SEMINAR DAY 3

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The Family Therapist's Own Family

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Guerin defines the benefits and the means of working on one's own family, which he exemplifiies in the context of his family. He outlines the steps of the process, including the construction and analysis of a schematic diagram of one's three-generational family relationship system, called the genogram. The emotional process in the family system builds interlocking triangular blocks, and the goal of working on one's own family is to change one's behavior in order to become detriangulated. Guerin also enumerates the ways in which this work can aid and personalize the training experience.

Fogary focuses on the growth of a personal relationship between the trainee and his family supervisor, offering a specific account of the program presented by Guerin. He illustrates his belief that basic family-system concepts of triangles, fusion, and distance perhaps can be really understood only through application and that a professional who includes working on his own family in his training invariably learns more than in a pure supervisory experience alone.

Once upon a time, an all-together-now asked two lone wolves if they would put together a series of "we" statements. In the spirit of camaraderie and friendship the two lone wolves tried. But try as they might, they just could not make "we" statements. It was almost as if it were against their "religion." As a result, this article is divided into two sections, one by each of the authors.

PART I, BY PHILIP GUERIN

The inevitable has come to pass. Family therapists, having established a beachhead in psychological circles, are now turning their attention to working on their own families. But what does "working" on one's own family mean and

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what place does it have in training family therapists? What it means depends to a great extent on how the trainee and supervisor view family therapy.

To some therapists, family therapy is a technique to be tried when all else fails or when individual therapy is not feasible. Others see "family" as a new approach to emotional problems. To them psychological problems are a product of dysfunctional relationships. Each of the dyadic relationships in the family is interconnected, forming a relationship system. How this relationship system works is of primary importance. "Why" explanations, though plausible, are of secondary importance. Those who see "family" in this way make working on one's own family an important part of their personal and professional life.

Murray Bowen, a major proponent of this view, has stressed the importance of the trainee's working on his own family. In practice he has carried this to the extent of presenting the "work" he has done on his own family at a workshop and later in print (Anonymous, 1971).

While under Bowen's supervision as a psychiatric resident at Georgetown, I began "working" on my own family. For the past three years I have continued this work and at present see it as a lifetime project. Now in my position as a "family" supervisor, I liberally use examples from this work to seed the idea with trainees.

Stories about one's own family have a certain shock value and are usually listened to intently. The various ways the message behind these stories is interpreted, however, are always of interest to me. It is often heard as "go visit your grandmother," or "go back home and tell the ol' lady off," or "go back home and make everybody happy." In supervision I usually field such responses by agreeing that it can be fun to see grandmother, triumphant to tell the ol' lady off, or gratifying to promote togetherness, but that I don't see anything accomplished by these actions in themselves. At any rate, none of these are what I mean by working on one's own family.

The best way to define what I mean is to describe what I do in the context of my own family. When a problem arises in my family, I try to examine my own behavior (that is, how I am thinking, feeling, and operating). For instance, if my wife appears depressed or one of my daughters becomes whiny and irritable, I will look to my behavior in my relationship with my wife, the troubled child, each of the other children, or my parents. The purpose of this is based on the idea that if my wife's depression or my child's behavior is an expression of a family problem, I have a responsibility for my part in the process. I believe that the only one I can change is myself, and therefore, if I hope to exact change in the family process, there must be a change on my part.

I remember an instance during this past year in which I was aware of being moderately depressed and somewhat irritable. At dinner I noticed that my oldest daughter was engaged in one of her sporadic bouts of thumb-sucking. I dropped some sardonic comment. My daughter replied, "Daddy, if you don't stop picking at me, I'm going to suck my thumb for the rest of my life." We all laughed. After dinner in the relative isolation of my office, I was able to figure out the following seemingly connected series of events. Early in the week the emotional tone in the extended family had been especially tight. In response to this extended family difficulty, my wife predictably pulled back, establishing distance between herself and other family members. Sensing this pulling back, I, according to form, began crowding in on her by repetitive questioning and expert, but unsolicited, supervision on household projects. This method of crowding usually results in increased distance on the part of my wife, and I began taking this distance personally—thereby further intensifying the situation. When things get to this point between my wife and myself, our oldest daughter's feeling barometer picks up the rising level of tension. As her own anxiety level rises in response to this, she begins making frequent mistakes or appearing confused and helpless. Watching this, I become irritable and begin to press her. If sufficient pressure is applied, pacification by oral gratification becomes apparent.

