

# Presidential Column

## Some Reflections on our Division

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For those members interested in D51 organizational reflections please read on. Others not so interested, you may want to skip to the next section.

**On Connecting at the APA Convention.** The APA convention in San Francisco is just around the corner. What makes the convention so special to me is the opportunity to be physically present with folks from our division. I cherish the opportunity to catch up with colleagues/friends I have known for 25 years, but may only see once or twice a year. I also appreciate the personal connections and a sense of our future with the newer members who are making D51 their professional home. For folks who are testing the waters of D51, the convention is a great opportunity to meet informally with D51 colleagues you can connect with on a professional and/or personal level. No matter how many publications, awards, years of experience or titles D51 members have on their resume, I have found our group to be warm, inviting and interested. I can't wait to see old friends, create more history with others and start a history with those I have never met. A gigantic thanks goes to Chen Oren our program chair for the upcoming convention. I know how hard he has worked to facilitate the programming decisions and arranging our keynotes, our dinner and joint social with D35.

**On our Division's Struggles and Prosperity.** I experience, with frustration and pride, our division as both struggling and prospering. As in most systems that is a common dynamic. What I believe may be most challenging is our struggle on how to struggle. Not certain we know how to do that very well. An example of a struggle our division is facing is the challenge to expand and re-define our division's identity and purpose. Connected with that struggle are the feelings of our members, who are invested (with all good intentions) with differing perspective, as to the appropriate amount of re-definition that would be "good" for our division. Being called into question are what aspects of our ideological history and foundation do we hold onto, what parts do we de-emphasize and what do we want to add to the mix that may not be present? What I have noticed most in our struggle (both from my own phenomenology and behaviors of others) is the fact we have not shared with one another the personal meaning and feelings associated with the above questions. I invite and challenge us to do so. We are smart enough, strong enough and I believe we care enough about one another and the division to do so.

We are also prospering. The recent success of the Psychotherapy with Men Conference is a pat on the back to our D51 members, who have for years been setting the stage (through publications, workshops, and mass media) to create a demand for professionals

to learn more about the unique needs of men coming into psychotherapy. The conference was an easy sell thanks to the foresight and years of hard work of many of the men and women in our division. I am so curious and excited to watch how the fruits of our labor will pay off in the future. Our division was built with the spirit of desire to *make a difference* and we already are doing so, in a variety of ways.

**On a Hard Working Dad and D51 Member.** I want to thank our editor Mitchell Hicks for putting together a thoughtful and attractive bulletin. He has done all of this excellent work while changing diapers and being sleep deprived. Congratulations on the birth of your son. *[Editor's note: Thank you for your congratulations! I indeed have not slept more than four hours straight in the last three weeks. But being a father to both a daughter and now a son is one of the greatest joys. Nothing is better than sitting on the couch holding my son and hugging my daughter as I read a story to her. – MWH]*

## **Reflections on the First Psychotherapy with Men's Conference: Let's Do It Again!**

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A month has passed. There are a number of vivid memories and snapshots about the conference that emerge as I sit down to write this column. Also on my mind is the Tour de France, one of my favorite events to watch and follow, which is about to begin in just a few days.

**The Pellaton.** As an avid bicycling fan, I can not think of a better metaphor to describe the group effort that went into organizing the conference. A pellaton is a group of cyclists who work together to get to their destination. They wear different jerseys, speak different languages, and have different riding strengths. In common they all love to ride. The riders take on different roles, block the wind, lead, follow, communicate possible dangers, support, bring water and food for other riders, and protect their teammates. The pellaton almost always can move faster and more efficient than a single or small group of riders. We had a wonderful pellaton of organizers, presenters and supporters that I would like to give my thanks and credit. Seed money was given by APA Divisions 51, 17 and 45, Phillips Graduate Institute, University of La Verne-Department of Psychology, CSPP at Alliant International University, CSU Fullerton, APA CODAPAR, and Antioch University. Presenters and organizers included: Aaron Rochlen, AJ Franklin, Jon Carlson, Mark Kiselica, Richard Rodriguez, Fred Rabinowitz, Chen Oren, Rebekah Smart, David Shepard, Matt Englar-Carlson, William Parham, Chris Liang, Joan Rosenberg, Sam Park, Daniel Saland and Michael Banley. Special thanks to my conference assistant Lily Legarda, Website developer Matt Genuchi and all the folks at California State University Northridge who pitched in over the past year. We got to our destination with strong legs, nourishment and enthusiasm to do it again!

**Carbo Loading.** The night before the conference we had a wonderful dinner with the presenters, planners and out of the country attendees. While the food was excellent, it was the conversation and good mood that was most tasteful and relaxing. The numbers were in and looked like we would have a full house. This was a gigantic statement about the interest level in the topic of psychotherapy with men. Most important I felt like my back was covered. I had a great support system. Sleep was not a problem.

**Event Day.** Watching the people come in and register was like throwing a party and having the guests arrive. They found us. When I stood in front of the approximately 200 attendees to welcome them to the conference, I noticed the wonderful mix of men and women, older and younger, and people of color. Graduate students comprised 40% of the audience. The energy of the room was filled with a joyful sound of discussion and positive anticipation. I personally had reunions with over ten colleagues or ex-interns I had not seen for years. Staying present and enjoying the experience, while also attending to some of the details was my personal challenge. While welcoming the attendees I had a great and overwhelming feeling of pride about our division and appreciation for the enormous group effort. This was a conference that did not happen over night. The conference was built on the relationships that have been developed by individuals in our division over the last two plus decades.

Aaron Rochlen opened the conference with a keynote on men and masked depression. While his PowerPoint was challenged by some lighting difficulties, he got the audience thinking about men and counseling. Many participants remarked they could not help but think about clients they had seen and possibly misdiagnosed. Thank you Aaron for your creative presentation and inviting presentation style.

Off to the various presentations. Participants asked me about which workshop I recommended. I said throw a dart, you can not go wrong. I am so thankful of the presenters who traveled near and afar to share their expertise. I knew I could count on you all to stand up and deliver and you sure did. The participants commented on the wisdom, easy going style and approachability of the presenters. So much so, over a dozen attendees came up to me and said “if this is what division 51 is all about, where can I sign up?”

By lunchtime, I had a big smile on my face and calmness in my gut. The buzz about the first set of workshops was extremely positive (much better than the actual meal). Also present in the buzz was a type of respect for working with men. I could sense in the conversations a feeling of enthusiasm, hope and desire to learn to be as helpful as possible in counseling men.

After lunch, AJ Franklin gave a powerful and moving keynote on engaging black men in psychotherapy. The content and usefulness of his presentation was quite evident. Even more memorable was the spirit of AJ's presentation. He was enjoying himself and the audience was enjoying him. AJ's wisdom and years of experience came through loud and clear. The audience left the keynote with great enthusiasm and inspiration to learn more.

**The Finish Line.** The buzz about the afternoon workshops was positive as in the morning. The official part of the conference was over. Folks were buying books. Most sold out. What I noticed most was the fact that a majority of the participants were hanging around. Conversations were flowing. I believe a learning and social environment of mutual respect, appreciation and desire to learn was created to make this conference feel very special for many of the participants. It warmed my heart to see the guests leave with smiles on their faces.

**The Exhale.** A number of the presenters and organizers had the opportunity to debrief right after the conference. We filled our bellies with food and stories. The laughter and serious conversations continued to flow. New connections and old connections were being made and reinforced. There was talk of where and when the next conference could be. My heart and mind was full of gratitude and relief. I slept well again.