturally sensitive clinical and policy practices. Positionality is no longer a philosophical or ideological issue; it is central in the assessment of the quality and significance of the research.

Jamming in jazz is at its best when a diverse group of musicians both understand the music and are willing to be inclusive of everyone in the band. Learning about the skills of the other while also playing reminds me of research that takes seriously the complexities of privilege and inequality. As a researcher or practitioner who is part of a privileged group in the Society of Family Psychology (most of the membership belongs to this group), to what extent do you attend to the inclusion of minority populations in your research team, in your research samples, and to what extent do you consider the significance of your research for these communities? What are the challenges associated with inclusion, for the few of you who like me conduct research or consume it to inform your clinical work? Have you volunteered to be an ad-hoc reviewer when calls are announced or when you meet a journal editor? or co-editor?

International Family Therapy Association

20th World Family Therapy Congress
March 21-24, 2012

An exciting, stimulating, invigorating international gathering of family therapists/psychologists/psychiatrists is scheduled for March 2012 at the Sheraton Vancouver Wall Hotel. This meeting is the 20th Congress of the International Family Therapy Association (IFTA). IFTA was born in 1987 at an international family therapy convention in Prague, then the capital of Czechoslovakia. It held its first World Congress in 1989. Its conferences are relatively small, especially compared to APA — usually fewer than 1,000 people who come from a variety of countries. (Between 20 and 60 nations are represented.)

Division 43 members are strongly encouraged to attend, as they will find the conference program to be of much interest and value and will have multiple opportunities to interact with international attendees and presenters formally and informally. Florence Kaslow, the founding and first president (1897-1991) of IFTA, will present the opening address on March 21 and do a Super Saturday half-day workshop on Divorce Around the World. The program also includes top-notch plenary speakers such as Sue Johnson, John Gottman, Julie Gottman, and John Banmen. Douglas Sprenkle is leading a full day pre-conference workshop on family research. Bill Nichols, Florence Kaslow and Terry Trepper have convened the International Editors Group for a meeting during the conference.

So plan to venture across our northern border and expand your horizons by networking with colleagues from around the globe. For further information go to the IFTA website www.ifta-congress.org. We hope to see many of you there. Come on along and become an International Family Psychologist.

—Florence W. Kaslow, Ph.D., ABPP
—William C. Nichols, Ed.D., ABPP
Religion has influenced human behavior throughout history and it is estimated that somewhere between 68.08% and 88.74% of the current world population (4.54 - 5.92 billion people) profess some religious faith (List of religious populations, 2010). Most studies on religion and the family (79% and 76% of marital and parenting studies, respectively; Mahoney, 2010) use one or two items to measure religious variables (e.g., affiliation, attendance, self-rated importance). Although these studies generally show that religiosity is related to several positive outcomes in family relationships, they yield small effect sizes. Moreover, such studies are subject to multiple interpretations (e.g., they may simply reflect selection effects, the operation of third variables such as social support and so on) and provide little information about what specific, modifiable aspects of religious behavior are associated with positive outcomes. The need to identify specific religious behaviors that influence family outcomes is apparent.

Central to most religions is the practice of prayer and many individuals use prayer spontaneously to cope with their problems, including family problems. But because prayer “has been largely marginalized by social scientists who study religion” (Dein & Littlewood, 2008, p.39), little is known about prayer and close relationships. This seems unfortunate, even if it is understandable in the context of the common fear that the study of prayer could prove career threatening for academic psychologists. It is particularly unfortunate if it removes a potential tool from the kit of marital and family psychologists.

Theoretical Perspective.

In light of these observations, an analysis was developed of colloquial, petitionary prayer for the partner (CPP-P), a form of prayer that invokes God’s help for the partner in response to specific needs, using the individuals own language rather than a set or

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1 This work was supported by a grant from the John Templeton Foundation.

2 Throughout I use the term “God” to refer generically to a range of conceptions of the deity, higher power, or transcendent aspects of life typically associated with spirituality. The usage is intended to be inclusive.
standardized prayer. Although colloquial prayer is common, we do not know how often it is spontaneously focused on the partner. Anecdotal evidence suggests that CPP-P may be far less common that colloquial prayer for other purposes, and even when focused on the partner, colloquial prayer may often be used to ask for change in the partner. In contrast, the focus of the CPP-P is other-directed and centers on the partner’s well being (asking God to do good things for the partner, envelope the partner in God’s love and so on).

Central to the analysis are motivational processes, specifically the goals pursued by relationship partners as they are a possible mechanism linking prayer to relationship outcomes. Prayer could influence choice of goals and thereby the intentions and willingness to engage in particular behaviors that can either support or undermine relationship functioning. Fincham and Beach (1999) noted that motivational processes may be particularly influential for the course of relationship conflict as well as recovery from negative interactions that have already occurred. They hypothesized that during destructive interactions couples commonly switch from the cooperative goals they profess and believe most of the time, to emergent goals that are adversarial in nature. For example, rather than generate a “couple-level” solution to the problem, partners locked in conflict may find themselves focused on getting their way—or at least focused on not losing the argument to the other partner. Practitioners often work to help couples deal with such situations which can, if unchecked, rapidly escalate into increasingly negative behavior exchange.