All these observations may or may not be true, but using them as a basis for a hypothesis on how the present situation evolved, I could then begin an attempt to change my own part in the process. Actually, my daughter's comment on the possible perpetuation of her thumb-sucking had succeeded in decreasing some of the emotional intensity. This decrease had enabled me to begin thinking about the situation. Once I had attempted to bring about some change in my part of this process, I would then be able to validate or invalidate part, or even all, of my hypothesis.

The plan of action I decided upon called for me to cease questioning or commenting on either my wife's or my daughter's behavior. Instead I would make such comments in my wife's presence as, "It sure is peaceful to live with someone who doesn't burden me with personal thoughts and feelings," or "I can't stand people who are always talking about their troubles." Immediately after such a comment I would make a quick exit, instead of waiting for or even expecting a response from my wife.

Where my daughter's performance was concerned, instead of a barrage of irritable corrections, I would say, "Can you do that wrong once more, honey? I think it's good for kids to practice doing things wrong," or "After you have finished practicing, I want you to spend the next half-hour sucking your thumb." I would then leave the room.

Moves such as these served several purposes. I was able to check my anxiety and decrease the crowding of my wife and daughter, while still letting them know that I was aware of what was going on. Handling things in this way made it possible for me to view their behavior as less of a personal affront. Given enough room, my wife was able to move toward me and open up the issues that were bothering her. Once the anxiety level of the whole family had decreased, we were then able to deal with the problems in the extended family in a more meaningful and successful way.

Obviously the outcome of this story was satisfactory, or I wouldn't have used it as an example. But more important to me than the success of this individual operation was the fact that I had learned something. One of the recurring, automatic behavior programs in my family had been spelled out, and an attempt had been made to change it.

The trainee's response to "hero" stories such as these is often, "Sounds interesting, but how does one go about it?" (In my experience, 50 percent of trainees express interest. Of this 50 percent, only one-half actually do anything with the idea.) The first step is to obtain a minimal groundwork of theoretical ideas. The best published source of these at present is Bowen's article, "The Use of Family Theory in Clinical Practice" (1966). The next step is to take out a pencil and a large piece of paper and draw out a schematic diagram of your own three-generational family relationship system. This schematic diagram is called a genogram.

The genogram provides a guide for following the action. It's like the program at a football game or perhaps even more like the coach's blackboard at half-time. It names and numbers each of the family members and their relationships to one another. You start the genogram with the central and primary relationship in the nuclear family—that between the spouses. Then draw squares (with no offense intended) to represent men and circles to represent women. Insert the age of the individuals inside their respective square or circle. Connect the square and circle with a horizontal line, on which you write the date of marriage.

Next complete the nuclear family by adding the children below, connected with vertical lines. At this point the functioning of the nuclear family can be considered. The presence or absence of work productivity, socialization, isolation, and emotional and physical symptoms is reviewed. Then the state of the various relationships is scanned, with an eye toward how emotional issues are handled. The relationships that appear to work well and those with the most difficulty are pinpointed. An attempt is made to define the shifting patterns of alliance and to determine how they operate. The effect the functioning level of one family member appears to have on the functioning level of other family members is defined.

The above matters having been considered, next expand the genogram to include the extended family—each spouse's family of origin. Place the respective parents above each spouse, connected by vertical lines. Also connect the mother and father to one another by a horizontal line, on which their marriage date is indicated. To represent siblings, insert circles or squares, with ages inside, on a horizontal plane with the spouses. Include the present city and state address for each person. In constructing a genogram, the dates of important events, such as deaths, births, marriages, and retirements, are always worth investigating. These events have a profound emotional impact on families. Like adolescence and old age, they are normative crises. If the family relationship system is flexible and open, there are open lines of communication. Through these lines, emotional issues get dealt with, rather than closed off and buried. As a result, the impact of such events on the family system will be absorbed and dissipated.

