



The American Academy of Couple and Family Psychology

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Intervention and assessment in Couple & Family Psychology, embracing the total family system including individuals, couples, families, and the intergenerational system

Note from the President

I am focusing this, my last column, on the events occurring within the American Psychological Association (APA) concerning the release of the Hoffman report, and its subsequent effects for all of us. I have read many posts to several list serves during the past month concerning the report, the stated feelings of many people inside and outside APA, and the various newspaper accounts and commentaries. I had been asked for my opinions about some of this because of my role 10 years ago at APA, and having been an APA member approaching 40 years. I have never been an officer of APA or on Council, and do not intend to be, but I have chaired committees and helped found the Trauma Psychology Division (Div 56) in which I was its second President. What is also relevant for this discussion is that I was in the Chair role (Chair-Elect, Chair, and Past Chair) of the Divisions for Social Justice (DSJ) from 2003-2006 when much of the issues had surfaced and were occurring that are discussed in the Hoffman report.

At that time, DSJ came out strongly against torture in all forms, against the PENS report which laid out the position of APA, and against changing our ethics codes accordingly. We hosted symposia at the convention on these issues at the time. However, we were basically ignored. I phased out of DSJ in 2007, but some people continued to persist in fighting for these principles, and to obtain a full disclosure of what happened then. I have watched as these people have been active for years in trying to get the truth out, and hopefully have finally succeeded in getting us objective investigations and more

information than we had before that has opened this up. It took 10 years but their persistence paid off, and a new Board of Directors of APA commissioned the independent Hoffman report. It bears out and confirms that things were not what they seemed 10 years ago, and many people were indeed correct about their assumptions. As a result of the release of the report, the head of the Ethics office was terminated or forced to resign, depending upon who you talk to, and several other high ranking executives of APA have followed suit with resignations. In total, APA is in a crisis as an organization and at a crossroads as a field.

I have seen comments going back and forth on list serves about members of APA resigning because of what APA did and did not do. Having founded nonprofit organizations, helped build some APA divisions, been in charge as the chair/president of some of them as noted above, and having been in APA for so long, there are some things I have learned. One, it takes time for large organizations to get things right sometimes even though some of us are quite impatient (I speak for myself here). Two, if you are persistent, things sometimes do work out right in the end. Three, there is no such thing as an organization that makes decisions, hides facts, covers up scandals, and basically does bad things (in our jargon, acts unethically). However, people do such things, abuse power, and sometimes these people run the organizations for some time. Blaming APA as if there is an entity that lied, broke ethical rules, covered things up, or abused power is really not productive. Holding people

who do these things responsible and accountable, providing consequences to them for their actions, and following through with fair investigations with due process are keys. If some of the people involved indirectly or directly are found to be at fault and violated ethical standards, including conflicts of interest, then taking away their licenses and removing them from the power they abused is part of what leads to change. Changing an organizational structure to avoid groupthink, conflicts of interest, and adding in transparency leads to sustainable reforms.

Resigning from APA reduces the number of good people left to make sure these things do not happen again, that the infrastructure is changed, and that good people with ethical principles and not ego invested power issues are in charge who do not have conflicts of interest. That is what leads to change, whether we are talking about an organization like APA, a family where abuse occurs, a school where bullying is present, or any example where interpersonal violence and abuse of power occurs. It is long past time for change so hopefully it can begin and continue now for APA as those in the organization work together to do the above and determine how this was able to happen in the first place, so that those systems can be changed (we in family psychology know a little about systems). Changing such systems at micro and macro levels is what I have been attempting to focus on in my small ways. Right now too many people in and out of APA are reacting with anger and frustration (I can say I am also angry and frustrated). There are calls for several more people in high positions at APA to resign, and too much name calling. I have worked with all of the people named for

many years. I can't tell you why some good people got caught up in such group think that they seem to be realizing now, a decade later. I do not want knee-jerk responses to this crisis. I have learned that for true change and reform to occur, it takes a deliberate approach in a responsible manner, and not a rush to judgment. We do need to hold people accountable, and to have unbiased ethics hearings. **We need to go back to our basic principle no matter whether we are talking about the issues around torture or taking for granted some of our actions when working with clients or testifying in court - Do No Harm!!** It seems too many people have forgotten this. It is time to take control of our profession in general, look closely at the organizational infrastructure of APA, and move forward.