Carrying this analysis a step further, Beach and colleagues (2008) offer a conceptual framework in which they argue that spiritual activities, such as prayer for a relationship partner, can function in ways that are consistent with the aims of traditional skills-based interventions. That is, when utilized in the context of conflict, prayer can provide a time during which the partner can self-soothe and during which cooperative goals can regain their dominance, replacing revenge-oriented or competition-oriented motives. Likewise, prayer may have the added advantage of providing what can be considered a profound form of social support and attachment security by reaffirming a connection to a dependable attachment figure and so decreasing the impact of negative partner behavior.

Prayer may also directly foster some goals, decrease the attractiveness of other goals, or be used to deactivate problematic emergent goals. First, intentions, representing conscious goal states, directly influence behavioral choices, and are themselves influenced by beliefs about what significant others would think of one’s behavior. Because prayer highlights the view of a particularly important significant other (God), it has the potential to bring behavioral intentions under pressure to conform to the belief that God loves one’s partner. If so, there could be downstream effects on behavior toward the partner across a range of settings. A second motivational influence may result from the potential for prayer to prime “implemental intentions” (i.e., plans or means of achieving a desired goal) that can powerfully affect future behavior. As a result, there is considerable potential for prayer to influence motivation, intentions, and implemental intentions, enhancing relationship promoting intentions as well as the probability of following through on those intentions.

In addition, prayer that helps focus attention on God’s love for the partner, and one’s own wishes to be a vehicle of God’s love, has the potential to enhance a range of relationship enhancing behaviors, facilitating constructive communication or other positive behavior in the relationship. For example, regular focus on God’s love for the partner can be expected to facilitate the propensity to forgive and exit from negative cycles of interaction that might otherwise become self-maintaining.

Basic Research. Initial research informed by this framework documented an association between prayer and positive relationship functioning. Unless otherwise stated, participants were young adults screened to identify those who prayed at least occasionally. The findings therefore pertain largely to romantic relationships in emerging adulthood. We began by showing that prayer predicted relationship satisfaction (both concurrently and over time) over and beyond positive and negative behavior in the relationship and that commitment mediated the prayer-satisfaction association (Fincham, Beach et al., 2008). Although encouraging, such correlational research provided weak evidence for inferring direction of effects.

Subsequent research therefore incorporated experimental designs. Participants were randomly assigned to pray for the partner or to comparison conditions such as describing the partner to a parent or meditating on the partner’s positive qualities. In some studies we have even used as a comparison condition undirected
prayer (“just pray as you normally would each day for the next four weeks”). We have consistently docu-
mented that CPP-P has a greater impact on the relationship than any of the comparison conditions. Here is an example of the instruc-
tions we use in our studies and a sample prayer.

“Please read the example prayer below to get an idea of the type of prayer we would like you to pray on behalf of your partner:

Dear Lord,

Thank you for all the things that are going well in my life and in my relationship. Please con-
tinue to protect and guide my partner, providing strength and direction every day. I know you are the source of all good things. Please bring those good things to my partner and make me a bless-
ing in my partner’s life. Amen.

Now, please generate your own prayer in your own words on behalf of the well-being of your ro-
mantic partner and in the space below write a short description about what you prayed for.”

The above instructions illustrate those used when partici-
pants come to the laboratory and engage in a single prayer ses-
sion. A bit artificial? Yes, it is! And that is why we always replicate what we find in the laboratory using longer term, diary studies in which participants are asked to pray each day for a month. We ask participants to make online reports twice a week during the month. That way we can be confident that they are following study instructions.

One set of studies provided support for the idea, articulated earlier, that prayer increases will-
ingness to forgive a transgres-
sion by the partner (Lambert, Fincham, et al., 2010). This is im-
portant because in relationships such as marriage the probability of being hurt by one’s spouse at some point is very high, and that hurt is likely to be all the more poignant as we make ourselves particularly vulnerable in close re-
lationships. It is little wonder then that it has been said that a happy marriage is the union of two good forgivers. In these studies we doc-
umented that prayer led to high levels of agape or selfless love and that this love led to greater will-
ingness to forgive.

But, one could argue, as we did, that such findings might simply reflect self-report biases such as socially desirable responding. That is why we went on to show that prayer following a partner transgression influenced actual behavior in response to the trans-
gression. Participants were exposed to a partner transgression in the laboratory. Then after pray-
ing (or engaging in a control ac-
tivity) participants were given the chance to cooperate with or an-
tagonize their partner in a com-
puter game. Those who prayed were more cooperative than control participants who instead of praying had been asked to think about the nature of God.

Increasing forgiveness is all very well but what if it is not even noticed by the partner? In such circumstances it might have a limited or even null effect on the relationship. Therefore in another study we tested whether partners of participants who prayed over the course of four weeks reported the participants (i.e. the member of the dyad doing the praying) as more forgiving. Apparently prayer had a strong enough effect on participants’ forgiving behavior to be perceived by the partners; participants were rated as more forgiv-
ing at the end of the study. But the impact of prayer is not limited to forgiveness.