If the opposite is true and family behavior patterns are more fixed, channels of communication get closed off and feeling-laden issues are buried. Apprehension over controlling one's own feelings or dealing with the emotional response of others prevents the open airing of issues, such as the death of a family member. In this type of "closed-system" situation, emotional or physical symptoms will often appear in one or more family members.

For example, a local school psychologist referred a family to me, in which the twelve-year-old son was symptomatic. His performance in school had dropped far below his potential, and he appeared clinically depressed. During the past year the boy's need for glasses had been discovered. The fact that this would prevent his following his father's career was considered an important etiologic factor.

Filling in the genogram, I discovered that the maternal grandfather had died fourteen months prior to the family's initial visit. Grandfather, a prominent and successful man, had taken a great deal of interest in his family, especially his daughter and his grandson. As such, he had been an important

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functioning part of this family. His untimely death had been a shock. The family, however, quickly accepted it as one of the tragedies of life. They remained brave and stoic throughout the funeral ritual, shedding only the respectable amount of tears. His death left a large empty space in the family. The boy and his mother frequently thought of him. These thoughts inevitably provoked a lot of feelings. But mother wouldn't talk about it, "because it's morbid." The son wouldn't talk about his thoughts and feelings, "because it would upset mother." As a result, mother found convenient times, when no one was around, to cry and get it over with, rather than burdening anyone with her troubles. Her son was unable to concentrate, had difficulty sleeping, and lacked the energy to get involved with his heretofore favorite projects. His thoughts dwelled on Grandfather, wishing that he could talk to him again and that he had had a chance to tell him some things before he died. True to the image of the "brave soldier," the son kept these thoughts and feelings to himself.

The issue of Grandfather's death was opened up in a family session, leading to a discussion of the hidden thoughts and feelings about the death and the effect of keeping them closed off. I instructed the mother and son to work consciously to keep the issue open by purposely discussing Grandfather's death, whenever thoughts and feelings about it arose. This enabled them to deal with their feelings. As a result, the son's depression lifted and his school performance improved sharply.

To return to the genogram, the physical location of the various parts of the family system is another area to investigate. In some families a cohesiveness appears evident. Multiple members of a family all live within walking distance of one another, with frequent visiting back and forth. In other families there is an explosive quality. Family members are spread to all corners of the globe, and the frequency of contact is minimal at best. It often happens that a person from an explosive family will marry someone from a cohesive family and become absorbed into the cohesive family structure of the spouse.

The issue of physical proximity and distance within the family has another facet. People tend to deal with emotional conflict by becoming either overdistant to or overinvolved with the problem. For instance, one person may respond to family problems by telephoning one or more family members

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daily. On the other hand, another person may move three thousand miles away and reduce contact with family members to a minimum. In order to deal with emotional conflict, he requires a certain degree of physical distance. He must move himself outside the range of the family's emotional bombardment in order to facilitate a relatively objective view of what is going on.

I now live within fifty miles of my extended family. Up until two years ago, I lived three hundred miles away, so the tension input from my extended family was much less intense than at present. It took much less energy on my part to deal with the relationship problems as they arose. On trips to visit the extended family I would often get caught up in the conflictual part of the family emotional process. On such occasions I could feel myself tightening up inside, and my ability to observe and think about what was going on would become markedly impaired. It would take up to a week, following my return from the visit, before I could begin to think again. Since moving to within fifty miles of my extended family, the emotional input has greatly increased, as has the amount of energy necessary to keep myself loose emotionally.

On one occasion during this past year, I found myself caught up in an attempt to deal with a conflictual process in my extended family. In trying to think out the problem, I only drew a blank. The absence of a flow of ideas about a particular problem is a good index of the degree to which one is emotionally caught up in a feeling process. While struggling with this, a professional trip to Boston happened along. On the day of my departure I made another attempt to sort out the difficulty by visiting my parents. The visit was at best unproductive. It was not until I had been in Boston for twenty-four hours that a flow of ideas about the situation began. As a result, I was able to sort out my part in the process. On my return trip I made a re-entry into my extended family. This time I was emotionally loose and had a plan of action. I was able to reverse my part in the process and, as a result, the conflict was eventually resolved.

Instances like this point to the importance of physical distance. On the other hand, people tend to equate maturity with an avoidance of contact with extended family members, particularly parents. Being three thousand miles away and not having had contact with one's parents for years is seen as independence. In my experience, rather than independence, it represents a reac-

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tive distance to unresolved conflict in an extremely important relationship.

