

MEDIA REVIEWS

Edited by
IAN ALGER, M.D.

Both reviews this issue are of taped live interviews. The first, from Australia, is an edited version of an 11-session family therapy sequence, and shows Moshe Lang, one of Australia's leading family therapists, at work with a family. Lang skillfully engages a family with a "troubled" daughter, and then gently yet most effectively transforms the format into marital therapy, finally returning to the larger family format. The review, by John Patten, M.D., another native Australian, currently at Cornell Medical Center in New York and on the faculty of the Ackerman Institute of Family Therapy, expresses appropriate appreciation for the unique therapeutic style of Moshe Lang.

Reference is made to the article, "Blackmail is Against the Law," by Peter McCallum and Moshe Lang. This text, and three additional articles, all containing detailed transcripts and analysis and discussion on the same family, and all subsumed under the same title, have appeared in recent issues of the *Australian Journal of Family Therapy*.

The second review, by Evan Bellin, M.D., also concerns a live consultation interview, this one between a marital couple and their therapist, Steven Hawthorne, A.C.S.W. The consultant, Florence Kaslow, Ph.D., is well-known for her contributions and work in the field, and the tape itself is instructive both for teaching marital therapy and for exploring the issues in the consultation process. The reviewer, Dr. Bellin, has had wide experience in the field of family therapy, and received training in Philadelphia with Salvador Minuchin. Currently he is at Albert Einstein College of Medicine/Montefiore Medical Center in New York.

—I.A.

The "Black" Family: Blackmail is Against the Law, produced by Moshe Lang, Williams Road Family Therapy Center, Windsor, Australia. VHS/Beta II. 90 minutes. Black and White. Sale: \$225. Rental: \$30. IEA Productions, Inc., 520 East 77th Street, New York, NY 10021.

This is a videotape of a family therapy with an Australian family by a prominent Australian family therapist. It is a harbinger of many things to come.

Moshe Lang is one of the key thinkers and practitioners in the Australian Family Therapy Movement. This videotape could stand by itself as a fascinating and instructive lesson, but Moshe offers more. In their paper, "Blackmail is Against the Law," McCallum and Lang (1982) include a transcript of this interview. They want us to focus on the raw data and wonder why family therapy journals prefer to publish "abstract speculation and debate." As Salvador Minuchin said recently in the *Networker*, "Labels like structural, strategic, systemic, etc. are brand names like 'Pierre Cardin,' created to sell products" (Simon, 1984, p. 26). I think Moshe wants us to look at this tape with our own eyes, without distorting lenses. He himself spent three hours a week for one year just reviewing and scrutinizing the first interview.

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In the therapy shown, the family arrives as an emergency referral. The 14-year-old daughter took an overdose of her mother's pills, the mother herself having taken an overdose some months earlier. The first interview is presented in its entirety and includes mother, father, daughter, and younger brother. Edits of the second, third, and fourth sessions then follow; these sessions show the shift of the children out of the protective position between their parents, who have rarely communicated at all with each other. Sessions five through ten are focused on marital therapy with the couple and are not included. Finally, parts of the eleventh session, again with the family—much changed and happier—conclude the tape.

The family at first presents the challenge of a frightening crisis. Into this situation comes a calming and accomplished therapist with a unique style that does not remind this writer of anyone else in the field. Throughout the interview process, the therapist facilitates change through his very clear, yet subtle use of language and interventions.

To the untrained eye, the case presentation may just look like a run-of-the-mill bad marriage with children stuck in the middle, being approached with only a simple, straightforward therapy. Yet viewed at a different angle this therapy is very rich and complex and stimulates a call for much discussion. It transcends any therapy "brand name." I think Moshe Lang chose to show us this piece of his work because it demonstrates the simplicity and yet complexity of family therapy at one and the same time. It is ideal for the training of students and practitioners at any level, and it is an especially refreshing view from "Down Under" for all of us in the family therapy field.

Seldom have I seen a therapy videotape that concentrates with such even balance between the therapeutic process and the family, and not just on the family dynamics. My only regret is that the visual aspect of the tape is not as clear as it might have been; we would have liked to have seen things more closely, and the continued use of a wide-angle shot does not give the close-up material that shows emotional reaction well. The trade-off, however, is a full documentation of all the behavioral sequences and interactions among therapist and family members.

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