Successful relationships also require partners who are will-
ing to sacrifice selfish interests for the good of the partner and the relationship. A series of stud-
ies therefore investigated the ef-
fect of prayer on satisfaction with sacrifice in a close relationship; prayer for the partner was related to satisfaction with sacrifice both concurrently and longitudinally (Lambert, Fincham & Stanley, in press). Importantly, individ-
uals randomly assigned to pray were more satisfied with sacrific-
ing than those assigned to a con-
trol condition, and in a further study, experimentally manipulat-
ed prayer after a confl ictual inter-
action increased satisfaction with sacrifice. In addition those who prayed reported fewer emergent goals and greater couple identi-
ty than control participants, and both emergent goals and couple identity mediated the relationship between prayer and sacrifice. In a final study, objective observers rated those who were randomly
assigned to pray for the partner over a four week period as being more satisfied with sacrifice than those who daily engaged in positive thoughts about their partner.

The foregoing studies supported the hypothesis that prayer for the partner could facilitate positive relationship outcomes, but left untested the hypothesis that prayer might protect against risk factors for relationship dissolution. A critical risk factor for relationship dissolution is cheating or infidelity. In a recent set of studies we were able to show that, relative to undirected prayer and positive thought conditions, those assigned to the CPP-P condition showed decreased extra-dyadic behavior over the course of the study (Fincham, Lambert & Beach, 2010). Again, in one of the studies in this series, we were able to show that those who were randomly assigned to pray were rated differently by trained research assistant coders, blind to study hypotheses and the condition to which the participant was assigned. Specifically those who had prayed for four weeks were rated as more committed to the relationship which helps explain why there was less cheating during this period even when taking into account baseline rates of cheating.

Primary Prevention.

Finally, we conducted a randomized clinical trial to determine whether adding prayer to an established prevention program with well-documented efficacy improved maintenance of intervention gains (Beach, Hurt, et al., 2011). A sample of 393 African American married couples were randomly assigned to (a) a culturally sensitive version of the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP) that included consideration of the effects of discrimination on couple relationships; (b) the same program with an additional focus on prayer (PFP condition); or (c) an information-only control condition in which couples received a self-help version of PREP. Assessments were conducted before the intervention, immediately after it was completed, and 6 months and 12 months later. There was no reliable change as a function of time in the self-help control group. Considering the two intervention groups, it suffices to note that even though wives began at similar starting points they showed differing outcome patterns over time depending on the intervention. There was significantly greater change from pre- to post-test in the PFP condition than traditional PREP condition, indicating a more rapid initial change process in PFP that resulted in marginally better outcome even at 12 month follow-up. Because husbands showed equal improvement across the two intervention conditions, this study yielded only partial support for the hypothesis that prayer would improve maintenance of intervention gains over time. Nonetheless, it points to one way in which prayer might be relevant to practitioners working with couples.

Beach et al. (2008) offered an analysis of the role prayer might play in couple therapy arguing that “prayer-based alternatives are available that meet many of the key objectives of emotion regulation as taught in marital skill training” (Beach et al., 2008, p. 647). They illustrated how prayer might offer some advantages over therapist directed time-out from conflict or similar anger management techniques. In addition, prayer provides a behavior that partners are likely to remember to execute when experiencing strong emotions, and one that can help them return to a state of mind in which using relationship skills seems more attractive than destructive behavior. Thus, prayer may be useful in dealing with important affective processes that skills-training methods do not always handle well. The availability of such alternative approaches to marital intervention is useful because they can provide needed flexibility in working with couples. For example, it may be useful to have an approach to couple intervention that will resonate more with those who are highly spiritual in their approach to life as these clients prefer therapy that in some way includes their belief system and they view clinicians who integrate religion into therapy more optimistically and as more competent than prayer might offer some advantages over therapist directed time-out from conflict or similar anger management techniques.”
clinicians who do not (Aten & Hernandez, 2004).

Beach et al. (2008) also argue that prayer can be used as an addition to traditional skill-based couple interventions. This is important because couples who learn relevant skills often do not use them when a conflict of interest arises and emergent goals dominate. These authors argue that prayer highlights the view of an important “other” and thereby engages motivational processes that increase the ability to effectively handle emergent goals. Because of this, it is concluded that adding prayer to traditional interventions for religious clients is likely to increase their efficacy. The claims made by Beach et al. (2008) were challenged in several critiques published immediately following their article.

Conclusion.
The research described suggests that prayer may play an important role in close relationships such as marriage. Applied research on the use of prayer in a marital intervention provides some evidence to support the view that spiritually and religiously informed programs may have a potential edge because gains may be naturally reinforced by the individual’s ongoing spiritual and religious commitment and by the religious community within which he or she is situated. However, there are critical judgment calls to be made when targeting spiritual and religious behaviors for intervention and not all family psychologists will be comfortable dealing with them. Given the emerging evidence that CPP-P can be useful for some purposes, for some couples, it seems problematic to exclude it from the marital and family therapist’s tool kit. Rather, this may be the time to develop a range of clinician and couple friendly approaches (e.g., see the Prayer Journal: Like a Tree Planted by the Water on the PREP website). Incorporating spiritual issues in interventions is fraught with danger, but failure to do so may be a disservice to many who seek our help.