The more who join such efforts, the more likely we will succeed at all levels. Just my 5 cents (adding in inflation). I want to thank the members of the Academy for allowing me to serve as President for the past 2 years, and helping our impressive Academy Board re-organize itself and set things in motion for the future. I welcome the incoming board members, and especially our new President, Chris Tobey.

Until next time,



Bob Geffner, Ph.D., ABPP, ABN
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The American Academy of Couple and Family Psychology

The Academy is devoted to the advancement of the psychological specialty of Couple and Family psychology in general and board certification (diplomate) in that specialty in particular. As professions become more specialized, board certification is becoming an increasingly important marker for expertise in a specialty area of psychology. Advanced standing as a Board Certified Couple and Family Psychologist *reflects a higher standard of expertise over basic licensure* and assures the public that their provider choice is among the select in the field to be nationally recognized for experience, expertise, and education as a Couple and Family Psychologist. The American Academy of Couple and Family Psychology is comprised of all psychologists who are board certified in couple and family psychology by the American Board of Professional Psychology.

AACFP cordially invites you to become part of our incredible team!

For more information, please visit our website at www.familypsych.org.

A Message from the Editor

Hello Academy Members!



I am pleased to announce the Summer 2015 *American Academy of Couple and Family Psychology Newsletter* is here! Highlights from this issue newsletter are as follows:

- A message from our outgoing President, Robert Geffner, Ph.D., ABPP, ABN
- Announcing two new diplomates, Robin M. Deutsch, Ph.D., ABPP, and Scott Browning, Ph.D., ABPP
- Article from Gerald R. Weeks, Ph.D., ABPP and Nancy Gambescia, Ph.D.

Our goal is for each issue to be better than the last. That's not possible without your help. Please send your submissions for the next issue of the newsletter to: Rachael Silverman, Psy.D., (silverman.rachael@gmail.com), or Martha G. Ruiz, Psy.D. (martharuiz26@gmail.com).

If you would like to read this issue or any other issue online, please click [here](#).

At this time, I would like to thank the extensive efforts of Martha Ruiz, Psy.D. (Co-Editor).

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the newsletter (or its content), please email me at Rachael Silverman (silverman.rachael@gmail.com).

Happy reading!

Interested in Board Certification?

Psychologists: If you are interested in board certification in Couple and Family Psychology, I would encourage you to go to <http://www.abpp.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3359> in order to download and review the ABCFP materials.

There are three pathways to demonstrate specialty education, training, and experience, including the Senior Track for individuals with over 15 years of experience who meet specified criteria. Our board is committed to creation of a positive and professional application and examination process. If you decide to pursue board certification, you may have a mentor assigned to assist you through the process, if you so desire.

Clinicians: Involved in educating and training psychology students in a predoctoral or postdoctoral venue that includes a Couple and Family Psychology emphasis, we invite you to consider ABCFP board certification.

Faculty members: In a doctoral program that includes a Couple and Family Psychology track, we encourage you to consider board certification as a demonstration of your competence in the specialty and as part of your modeling of postdoctoral certification. Finally, we encourage you to enlist your students in the ABPP Early Entry Program (see below).

Pre-licensure individuals: Students or recent graduate of a program that included a track or emphasis in Couple and Family Psychology, we encourage you to start the process of progression to-ward board certification through ABPP at a reduced fee. See information on the Early Entry Program at: <http://www.abpp.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageID=3299> and start the process now.

We appreciate your interest in board certification in Couple and Family Psychology. Please contact any member of the ABCFP board if you have any questions or concerns about the process. We are happy to respond to your inquiries.

Bob Geffner, Ph.D., ABPP, ABN
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Newest Academy Family Members!