Planned distance to enable thought and planning for re-entry is essential. Reactive distance leaves the problem unresolved and attempts to close off the feelings connected to the conflictual relationship. Unfortunately, these closed feelings will out, most often in a camouflaged form in one's nuclear family.

Now, the names, ages, physical locations, and frequency of contact of family members have been filled in on the genogram. Important happenings, such as deaths, have been investigated. The next step is to define the triangular sets within the relationship system of the family.

The emotional process in the family system appears to move in such a way that interlocking triangular building blocks are formed. The concept of the triangle is one of the primary ones in family-systems thinking. It is based on the idea that the emotional process between two people is unstable and thus moves to stabilize itself by triangling in a third person or object. This triangulation may take place when one or both parties actively move to triangle a third or when the third party, caught up by the anxiety in the tottering dyad, is pulled into the emotional process as a stabilizer.

In any triangle of people, there are three points (representing the individuals) and three legs (representing the relationships). The process works so that, at any given time, two points and the leg connecting them are cozy and pulled together. Simultaneously, the other two legs are distant, and the point connecting them is in the odd-man-out position. For example, my mother relates her displeasure with me to my sister. The emotional process between my mother and myself is being run at my sister. If my sister reacts to this communciation by agreeing with mother, she and mother form the cozy or pulled-together leg of the triangle, and I am in the odd-man-out position. On the other hand, if my sister reacts to my mother's communication by defending me, she makes the leg of the triangle between us the cozy one and puts my mother in the out position. My sister might further solidify the pulling together by telephoning me to complain about mother. And so the process goes on.

The dysfunctional or undesirable aspect of this process is that it prevents the emotional process between two people from ever being worked out. In this way, personal, one-to-one, open relationships, in which there is a

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mutual sharing of personal thoughts and feelings, cannot develop. Detriangulation of oneself and the development of a one-to-one personal relationship with each family member are the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow in the project of working on one's own family. In order to accomplish this, it is necessary to spell out the triangles that exist in one's family. The process of detriangulating oneself is complex. Basically, it entails a definition of the process and a plan of action whereby self ceases to participate in the process. For example, if we flip the triangle just discussed around, so that mother is communicating to me her displeasure with my sister, I can attempt to detriangulate myself in the following way. If I do not react on a feeling level to my mother's communciation, I can take her hypothesis—"Your sister has faults"—and run it into the ground by finding so many things wrong with my sister that mother, in a predictable fashion, will begin to defend her. In addition, I can phone my sister and indicate to her that she should find a better way to relate to mother. By this series of moves, I have given them back to one another to work out their problem. Maybe they will, or maybe they won't. But I have fulfilled my responsibility by not participating in a triangulation of the conflict.

Realizing that the number of triangles multiplies with the number of people, it is easy to appreciate the complexity of the family process. Faced with this real complexity, one can only begin to spell out the triangles and deal with them as they become active. In the beginning, it is especially wise to try to pick out a few of the more dormant triangles and try your hand at those. That is preferable to waiting for one to become active and hit you over the head. In this regard, I found it was initially much easier to work on my relationships with my wife's half of the extended family. This was the area in which I was first successful. These successes spurred me on to the greater challenge of my own nuclear family and my half of the extended family.

The most difficult work for me has been in attempting to establish a one-to-one personal relationship with each of my parents. The trainees under my supervision who have tried this project also found this to be so. When an attempt is made to exact a change in a relationship with one parent, usually both parents pull together into a position of "we-ness." Parents are experts at the lateral pass. For instance, if I open up a conflictual issue with my mother,

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she will invariably pass the ball laterally to my father with a, "What do you think about that?" This is usually followed by a statement like, "We've always thought . . ." Thus it is almost impossible to accomplish any work on a one-to-one relationship while both parents are physically present. Instead, arrange a time when it is possible to be alone with one parent.

Despite this difficulty, working on my own family has enabled me to see my parents as real people. At this point I don't believe I overvalue or undervalue either of them. Although, on the one hand, I am perhaps more aware of their shortcomings, I believe that each of them is more knowable to me now and that I am closer to each of them than at any other time in my life. One thing is certain; I don't view them as the malignant cause of my shortcomings.