References

Family Life Cycle – General Concept

The family life cycle focuses on the transitions families experience as they progress through phases of development such as a family with infant, toddler, early childhood, latency, adolescent, emerging adult, and mid and later periods. During each of these transitions, the family system re-organizes – adjusting the operating rules, roles, responsibilities, communications processes and boundaries to meet the changing developmental needs of the individual members and the family as a whole, and to adapt to the ever-changing community and larger sociocultural systems. There may be a number of events that are happening in a family at the same time. For example, one child may be entering elementary school while another is starting adolescence. How a family navigates the family life cycle is influenced by multiple factors, including the parents’ stage of individual development, health, class, religion, ethnicity, educational level, sexual orientation, generational and geographical variables.

The concept of the family life cycle is useful because it informs families about the tasks and issues of different developmental phases and helps normalize behaviors such as the rebellion of a teenager. The concept suggests that issues not dealt with successfully at one phase of development are likely to show up at later phases. If an adult child has not separated and individuated from his/her family of origin we might expect difficulties when this person marries and becomes a parent. Today there are many variant forms of “family” who may have additional specific developmental issues to manage.

Events that Alter the Family Life Cycle

The series of expected events frequently does not unfold in a typical sequence because other events occur such as illness and death or dislocations of the family unit. These events may affect a family differently according to the phase of the life cycle that the family is in at that time. In the next paragraphs, we examine the developmental challenges associated with two phases of divorce, the divorce and the post-divorce family, as discussed in Carter and McGoldrick (1988).

Separation and Divorce

In the Separation/Divorce Phase, turmoil is especially expected since emotions are more likely to be raw at this time and there may be greater and faster changes in the structure, roles and rules of the family. When thinking of divorce most people focus on the legal divorce. Actually there are a number of aspects in a divorce that the couple will deal with. For simplicity we will consider four components of a divorce; emotional, legal, psychological, and economic (adopted from Kaslow & Schwartz, 1987). We should note that one aspect of divorce may be completed while other aspects may be uncompleted or only partially completed:
Emotional – The emotions involved with deciding to divorce or learning that your spouse wants to divorce, and then going through the divorce process.

Legal – The steps taken to obtain a legal divorce. This may involve the litigation-court process or alternative resolution processes like collaborative divorce or divorce mediation.

Economic – The economic agreements made during the divorce including the possible change in economic circumstances involved with separation/divorce, and the readjustment after the divorce.

Psychic – the feelings about one self and one’s identity, change in life style, finding a new love object, helping family and children accept and adjust to the divorce. The children and family as a whole need to deal with the issues cited above, particularly the emotional and psychological components of the divorce. A similar process may take place in the extended family. We may want to take larger views of the extended family dealing with the separation/divorce that expand to include the community.

The formal divorce is a nodal event for the family and a signal that hopes or fantasies about the parents reconciling will not come true. Temporary living arrangements are likely to become permanent. The actual divorce occurring pushes the family to readjust and move on.

Most families weather the storm of separation and divorce and readjust without lasting profound effects on the family members. It is important, however, to realize that divorce represents a major challenge for parents and children of any age, including fully grown adult children. Parents sometimes fail to realize the full impact of divorce on adolescents and adult offspring. Divorce affects their self-identities, their ideas about self-in-relations, their feelings of trusting, security and stability. Divorce alters their views and expectations of the future, despite their perhaps seeming to be “cool with it.”

A divorce impacts families differently depending on the life stage of the family, the type of attachment to the parents, amount of conflict and the sense of autonomy of the children - i.e. the impact is expected to be different with young children, latency age and adolescent children – and whether one of the parents does not want the divorce, etc. Research indicates that high conflict, including the amount and duration of it, has the worst affect on the family. In a previous article Grossman (2006) recommended that the post-divorce adjustment of the family be a major consideration for lawyers, judges and clinicians.

While young children have little say about their parents’ decisions, their powerlessness can put them in a very vulnerable position. They may feel that they caused the divorce and their behaviors may regress. Parents often do not realize how much children sense and that their imaginations are more potent than “the realities.” So, in an attempt to protect children, parents may be vague and unclear in what they do communicate.

Post-Divorce Phase

In this phase changes are hopefully thought out, better planned and take place at a slower pace. The family needs to re-stabilize as a divorce family. However, many profound changes may take place as other people enter the family.

1. The new family structure

A new structure as a bimodal family with different rules, roles and parenting styles necessarily develops in relation to the divorce. How these changes are planned and communicated, how consistently the parents are able to co-parent and not draw their children into post-divorce conflict will affect the children’s adjustment. Children of various ages may take or try to take different roles in the divorced family. Older children and adolescents may have more voice in restructuring the family – visitation, living arrangements, etc. For example, an adolescent may try to take the “man-of-the-house” role in relation to the now single mother. While adolescents have their peer group and own activities
outside of the family, they may attempt to protect siblings and the more vulnerable parent and this may impede their adolescent differentiation from the family – or in other instances the divorce may speed the differentiation. Adolescents, or other children, may also resort to acting-out or symptomatic behaviors in order to alleviate family tensions, to distract parents from their conflicts.

Offsprings in their twenties – emerging adulthood in today’s world – are likely to feel caught between wanting to “help” their families and establishing a career and personal relationships. They still need parental support – emotional and sometimes financial –, and role confusion can impede their self differentiation. Adult offspring may have their own families and feel caught in the “sandwich generation” of changing involvement and responsibilities due to their parents’ divorce. As more older adults divorce, physical, emotional and financial caretaking of the divorced parent may be a major disruption.

