



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE

EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA PSYCHIATRIC INSTITUTE
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September 27, 1965

Eric Berne, M.D.
Box 2111
Carmel, California

Dear Dr. Berne:

For a number of years the practice of family therapy has yielded new concepts and knowledge about what goes on between people intimately involved with each other. There have been numerous conferences held by clinicians and family theoreticians where attempts have been made to share experiences, explicate various aspects of family dynamics, and to develop conceptual points of view. However, there has been a notable absence of conferences oriented around the systematization of this newly accumulated knowledge. More specifically, we feel that the time is propitious for a conference on systematic research approaches to the inner dynamics of family life, with particular emphasis on transactional phenomena directly observed and measured when the family members interact together as a unit, either in an experimental setting or the naturally developing family therapy situation.

We are in the process of organizing a working conference of this nature to be held at the Eastern Pennsylvania Psychiatric Institute in Philadelphia, Pa. in October, 1966. The title of the conference is: Methodological and Clinical Considerations Involved in Systematic Research on Family Interaction and Dynamics. As you may judge from this title, the philosophy behind this conference is to explore some of the methodological and clinical problems which need to be taken into account in planning systematic research in this area. The idea we have in mind is, how can we extract meaningful variables which capture some of the flavor of the clinical complexity of the family which we have gleaned from family therapy, and how can these subjective concepts be translated into operations and creative experimental designs? The question of whether the private can be communicated and made public, in Bertrand Russell's sense, is pertinent here. In other words, the conference is meant to be a preliminary one focusing on identification of problems and research strategy rather than the presentation of completed studies (although we do not eliminate the latter as points of departure.)

In a book we have edited, Intensive Family Therapy, due to be released by Harper & Row in a few weeks, one of us (J. L. Framo) wrote a chapter on Systematic Research on Family Dynamics, where an attempt was made to specify some of the issues of family interaction research, as opposed to individually-oriented family research. (See enclosed brochure). The questions raised by this attempt to evaluate and integrate the literature in this area were among the motivating forces behind having a conference of this type.

All of the invited participants have been carefully selected in terms of their past contributions as well as their capacity to contribute to a conference of this type. As you can see from the enclosed list of invited clinical investigators, we have tried to select only those who are somewhat familiar with each other's domain. We are hoping to develop a flow back and forth between clinical and methodological concepts so that each group will be stimulated into seeing the problems of the other.

In view of the valuable contributions you have made in this area, we would be most pleased to have you attend this conference as a participant. We are interested further, in your feelings about the merits of such a conference and would appreciate any suggestions about procedure. More specific details about format will be disseminated to those able to attend.

We are in process of applying for an NIMH grant to pay for travel expenses, and EPPI may be able to provide for meals and lodging. Although we estimate that our chances of getting a grant are pretty good, we will not know for sure whether or not it will be approved until next spring or summer. Would you be able to attend if transportation costs cannot be provided?

With our best regards,

Sincerely yours,

James L. Framo

James L. Framo, Ph.D.
Department of Clinical Research

Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy, M.D.

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JLF:rmt
Enclosures