There are many reasons for sharing with trainees this work on the family. First of all, it demonstrates to the trainees that you really mean what you say and, furthermore, that you do what you say. You don't propose that others—patients and trainees—work on their families while you do something else, or nothing at all. It also demonstrates your willingness to be open about yourself, and it personalizes the work. In turn, it makes clear to the trainee that you are interested in his own family as well as those families he is seeing professionally. In addition, the presentation to the trainee of your work on your own family gives him a frame of reference from which he can launch his own work.

Of the 25 percent of trainees who, in my experience, take on the project of working on their own family, all have found it to be helpful personally and professionally. The part they find most difficult is thinking out a plan of action and following it, once the process has been spelled out. The act to change your behavior in the context of your relationships with spouse, children, parents, and other family members is the route to differentiation of self from others. It is this planning and doing that separates the successes from the failures.

Another important aspect of the trainee's work on his own family is the relationship between the trainee and his family supervisor. This is dealt with extensively in the remainder of this article.

PART II, BY THOMAS F. FOGARTY

> George walked into the office and we introduced ourselves. In direct response to questions, he told me about his position in the training program, his plans once finished, his orientation toward emotional problems, and some other pertinent data. Then I told him about my own training, experience, and practice. Again, in response to questions, he told me a little about himself—he was married, and had one son—and his parents. Then I sat back and asked what he would like to do with the rest of the hour.

It is hard to tell, out of context, whether the above paragraph describes a training hour or a "treatment" hour. Much the same thing occurs in both. First, pertinent data is gathered, and then the "I" position of the trainee is gradually clarified. Initially his "I" position is spread out to include his profession, his family, and his particular position in time. From the start, the context of supervision is set to include the total self of the supervisee—his profession, inner self, family, viewpoint, and future. Next the supervisor does precisely the same thing. I tell trainees about my own family, orientation, training, viewpoints, and practise—a necessarily general but inclusive definition of me and my context. Designed to set the scene, this will hopefully lead to insight that each of us is a part of a continuum and to the development of a personal relationship.

> George starts to tell me about families. I sigh with relief; at least he is seeing some families. In the worst of supervision, the trainee lapses into individual dynamic thinking and ponders about seeing a family sometime in the future. The future is now. It is difficult to follow George because he keeps giving me historical data full of holes, liberally laced with gratuitous explanations and interpretations about what is going on inside these people he is talking about. I long to have them there so that I can ask them what they are thinking and feeling. But I persist, trying to show interest. I find myself really wishing that he would talk about his own family.

When I was in supervision, I had either tried to impress the "big man" with how much I knew or looked to him for wise answers. I was generally relieved when the whole thing was done with. I assume he was too. My supervisors referred to me as if I were an impersonal machine, and I don't really believe they knew what they were talking about. Heaven forbid that I should ever have gotten to know them.

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Supervision, like all human contact, tends to start with two people talking about a third—the patient. This is to be expected and endured. Fools rush in where wise men fear to tread. Distance between self and other is narrowed gradually. There is a routine, a ritual, a format, which leads to the possibility of a relationship going further. It is not so troublesome that this ritual exists, but that the relationship so often gets stuck there. To unstick, the supervisor must be alert, like a halfback going around end, for an opening.

> George is telling me about a family. The husband lives alternately with his wife and a mistress. George thinks the husband is a homosexual and is full of explanations about the man. I notice George seems to document every viewpoint with "I feel this" or "I feel that." I wonder what a homosexual is. It seems to me that this family is in a triangle. I try to explain this to George. He looks confused. I search for a piece of paper and draw a diagram of a triangle. Then I illustrate it with examples from my own family. "It's like this, George. If my wife is doing something with my son that I believe is absolutely wrong, then I have a tendency to jump in and give her the truth, which only I possess. When I jump in, she and I get into a fight and, while we argue, our son goes out the back door. My wife retreats to her room, and I sit down and ponder how I am going to straighten out all the other members of my family. My intrusion serves to increase the emotional intensity of anger, prevent discussion, allow my son to parlay the triangle, and simply repeat things that haven't worked in the past and won't work in the future." As I talk, I can see ol' George's eyes light up a bit; he even begins to chuckle. I wonder if he has had some of the same experiences. This is what you call an opening.