The post-divorce period for offsprings of any age will result in changed lifestyles for some family members, possible new relationships and remarriages and all of the necessary changes and adaptations occurring for blended and remarried families. Family loyalties, the collision of fantasy and reality are challenged. Adulthood is no protection for the discomfort, disorientation and pain associated with the collapse of the family-of-origin.

2. New members entering the family.
   The parents and children may need to adjust to parent(s) dating, possibly bringing another adult love object into the house or remarrying. This may bring other children into the family such as a stepparent’s children, half brothers or sisters. Thus family may have an addition of a step parent(s), or may become a blended family.

References

International Roving Report

Florence W. Kaslow, Ph.D., ABPP

Family Life in the Enchanting Polynesian Islands

This column is being written while I am sitting at a lovely beachside hotel resort on Moorea – one of the magnificent Society Islands in the South Seas. It is easy to understand why Paul Gauguin, James Michener, Marlon Brando, and scores of others from the western world were captivated by the sheer lush scenic beauty of these gorgeous, fertile islands that arose out of volcanic ash centuries ago. They are a maze of colorful, blooming fruit trees and tropical plants, quite wondrous to
behind. The mountains that arise out of the sea on Bora Bora, Tahiti, Moorea, etc., are breathtaking. And so are the soft spoken, gracious, and hospitable Polynesian people.

Each main island community has the equivalent of a pre-kindergarten (2 ½-5 years of age) and primary school (6-10 years of age). We had the opportunity to observe children playing in the elementary school yard enclaves at recess; it seemed like free and easy childhood play of tag, ball, jump rope, and hide and seek. Sophisticated equipment did not appear to be needed, nor was there much adult supervision. The play seemed to flow peacefully and effortlessly. How refreshing to observe and “sense”.

Not each community or Island has a high school so the children have to travel to continue their formal education in what is equivalent to our high school (ages 11-16). Their informal education occurs under the aegis of the family as it has traditionally – working with parents mostly in agriculture, fishing, the cultured black pearly industry, or on vanilla bean or pineapple plantations. Since tourism is the Number One industry and source of revenue, many young people seek positions in the hotels, on Air Tahiti Nui, in the boating side of tourism – sometimes using family craft or in commercial fishing.

Being multi-lingual is important. At home and school the children learn Polynesian – and the different dialects spoken on their own Island. In school they also take French and English and can study Spanish, German, and Chinese as electives. Thus they are prepared to welcome visitors and help boost the attraction of tourism to their multi-island paradise which, like so many other areas of the world, has seen a decline in the number of visitors since the recession of 2008.

One university was built in Papeete, the capital city of Tahiti, in the last two decades. Apparently there are no special entrance exams and students receive scholarships from the French Government, under whose rule Polynesia falls. Education, like health care, is provided for all, if they go on to college and then to a graduate professional school in another country, right after finishing university. If they take a break and decide to resume their education at a later time, then they must pay for it personally. Unless someone has a minimum of a college education and is at least bilingual, few good paying jobs are available and life on the islands is expensive even compared to the cost of living in the U.S. We were told no one starves as fruit grows abundantly, seemingly everywhere, and everyone has chickens and roosters, to eat the poisonous insects and supply food, and can catch fish. Nonetheless, there is quite a bit of poverty.

Enlistment of all men into the French military ended within the past decade (or so we were informed). However, many of the men join the French Army voluntarily as it provides good discipline, education and skills training, pays a better wage than one can earn in civilian life and offers an opportunity to travel – which many Polynesians covet and could not otherwise afford. The initial enlistment period is five years and can be renewed for two additional ten-year terms.

As is true of people serving in the military forces of most countries, a certain percentage of service people marry non-Polynesian women they meet during a tour of duty. In addition, people who visit the languorous, lovely islands “fall in love” with someone beautiful here and with the mesmerizing climate and topography and decide to settle here. Thus, quite a number of the families in the more metropolitan areas have one to several mixed marriages within their extended family. In Tahiti, if the parents disapprove, the young adults move out and set up their own households. Cohabitation, which would have been totally spurned and ostracized until relatively recently, is becoming more frequent in the major metropolitan areas. On the smaller, less inhabited islands and in the more rural areas of the larger islands, the extended family form still predominates. Couples traditionally had six to eight children to insure help on the farm and in the house, and enough children to care for them when they become infirm and/or elderly. Now couples have fewer children, by agreement; the average seems to be four per family. But senior parents now worry about who will provide for them and adult children are concerned about how they will handle the burden. Senior living facilities do not seem to exist here. A new 400-bed hospital recently opened on Tahiti; it does not seem that the other islands in the archipelago have hospitals so in case of emergency people fly in for treatment on the domestic airline.

