From The Editor: The Evolution of a Family Therapist

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As with every profession, the field of marriage and family therapy (MFT) is characterized by a unique training and socialization process for those who desire to attain full membership. Students first must become proficient and demonstrate competence in the following areas: the theoretical foundations of family therapy, with a specific focus on a systems perspective; human development and family studies, with an emphasis on such areas as individual and family development, sexual functioning, and psychopathology; the many therapeutic models and approaches to working with clients; values and ethics relative to family therapy; and supervised practicum experiences that focus on working with clients utilizing a systems perspective (Becvar in press; Becvar and Becvar 2009). Following their formal education, trainees must engage in supervised clinical experiences for a period of at least 2 years and successfully complete a licensure exam in order to become licensed MFTs. This entire process is overseen by those of us who have come before and who in our role as MFTs have chosen to become mentors to the next generation. Once out in the field, some of our students will follow in our footsteps, becoming trainers and supervisors, while others will embrace various aspects of practice, whether in private practice, agency settings, or in a variety of other roles. And regardless of context, many will continue to focus on generating knowledge relative to both the training and supervision of family therapists and the practice of family therapy. In this edition we thus provide articles that represent various components of this evolutionary process, dividing them into the two categories of training and practice.

Training and Supervision

In their article entitled “Teaching Family Systems Theory: A Developmental-Constructivist Approach,” Karen Caldwell and Chuck Claxton discuss the challenges often experienced by students when they first encounter a systems perspectives, and offer some thoughts and suggestions to facilitate the creation of effective teaching/learning contexts.

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Next, Cynthia Somers, Joy Benjamin, and Ronald Chenail provide findings regarding their study of “How Masters Students Document Stability and Change Across Progress Notes,” noting some of the dilemmas involved with the blending of modern and postmodern perspectives in a training setting. In the third article in this section, “Creating Internships in Marriage and Family Therapy: A Collaboration Between a Training Program and an Offender Reentry Facility,” Louis Barretti and Ben Beitin describe the development of an innovative internship program that serves well the needs of both students and clients.

Family Therapy Practice

Once out in the field, the assessment of clients requires instruments that are valid if the efforts of MFTS to help are going to be successful. This is the topic investigated by Lisa Hooper and Scyatta Wallace in their article entitled, “Evaluating the Parentification Questionnaire: Psychometric Properties and Psychopathology Correlates.” Similarly, the requirements of evidence-based practice specify the need to evaluate the degree to which our models and approaches are effective. Accordingly, Terje Tilden, Tore Gude, Harold Sexton, Arnstein Finset, and Asle Hoffart investigate “The Associations Between Intensive Residential Couple Therapy and Change in a Three Year Follow-Up Period” in the article that concludes this edition. And so the evolutionary cycle continues.

References

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