In the process of supervision of families, more often than not, I find golden opportunities for the development of a struggle. My own experience in my family and in my practice has convinced me that this kind of a development is useless and often destructive. I try hard to listen to what the other fellow has to say; then I try to get my ideas across. I try to take an "I" position. In the above case, George saw homosexuality and I saw a triangle. As with George, I generally start with some kind of an abstract explanation of what a

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triangle is. This, as often as not, simply does not work; yet it forms a baseline. Then I draw pictures and try to demonstrate my point visually. This helps; it always helps. Seeing something will sooner or later help to clarify an idea. Then I move the explanation into the concrete and the personal. In George's case, my illustration was concrete because I gave an example of a specific situation in a specific family; it was personal because it referred to myself and my own family. The results are almost inevitable. They are not inevitable (nor should they be) in terms of agreement, but in terms of the beginning of openness. George and I now have the beginning of a context wherein we can each take a stand. We can be honest with each other. Furthermore, the first teaching experience of families—What is a triangle?—has been put out on the table. It has been put there in a personal way. I ain't caught a fish yet, but I can see them biting. What's more, they don't even know they're biting. Now I'm starting to get into business.

The next meeting, George doesn't show up. He is attending some important meeting on the "importance of transference-countertransference in the development of the female carrot" at the New York Psychoanalytic Association. Without further comment, this is a most discouraging development. But I persevere. After all, they pay me, and the other parts of the job ain't so bad. There are some people there that I actually enjoy. The next week George is back. He tells me about the meeting, and I'm sure glad he went to it. What the hell? George deserves such a fate. I think he is hopeless.

Something wakes me from my sleep. George is talking about his family. How about that? He found a triangle. He knows they exist. This is a phenomenal development in view of the fact that every family has about five million of them. George is alive. The trouble is that George doesn't even know he's alive. But hope springs eternal within the human breast. George found a triangle. We are back in business. George starts to talk about himself and his wife. It seems that he has a mother-in-law that he has no trouble with. The only problem is that he can't stand her and that he stays away from her. Of course, this isn't a real problem. He has taken care of this in his analysis. He can explain it now. It's just that he hasn't spoken to her in ten years. Of course, someone might consider it a problem because every time the subject comes up, he and his wife fight. Well, they don't really fight; they just don't talk to each other for one week.

Teaching family therapy or family theory is a most discouraging prospect, like swimming against the tide. Yet there is an audience, a group of people who really want to learn about family theory. George jumped out toward it, then took a massive retreat. But the next time he jumped, he landed smack in the middle of his own family triangle. Now I know that George is gettable, he is reachable. Now he has to live with it; he can no longer run. George has a triangle in his own family. If what I have to say is really useful, then I should be able to document it. The context has been set. The continuum has been set. The rewards of good deeds earlier done may now be reaped. I have taken pains to set the context in a continuum wherein his family, profession, and other interests now meet with my family, profession, and interests. George doesn't move in a straight line, but who does? He has opened his mind so that he can see. That is all I ask. He must deal with something personal in his own family. Now he can begin to see what I mean. My family is my system; that is where my most intense involvement lies. I care more about my family than any person that I supervise. I will tell George that. He'd better understand it; I think that now he can understand it. George is beginning to find out that he really must deal with his mother-in-law; staying away from her is no solution. He is beginning to see that distance is a useful tool for "thinking," but that distance never solves problems. Explanations are great until one has a problem in one's own family. Then one wants results. But what is the price?

George tells me about something that he tried. He asked his mother-in-law over. She came. His wife loved it, but after her mother left she said he did it to embarrass her. He felt resentful. He likened the situation to that of a man he was seeing. He could understand that his patient might not be homosexual, but rather might feel neglected and therefore seek consolation outside the family. I stayed quiet. This guy was thinking. I didn't want to impose my thoughts on someone who was thinking. I wanted him to continue. He has a question. What is this thing we do here, this supervision? He has a psychoanalyst. He takes his personal problems there. I am supposed to be teaching him. But what am I doing? I hear this as an equalizing statement. He no longer looks up to me; he is ready to deal with me. Now I can confront him. "What do you want?" I ask. "Spell it out." He is on the

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> spot. By now he likes the results, but he also sees that they exact an emotional price from him. Tough. I should charge him.