Singing, dancing, and music are provided by playing instruments like drums, guitars, ukuleles, and violins. This is a major part of the culture for big celebrations and the weekly family Friday night get-togethers – mostly at home barbeques with oodles of (local) beer drinking. (Alcoholic spirits are too expensive). Both boys and girls learn the Polynesian dances at home from the time they are very young and then
can also take this as an elective at school or pursue it elsewhere. The dance troupes are colorful, exciting, sensuous, rhythmic, and wonderful to watch. At the end of a performance guests are invited to participate and the welcoming communal spirit is contagious. No wonder Gauguin ultimately settled in this colorful, free spirited world. The Gauguin Museum in Papeete featuring his works is excellent and once Brando arrived here to make Mutiny on the Bounty, he never wanted to leave. The legends live on. And strong family ties live on and are celebrated. Some families even keep the casket of a beloved deceased relative on the front lawn so they are always nearby and can be present at festivities. The young are loved; the elderly are respected and venerated. And there seems to be much joy and harmony everywhere.

Student Corner:

Allison B. Hill, J.D., M.S.

I would like to introduce myself. My name is Allison Hill, and I am the incoming student representative for Division 43. I am a law-psychology student who completed my J.D. from Villanova Law School and am finishing my Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology at Drexel University. I am currently on internship in Atlanta at Emory School of Medicine/Grady Health System. I am honored to fill the shoes of former student representative Kendra Jones by continuing her work in increasing the voice of students in Division 43 through membership, outreach and networking. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or comments regarding student membership, joining the student committee, or my columns.

—Allison B. Hill, Esq., Student Representative

From Preparation to Action: Becoming a Family Psychologist

I did not begin graduate school with the intention of becoming a family psychologist. However, as my predecessor, Kendra Jones, mentioned in her column from Fall 2009, what makes family psychology unique is the acknowledgment of a systems approach. Individuals do not exist within a vacuum - and, while simple interpersonal relatedness is the basic requirement for growth and development, psychological health and well being require a great deal more of these interpersonal relationships. They should be realistic, mutually satisfying and balanced. An individual’s general distress and symptoms are often the result of core conflicts of underlying anxiety in interpersonal relationships. Thus, I have realized that I cannot approach my clients as individuals, but must view them within the context of a greater system. And, one of the core systems in an individual’s life is that of the family.

For those of you familiar with the transtheoretical model of behavior change, I would say that I am moving from “preparation” to “action.” I view my narrow focus on the individual as my problem behavior, and have been working through a series of stages to incorporate a systems approach into my therapeutic style. One of the aspects of my new role as student representative that I am the most excited about...
is my ability to reach out to graduate students and early career psychologists to figure out where they are in the “process” of incorporating a systems approach into their therapeutic style, what has helped them along the way, and how the Division might provide more assistance in the future.

As part of my “preparation,” I reached out to many graduate students and early career psychologists for insights about why they identify with family psychology. Jennifer Serico, a graduate student at Drexel University, stated, “As someone who intends to treat at-risk, underserved children and adolescents in my career, I believe it is essential to pursue a career as a family psychologist. Children and adolescents are involved in many systems, but the family is the first and the most integral. In treating children and adolescents, I incorporate family therapy into all of my cases.” Richard Mattson, an assistant professor at Auburn University, responded, “To be an effective clinical psychologist … one must nest conceptualization and treatment in the context of family and relational processes and structures. Whether or not I’m working with individual, dyad, or family units; it is this particular theoretical vantage point – ultimately and in both applied and research settings – that identifies me as a family psychologist.” Kelci Flowers, a graduate student at the University of Georgia, identifies with family psychology because, “I view all clients (children, adolescents, and adults) as a unit of their larger family system, wherein each family member is interconnected, yet independent of each other and no one can be understood in isolation from one another.”

I asked others about the impact of taking a systems approach, and Matthew Rouse, a graduate student at Emory University, replied, “Individual therapy can sometimes only yield limited benefits when the family system is problematic.” Matthew went on to say, “My advisor was really important in helping me realize this. She often said of work with children, ‘If there is no family involvement in the treatment, then what are you really doing?’ I always hear her voice in my ear!” Richard Mattson stated, “The influence of societal and cultural factors on individual functioning is to a large extent filtered through family life… It is important to connect the role of family and relationship functioning to individual behavior. The family is a nexus that links different important levels of analysis.”

Still, moving from “preparation” into “action” can be hard. It requires thoughtful reflection,

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**Announcements:**

Applications are invited for members to be recognized for

**Outstanding Contributions or Performance in the Field of Family Psychology**

Fellow status reflects colleague and APA recognition of extraordinary contributions to our discipline, and can support your clinical practice and professional development, as well as the promotion and tenure process.

Please see [http://www.division43apa.org/home/fellow](http://www.division43apa.org/home/fellow) for more details.
assessment of values, and a commitment to act. As previous student representatives have noted, finding training opportunities in Family Psychology can be challenging. As Dr. Celano, the new President of Division 43, states in her column, “Opportunities for supervised practice in Family Psychology often don’t emerge until internship and postdoctoral training; by this time, many trainees have identified themselves with a specialty or theoretical perspective that they perceive to be incompatible with Family Psychology.” However, training can present itself in multiple ways. Richard Mattson states, “My graduate training espoused a more generalist model to clinical training. I sought out clinical training in family therapy at various external practicum sites. In essence, I was taking a survey course in family psychology and treatment throughout my graduate career; as guided by various mentors, under which I had the privilege of training.”