The American Academy of Couple and Family Psychology would like to give a warm welcome to **Dr. Browning and Dr. Deutsch!**

Scott Browning, Ph.D., ABPP

I am a professor in the Department of Professional Psychology at Chestnut Hill College in Philadelphia. I have noted authority on psychological treatment with stepfamilies and Families on the Spectrum. As a scholar, teacher and clinician, I have explored the intricacies of treating contemporary families, and provided advanced training in the treatment of these diverse families to clinicians and graduate students both nationally and abroad. I am the author of numerous chapters and articles on the topics of: stepfamilies, empathy, co-dependency, Strategic Family Therapy and family therapy training practices. I am the co-author of the book, Stepfamily therapy: A ten-step approach (2012). I am also the co-editor of the book, Contemporary Families: Translating research into practice (2015). I have a video through the APA video series on Stepfamily Therapy. Finally, I am the recipient of the Lindback Award for Distinguished Teaching.



Robin M. Deutsch, Ph.D., ABPP

In 2011, I moved to the Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology (soon to be renamed William James College) from Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School, where I had directed a training program for postdoctoral fellows and residents in child and family forensic issues for almost 20 years, to begin the Center of Excellence for Children, Families and the Law. Because of my interest in the effects on children of living in stressful family circumstances that are often long lasting, such as families where parents are in high conflict and involved with intimate partner violence, where the children have experienced maltreatment, or where children are estranged from a parent, I have focused my career in the past 25 years on helping families reconstitute with a focus on enhanced parenting and family interventions. At MSPP I developed two programs: a



Certificate in Child and Family Forensic Issues for professionals, which to date includes five 28 hour Blended Learning courses including Divorce Custody Evaluation, Intimate Partner violence, Child Maltreatment, Mental Health and Juvenile Justice, and Parenting Coordination. I also initiated another program in 2013, the Child and Family Evaluation Service (CAFES), where we provide child custody evaluations and train four post-doctoral fellows to evaluate families who are in conflict, generally disputing custody or visitation arrangements, though they are also learning about family dynamics and concerns in Guardianship cases

I have two research projects beginning at MSPP. The Children of Divorce Project involves a prospective study of high-conflict divorcing families who, at the direction of the Probate and Family Court, are to be evaluated by a custody evaluator. The study's focus is to gain a deeper understanding of how litigious divorce affects the psychosocial adjustment of children, how it places children at risk and what factors contribute to positive outcomes in children. The second project will assess the effectiveness of High Conflict Parent Education classes. These 9-week 27-hour classes are for parents who the Court believes may benefit from education on the effect of this conflict on their children, strategies to change attitudes toward and behaviors with their co-parents, better ways to co-parent with more effective communication structures and protocols for reaching agreements.

In addition to my work at MSPP my private practice is focused on consultation and psychotherapy with couples and families who are separating, divorcing, dealing with difficult family transitions, or managing difficult interactions with their children. I teach throughout North America and Sweden on impasses to effective co-parenting when parents are separating or divorcing, parenting coordination, assessment and interventions for families where children are resisting contact with a parent and there are allegations of alienation, ethical issues in working with children, families, and attorneys in the legal system, and child development issues as they affect changing families.

Currently, I am involved as a consultant to the National Custody Demonstration Project Workgroup (sponsored by the Office of Violence against Women) where the focus is on assessment of violence in child custody cases. In

addition, I am a founding board member of Overcoming Barriers, whose mission is to promote children's healthy relationships with both parents where a child is in danger of losing a relationship with a parent. In addition I have been involved as a consultant to courts in Massachusetts, Connecticut and Indiana to improve services for these families at risk.

I have been involved in leadership roles in multiple organizations and task forces. I was the former President of the AFCC (2008-2009), and the former Chair of the APA Ethics Committee (2007). I was a member of COPPS (APA Committee on Professional Practice and Standards) from 2011-2014. I was on the American Psychological Association (APA) task force that developed Guidelines for Parenting Coordinators (2011), the Association of Family and

Conciliation Courts (AFCC) Task Force that developed Guidelines for Parenting Coordinators (2006), and the AFCC Task force that developed Guidelines for Court Involved Therapists (2010). I served as co-chair of the APA-ABA Working Group on Issues of Alleged Abuse, Neglect and Endangerment, co-chair of the APA-ABA Working group on Psychological and Legal Interventions with Parents, Children, and Families, and co-chair of the AFCC Task Force for Child Custody Consultants (2011).

