From the Editor: Strangers in a Strange Land

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As a Professor in a School of Social Work I act as a bridge between professions, licensed as both a marriage and family therapist (MFT) and a clinical social worker and teaching systems theory and family therapy to social work students. As I write this editorial I am continuing in that role only now I am doing so in a very different context. As part of a sabbatical leave I am spending the month of October as a Visiting Professor in the Department of Social Work at the National University of Singapore. Thus, I also am something of a bridge between cultures, one Western and one Eastern. However, despite the many distinctions between these two cultures, I find that here, as at home, the students with whom I have the opportunity to work are very similar in terms of both their eagerness to learn and the challenges they experience as they encounter and attempt to internalize a new way of thinking.

I suspect that over time we tend to forget what it was like to enter the unfamiliar new world of systems theory and family therapy. Certainly I see it in the eyes of students wherever I teach, but that is not the same as living it. However, I now am reminded every day, at least metaphorically, of this experience as I attempt to find my way around an enormous campus with its maze of buildings, learn to use appliances that work differently, adapt electrical sockets to accommodate my computer and cell phone, negotiate on foot through traffic that flows in a direction that is opposite to what I am used to, and eat food (delicious by the way) that is totally unfamiliar to me.

Being a stranger in a strange land is a marvelous experience for many reasons. Relative to the marriage and family therapy profession it certainly has been significant for me. On the one hand it is helping me to remain mindful of the confusion and muddled feelings most of us experienced during our initial training. It also reminds me that in some small way this experience is probably isomorphic to what the original creators of our field encountered as they introduced and began to practice using a totally different paradigm. And on the other hand, it helps me to remain cognizant of how far we have come both as individuals and as a field in terms of our comfort level with systemic thinking and our

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sophistication as practitioners, theorists, and researchers. This certainly seems evident in the wealth of information provided in this issue of the journal.

The initial focus is on training issues as described in two articles. In “Three Authors, One Client: A Qualitative Description of Marriage and Family Initial Case Documentation,” Randy Heller, Lauryn Gilliam, Ronald Chenail, and Tyon Hall examine the influence of various perspectives on the creation of stories about clients and their goals for therapy. By contrast, Ronald Werner-Wilson asks, “What Factors Influence Therapy Drop Out?” and attempts to provide useful answers to this important question.

In the second section, comprised of four articles, the focus shifts to a consideration of Couples Therapy Issues. First, Christine Gubbins, Linda Perosa, and Suzanne Bartle-Haring examine “Relationships Between Married Couples’ Self-Determination/Individuation and Gottman’s Model of Marital Interactions” in an effort to determine the overlap between the theories of Murray Bowen and John Gottman. Next, Chingju Chen and Marsha Carolan, in an article titled, “The Phenomenon of Comparative Development Between Female Survivors and Their Partners: Implications for Couples Therapy,” suggest the importance of looking at the developmental history of both partners when working with female survivors of abuse. Considering a relatively recent but growing area of interest, Laura Gambrel and Margaret Keeling bring our attention to “Relational Aspects of Mindfulness: Implications for the Practice of Marriage and Family Therapy.” And in the final article in this section, “Inviting the Significant Other of LGBT Clients into Substance Abuse Treatment Programs: Frequency and Impact,” Evan Senreich assesses the issue of partner inclusion in therapy for substance abuse within the LGBT population.

The third section includes two articles dealing with Home-Based Family Therapy Issues. First, C. R. Macchi and Nancy O’Connor investigate and describe “Common Components of Home-Based Family Therapy Models: The HBFT Partnership in Kansas,” providing an introduction to an ongoing project. And “A Survey of the Attitudes and Practice Experiences of Home-Based Practitioners” by Joseph Worth and Adrian Blow provides a consideration of therapists’ perspectives and experiences when working in this realm.

The final article in this issue is a contribution by Gerald Zuk, the founding editor of this journal, and his wife, Carmen Zuk. They have chosen to focus on “Unique Transformation in a Dali Painting of the Female Life Cycle,” offering their interpretation of a work of art that appears to have puzzled many.

As I come to the end of this editorial, just as I am approaching the end of my stay in Singapore, I find more comparisons to consider. I notice that the more we family therapists have immersed ourselves in systems thinking the more we have appreciated what it has to offer and the more diverse our productivity. Similarly, my total immersion in a different culture and my explorations here have enabled me to relax and appreciate fully all the nuances and opportunities that are a part of the Singapore context. Consistent with a systemic orientation with its both/and perspective, I and we have learned to live and feel at home in different worlds. As MFTs, certainly we are no longer strangers in a strange land.