Much energy and effort is required at the action stage. As the field of Family Psychology continues to evolve, it is our responsibility to identify ourselves as family practitioners and systemic thinkers. In my coming columns, I will try to highlight ways that we, as graduate students and early career psychologists, can get engaged in networking and mentoring opportunities, and find training opportunities through practicum, internships, or postdoctoral fellowships. Additionally, I plan to continue to talk to graduate students and early career psychologists to get ideas of how individuals are actively pursuing careers in family psychology. One of the first ways to get involved is to join Division 43. Through the Division, one may learn about opportunities for research and clinical training in family psychology at the internship and postdoctoral level, recent innovations and advances in clinical practice, and various networking and mentoring opportunities. Finally, consider joining the student committee and helping me plan relevant networking and mentoring events at the APA conventions over the next two years. I welcome any feedback or thoughts, and am excited to serve as the student representative!

References

Many thanks to my contributors:
Richard Mattson, an assistant professor in the Clinical Psychology program at Auburn University. Jennifer Serico, a 5th year doctoral graduate student in Clinical Psychology at Drexel University. Matthew Rouse, a 5th year doctoral graduate student in Clinical Psychology at Emory University. Kelci Flowers, a 4th year doctoral graduate student in Clinical Psychology at the University of Georgia.
This issue of The Reference Corner includes reviews of two books relevant for working with diverse populations in therapy: troubled adolescents and their families and the lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) population. The reader will surely find something of interest among these two books, Functional family therapy in clinical practice: An evidence-based treatment model for working with troubled adolescents and The initial psychotherapy interview: A gay man seeks treatment. Even though the second book is primarily about the initial interview of a gay man, his case is examined through the lens of different schools of therapy, including family systems.

If you are interested in serving as a reviewer for The Reference Corner, please email me your areas of interest. Contributors retain a complimentary copy of the book. If you are the author or editor of a new or upcoming book in family psychology that seems appropriate to review in this column, please send a copy to me to be considered for review as closely as possible to the publication date. Send books and galleys to: Marina Dorian, Ph.D., The Reference Corner, Column Editor, Alliant International University, California School of Professional Psychology, 10455 Pomerado Road, San Diego, CA 92131; E-mail: mdorian@alliant.edu.


Reviewed by Nancy S. Elman, Ph.D.

Functional Family Therapy (FFT) has been evolving for more than a couple of decades. For those unfamiliar with it, FFT is a family-based model for working with acting out or externalizing adolescents and their families, important because it focuses on some of the most difficult developmental challenges for families as well as recognizing the critical role of the ecosystem or larger community systems which influence both adolescents and their families. FFT has been well researched in laboratory settings and in large field applications and is well qualified, as the title of this book states, as an evidence-based treatment.

Author Thomas L. Sexton worked for many years with James Alexander, FFT’s founding researcher, has himself worked in the research and practice of FFT, and is eminently qualified to write this small but powerful text addressed to clinicians. Functional Family Therapy in Clinical Practice is a gem of a book – dense with useful information, thoughtful in its presentation of the background model and empirical research, organized and written in a highly readable manner. Essentially Tom takes the reader by the hand and explains the model and the research – with enough information to provide both context and documentation of its efficacy – and then walks us through what the model actually looks like in practice. In brief, the outcomes of FFT are not ideal but are what one might hope for: more and longer engagement in treatment; better behavioral outcomes, such as fewer out-of-home placements; fewer reoffenders (among index adolescents and their siblings); and cost effectiveness. Importantly for the field, FFT has been selected as a model program by
Okay, so it is easy for those of us in independent practice to get turned off here: it’s another highly researched model that gets results in the studies but probably doesn’t relate to day-to-day practice. Well don’t be tricked by whatever perceptions of the split between research and practice are out there. This book is an especially good example of the translation of research to practice that everyone who works with families can use.

Here’s how Tom Sexton accomplishes this: First, he details the clinical intervention model through its three specific phases, including the goals, strategies and challenge of each so that the clinician sees the how-to in close sequence. Several case examples of adolescents and their families help clarify this intervention sequence. Second, Tom repeatedly demonstrates how FFT is not some new arcane and dramatic enactment by charismatic guru therapists, but rather the skillful use of well-timed and well-honed interventions known to most reasonably competent family therapists.

The phases of FFT are: 1) Engaging Individuals and Motivating Families, 2) Behavior Change, and 3) Supporting, Generalizing and Maintaining Family Change. In a section entitled Practice of FFT, each of the three phases is carefully articulated. (As a side note, the effort to make this a practical articulation includes paginating each chapter rather than throughout the book so Chapter 4 is 4-1, 4-2, etc. While I find this personally a little annoying, it does enhance the workbook-like or blueprint quality of this presentation of FFT).

The model includes careful attention to risk and preventative factors for both the adolescent and the family, including the adolescent’s peer world, schools, and the community, sometimes referred to as the “package” of challenges that accompany the family into the waiting room (p. 1-6). Throughout the three phases of FFT specific tasks and goals are identified along with strategies that accomplish them. Strategies already familiar to practicing family psychologists include: Joining, motivation, re-framing (lots of reframing!) in phase one, parenting skills such as setting clear expectations and rules enforced with behavioral contingencies and conflict management in phase two, and consultation and interdisciplinary functioning in phase three, where the family’s connection to community institutions (e.g., schools) and social supports are crucial. Sexton defines the FFT therapist as a “translator,” whose mediating and moderating influence translates FFT to the clinic family, and case illustrations show how this is accomplished. The therapist in FFT is always working at 2 levels, the level of the model and what it calls for in each phase as a template or “manual” of operations, and the level of the family and how this must be accomplished within their concrete realities as the therapist influences them toward desired outcomes.