ABPP certification is important to me as it reflects my competence in Couple and Family Psychology, and allows me to connect with colleagues who share a systemic perspective and are interested in promoting best practices in Couple and Family Psychology.

CONGRATULATIONS

ANTHONY CHAMBERS, PH.D., ABPP

ON YOUR NEWEST POSITION AS **DIVISION 43 PRESIDENT!!**



AACFP Board Members



President: Christopher P. Tobey, Ph.D., ABPP



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A New Paradigm for Sex Therapy: The Intersystem Approach

Gerald R. Weeks, Ph.D., ABPP and Nancy Gambescia, Ph.D.

Theory development in the field of sex therapy has been evolving at an exceptionally sluggish pace (see Wiederman, 1998). Further, the outmoded approaches of Masters and Johnson (1970) and Kaplan (1974) dominated the field for decades with behavioral and psychodynamic perspectives. While both approaches stressed the importance of seeing the couple together, treatment was grounded in an individualistic approach to therapy with no appreciation of systemic thinking. Thus, sexual problems were treated in isolation with little or no regard for the relational or other contexts contributing to the problem.

Several editions of the major textbook *Principles and Practices of Sex Therapy* followed this same tradition of an individualistically based theoretical approach combined with an ever-increasing emphasis on the medicalization of sex

therapy (Lieblum & Pervin, 1980; Lieblum & Rosen, 1989; Lieblum & Rosen, 2000; Lieblum, 2007). These excellent texts have not pressed toward any major theoretical changes in our understanding and treatment of sexual problems. A significant paradigm shift within the field of couple/sex therapy was introduced and developed by Weeks (1977, 1994). This approach exposed a number of limitations that have hindered the efficacy of earlier modes of sex therapy.

Also, historically, there has been a lack of integration between the fields of sex and couple therapy. For instance, despite the fact that sex therapists worked with couples, they would focus myopically on the sexual disorder while disregarding the larger context of the couple's relationship. Likewise, couple therapists often believed that treatment a sexual problem was

beyond their area of expertise. In practice, the therapist would focus either on the sexual problem or on the couple problem, depending on background and training. The treatment of sexual problems became the territory of sex therapists certified by the American Association of Sex Educators, Counselors, and Therapists (AASECT) while the treatment of couple problems fell into the realm of couple and marital therapists who were certified by the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT). The training standards of each of organization de-emphasized training in the other; thus, a couple needing help with both sexual and non-sexual problems would ultimately have had to seek out and attend two different therapies! Not only has this bifurcation of sex and couple therapy been negatively impactful on those receiving treatment, it also fractured the development of professional organizations, theory, and research. Sexual problems were not examined within a systemic framework and this problem continues today.

The Intersystem Approach proposes that the etiology and treatment of sexual problems must be considered within numerous domains simultaneously: the psychological and biological status of the individual partners in addition to processes emerging from the dyadic system, families of origin, and contextual factors. (See Weeks, 1989, 2005; Weeks & Hof, 1987; Weeks & Gambescia, 2000, 2002; Weeks, Gambescia & Jenkins, 2003). The Intersystem Approach is an all-inclusive integrative framework that allows the therapist, theorists, and researchers to examine every aspect of sexual disorders. Adoption of such a theory will re-vitalize the field of sex therapy and, we believe, lead to more effective treatment and the utilization of a much broader range of techniques. In our experience, sexual problem rarely stem from one domain of the Intersystem, but usually represent a confluence of factors from multiple domains.

Recently, Weeks and Gambescia (2015; 2015a) have refined the application of a more contemporary, systemically grounded paradigm

for sex therapy. Changing paradigms is never an easy task. It often may take a generation for a new paradigm to be adopted, since the current practitioners have already become firmly entrenched in their theoretical frameworks through their training and experience. We encourage professional organizations such as AAMFT and AASECT to reconsider their training standards and gradually begin to include more emphasis on integration and training in the other's domain. We encourage new therapists to adopt a more inclusive theory of practice that addresses the issues of the couple, and hope that seasoned therapists will be more proactive in expanding their theoretical framework. When these changes occur, the days of fragmented training standards, theory, research, and treatment will fade into the past as a new emphasis on integration in therapy emerges (Lebow, 1997, Weeks & Gambescia, 2015; 2015a).

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