There is no question that supervision and teaching of the family is a very difficult job. Too many take it as something simply interesting or entertaining. The basic notions of triangles, fusion, and distance are very different from ordinary dynamic psychology. The best, and perhaps only, way to really understand these ideas is to try them out in one's own family. Introducing this as an innocent experiment will encourage the trainee to follow through. If one can predict to him what will happen when he tries it, then he is impressed and fascinated. If he is accustomed to taking emotional problems to his analyst, the idea may disturb him. The experiment sets up a potential triangle between the supervisor, the supervisee, and the analyst, offering a concrete example of a triangle. It affords an opportunity to see self as a part of a continuum that spreads through the family, the analysis, and the teaching. In this sense, there is no difference between treatment and teaching, between one's family life and professional life. Any supervision that limits itself to the trainee and the family he is seeing is practically worthless. It becomes but an intellectual exercise. Supervision as such should cease. The whole family of the supervisee should be involved, just as in "treatment" or on a family picnic. This eliminates much of the artificial flavor. A professional who comes to me with a family problem invariably learns more about family therapy than any pure supervisory experience can produce by itself.

> George brings a family in for me to interview. He is obviously impressed by the interview. He discusses the family and what he sees me doing. Then he compares me to another family therapist and says that I am really not so different. Toward the end of the hour, he raises an issue. Something about his family is bugging him. He has been getting letters from his mother that indicate things are not going well in the extended family. One of the reasons he moved to New York was to get away from the extended family. He had thought that the problem was solved. Now he is concerned and wondering if this is so. He can feel the emotional pull from the extended family. Mother tells him that he doesn't care.

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The details of George's difficulty with his extended family do not particularly matter. What is clear is that he does have to work on his parents. Growing up, he was triangled into his parents. He was overly close to his mother and distant from his father. The third leg of the triangle was the distance between father and mother. When George married, he moved away from mother and created a pull in that overly close leg of the triangle. Now he was hearing rumblings and repercussions from the extended family. This presented a golden opportunity for him to do something—something different, since he would not want to duplicate the previous dysfunctional triangle. He wrote his parents a letter. His letters had always been addressed to both parents, but their content had been directed to his mother. She had always answered his letters. In this letter George directed the content to his father. He asked specific questions about his father's business that his father alone could answer. Toward the end of the letter, he dropped a "reverse fusion" on his mother, who had told him that he didn't care. Mother fused with George. She acted as she could read his mind and his motivations, as if she were inside his head—like a psychiatrist. The reversal is just like the old statue-of-liberty play in football. George wrote his mother that he had the impression lately that she was cool to him and that she really was ignoring him and didn't care about him. George had much difficulty understanding precisely why he even wrote this letter.

George came to the next visit fairly glum. Nothing was going right. His wife read the letter before he sent it. She felt that he was being unnecessarily cruel to his mother, just like he was to her at times. George's father had written a long reply, which didn't seem to amount to much—except that he had never replied before. His father included a message which said that his mother wanted George to call her. George was discouraged. Fortunately, he had a session with his analyst that afternoon and would be able to cathect his discomfort.

George was beginning to learn. Now he could appreciate that there is such a thing as an emotional system. As soon as he changed, everybody in the system told him to get back in his place. His father tried to move away into his distant position and get his mother to deal with George again. Mother got hurt and pulled into herself. Even George's wife fused into telling him that his motivation was cruelty. George was also beginning to learn that change is difficult—more difficult than sitting in a chair reciting problems to harmless others. Change meant action, movement. It meant doing things that would create discomfort in others and doubt, confusion, and unrest in himself. It meant that writing a letter to father could change the position of mother and wife. He could now begin to see the interconnections among members of the family system. He said, "My God, I married someone just like my mother."

George and I finished out the rest of the year, fritzing around between the families he was seeing and his own family. He never really began work on his family, because he never even seriously thought of bringing his wife in. He fritzed around at the periphery. Yet he did learn something. One year later I ran into George again. He hadn't seen a family in that whole year. But he was still interested in systems and somehow thought that he could eventually use this interest in his work in public health.

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