The final chapters of Functional Family Therapy address the challenges of translating a carefully researched model into community use, where as with most treatments the outcomes are less sharply effective. He cautions against adopting FFT based on one book or training workshop without supervision and a clinical/agency support system, and provides specific models and examples for both. His ecosystemic model makes sense as he links the need for good organizational functioning to “contain” the work of therapists, families and the larger systems within which they function.

Alan Gurman in his cover blurb on FFT says eloquently: “FFT is an exquisite synergistic blend of clinical science and clinical attunement.” He is correct and Sexton’s book delivers as good a text for our broad understanding of it as we are likely to get. His work is also immensely timely, given the huge reductions in mental health funding looming or already happening in the current economic conditions. Any application of these thoughtful functions in clinical practice is bound to help challenging adolescents and families most in need.

Nancy S. Elman, PhD., is in independent practice in Pittsburgh, PA and is a member and former Chair of the APA Commission on Accreditation. She used to be Editor of The Reference Corner of TFP and is really happy to be writing a review again.
Overall, this book exposes therapists who are unfamiliar with the lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) population to topics that can arise in therapy. The case interview presented touches upon many areas that a therapist should be aware of and work towards developing competence. An LGB-identified clinician would appreciate a book that finally gives voice to areas neglected in the mental health field for them personally and professionally. It gives guidance to ways the case interview can be conceptualized and treatment options available based on different theoretical orientations, including family systems. For a straight therapist who has not had exposure to terms or material involving more in depth histories, possible traumas, and lifestyles foreign to them, he or she may find the book shocking and experience some trouble in making sense of the intricacies involved. Thus, a mentor or consultant would seem helpful as straight therapists embark in understanding the patient presented in this book.

The book can be perceived as a combination of narratives and scholarly-related work to support the personal and clinical experiences of professional individuals in the field who have worked with the population to a large extent. Their contribution is greatly appreciated and Silverstein structured this book in the best possible way to convey his and their ideas. It is clear that the mental health field was in need of a book such as Silverstein’s. No book has tapped into the knowledge, attitudes, and skills proposed to be necessary when working with the LGB population as has this one. Educators preparing their students to work with this population may want to use the book to cover the specific issues found to exist in this population. Researchers may want to use the information to propose studies or support their findings. Some information in the book needs to be supported by past research by including more citations. However, the reader may appreciate the impersonal aspect of this book to help grasp the ideas and the clinical skills described.

The case presented in this book has two major areas that can involve the family system. For one, the family has experienced a loss of a loved one and members may be at different stages of the grieving process. Secondly, the patient’s father has not been confronted in a constructive manner about the past abuse. At the same time, he and the mother have continued expectations of the patient, a situation that can create difficulties on many different levels for the patient and his family. Thus, this book is helpful in creating scenarios for teaching concepts and skills in educational and clinical settings, specifically those emphasizing the family system. Chapter 12, authored by Corinne Datchi-Phillips is dedicated to the family system and examines the relational contexts of individual symptoms.

Most of the authors in this book identified as LGB including the editor. A chapter written by a straight therapist that discusses his or her preparation in working with this population would have been helpful. Hellman and Cerbone give indications to straight therapists about how to help LGB clients feel welcomed and comfortable in chapters 5 and 15, respectively. The reader may want to read information on professional allies’ work with this population in addition to this book.

In terms of law and ethics, the reader may find some of the content discussed in this book as controversial involving the therapist and/or patient, and Silverstein gives some possible explanations for therapists’ unethical behavior in various circumstances (as in Chapter 3). In some cases, the therapist may be placed in an awkward position. A section in Chapter 9 gives some possible scenarios worth considering.

Some topics were not addressed in this book. One topic consists of religion/spirituality which some people may think is tied to bereavement issues; however, for some patients, religion/spirituality may not be central in their lives as was the case for the patient presented in this book. The second topic consists of institutional aspects involved for therapists who work in these settings. The aspects discussed in Chapter 5 cover the pros and cons of being able to serve the population. However, with the growing use of technology in institutions, the ability to build rapport may be hampered, an aspect not covered in this chapter. Thus, clinicians working in institutions who need to type, not write, their intake assessment forms while meeting with the patient may find it necessary to develop creative ways of both joining with the client and completing the electronic portion of his or her work.

All in all, the topics covered in this book seem to
attest to my clinical experience in working with this population as a straight therapist. As an educator, I have observed difficulties in some students or trainees in grasping ideas similar to the ones presented in this book, particularly the sex-related ones. Therapists who feel uncomfortable discussing sexually-related content with clients may find it difficult to work with LGB individuals who bring up these types of topics. A discussion in this area is presented in Chapter 3.

Veronica Gutierrez, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor at Alliant International University in San Diego, CA. She teaches courses involving diversity; human sexuality; and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) individuals. She also teaches students on how to conduct therapy in Spanish and how to develop competence in working with the LGBT community as straight therapists. She has conducted research in these areas and works as a psychologist in the community.