


Our relationship to the Tavistock Institute of Medical Psychology and Tavistock Relationships

A decorative graphic on the cover features a solid blue circle positioned on the left side. A wide, diagonal purple band crosses the circle from the bottom-left to the top-right, passing behind it. The background of the entire cover is a light blue color.

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David E. Scharff

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the Tavistock
Institute of Medical
Psychology and
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Relationships**

**Jill Savege Scharff and
David E. Scharff**

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It is with great pleasure that we congratulate the Tavistock Institute of Medical Psychology (TIMP) on its centenary and express gratitude for its support of couple and family psychoanalysis. Our current association with TIMP is primarily through its support of clinical work, teaching, and research on couple functioning: TIMP is the legal home of Tavistock Relationships (TR) and sponsors the journal *Couple and Family Psychoanalysis*. We are privileged to teach and learn with colleagues and friends at TR and to sit on the journal's International Advisory Board for which we submit and acquire articles—and successfully recruited the American editor of this volume, James Poulton. We are honoured to have been appointed as Senior Fellows of TR, a renowned centre for training, practice, and research in

couple therapy, and as Honorary Members of the Tavistock Institute of Medical Psychology (TIMP). These appointments reflect many years of active collaboration and mutual respect going back to the 1970s, before the name Tavistock Relationships had been conceived.

When we were employed at the Tavistock Clinic in 1972-1974, we participated in the work of the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (TIHR), the independently funded corporate twin of the National Health Service-funded Tavistock Clinic (Dicks, 1970). It was within TIHR that TR was housed at that time, then called the Institute of Marital Studies (IMS), but neither of us made the connection even though it was housed in the same building. Unfortunately, we lost the opportunity to learn directly from stalwarts such as Douglas Woodhouse and Enid

Balint. Our association with IMS began later, after Chris Clulow took over the leadership in 1987.

In the beginning

In 1972-1973, David Scharff left Washington DC to take a sabbatical year as an Honorary Senior Registrar at the Tavistock Clinic in order to learn object relations theory. Placed in the adolescent Department, he saw adolescent families and studied with Arthur Hyatt Williams, and reached out from there to learn from Robert Gosling, John Bowlby, and the marital therapist Henry Dicks, author of the seminal *Marital Tensions* (1967), who had been a consultant in the Adult Department, not connected with IMS, which now seems a curious disconnect in an institution full of inter-departmental

collaboration. Like most National Health Service staff of the Tavistock Clinic, David crossed over to pursue interests at TIHR, in particular its Centre for Applied Social Research (CASR) and to its TIHR-Leicester University group relations training. David signed up for the two-week residential group relations conference in April of 1973. Jill Scharff, then Jill Savege, was at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital as senior registrar to consultant psychotherapist John (Jock) Sutherland who had retired to his homeland from his position as Medical Director of the Tavistock Clinic, a post he had held for the previous twenty-one years. In retirement, Jock chaired TAMP, and that is the first that Jill ever heard of the organization. Jock recommended Jill to enroll in that same Leicester conference to which David was

headed. Also present were many members of the Tavistock Clinic Adolescent Department to which Jill was applying for a position. She found herself not only in a hothouse of a two-week job interview, but also in the same small group as David. So that is how we met—drawn together by shared interests and group forces in an intense experience of self-reflection, but pulled apart by distance and life circumstances.

Importing the TR teaching

After Jill left the Tavistock Clinic and joined David in Washington DC in 1974 to become a couple, we developed our ideas about couple and family therapy in association with colleagues John Zinner and Roger Shapiro at the Washington School of Psychiatry (Savege Scharff, 1989) and went on to co-author our own

books on object relations couple and family therapy (Scharff & Savege Scharff, 1987, 1991). In the 1980s, we found ourselves reaching back to London for access to the clinical teaching and research expertise of our colleagues at TR. We invited Stanley Ruszczynski, Deputy Director, and James Fisher to elaborate the TR signature concepts of shared unconscious phantasies and defences, infused with the brilliance of Bion and Meltzer (Ruszczynski, 1993; Ruszczynski & Fisher, 1995).

In 1994, we founded the International Psychotherapy Institute (IPI), a distance learning community with twelve founding faculty based around the United States and Panama. In due course, David invited Andrew Balfour, Chris Clulow, David Hewison, Mary Morgan, Chris Vincent, and others from TR to teach in the

videoconference couple therapy course he developed on the old Polycom videoconference system. Then David Hewison and David Scharff collaborated to design a TR/IPI course on couple therapy that IPI continues to this day. A group of TR trainees in London and IPI groups in Washington, Long Island, and Salt Lake City suffered through frequent technical difficulties in order to learn from an international array of psychoanalytic couple therapists. The London group had poor technical resources so their participation was interrupted for a period. For a few years we lost touch with TR, as we worked with colleagues in Panama, Germany, Australia, and Argentina. IPI reached out once more, re-established contact and invited guests from TR to give lectures online and at conferences in Washington and Salt Lake City. For instance,

Pierre Cachia and Jill Savege Scharff (2013a, 2013b) met on videoconference and subsequently co-authored papers for *Couple and Family Psychoanalysis*, another example of collaboration between IPI and TR.

Collaboration with TR

We were then invited to co-design and staff summer institutes at TR premises in London. Students and faculty came from IPI and TR to create an international learning event around theory papers, clinical case presentations, and small discussion groups. Lectures online and at summer institutes led to the IPI/TR co-authored and co-edited publication *Psychoanalytic Couple Therapy* (Scharff & Scharff et al., 2014), which embodied the IPI/TR collaboration in print.

Collaboration between the UK and USA is complicated by competing interests, cultural differences in history, and personal style. TR colleagues tend to read well-crafted papers, whereas David and Jill prefer to speak off the cuff or from PowerPoint. Colleagues from IPI and TR both find value in presenting clinical cases from observation of clinical process, but we sometimes use videotaped interviews in our teaching, and we sense that there is some discomfort with that in Europe. As child analysts, we are interested in family therapy as much as in couple therapy, whereas TR invests in couple relationship therapy, although it has increasingly applied this core practice to develop other interventions affecting family functioning (Balfour et al., 2019). Although we may differ in being drawn to one or another concept, for

instance to unconscious phantasy or internal object relationships as explanatory principles, we agree on their joint effect in shaping personality, determining intimate relating, and providing leverage for therapeutic change in the couple relationship. Our shared interest in a psychoanalytic approach, in the importance of the couple relationship at the centre of the family and the individual, gives us a secure base from which to appreciate difference and find commonality.

Thanks to our work with family therapy colleagues in Panama and Argentina, we learned of the link theory of Pichon Rivère. We found it to be a marvellous extension of object relations theory, placing the individual in a societal and generational network of mutual influence. We first introduced the link theory and its impact on

couple and family development in *The Interpersonal Unconscious*, reviewed by TR's Chris Clulow (Scharff & Savege Scharff, 2011; Clulow, 2012). Intrigued by link theory, TR colleagues convened a one-day conference at TR in 2013, co-sponsored by TR and the International Association of Couple and Family Psychoanalysis (IACFP) at which David was given an integrative role. The material of this conference—featuring Mary Morgan of TR, Rosa Jaitin, Ana Maria Nicolò and Sonia Kleiman of IACPF, René Kaës as distinguished guest—was published in *Couple and Family Psychoanalysis* 6(2) in the autumn of 2016.

In 2019, a day-long institute put together by the International Psychoanalytic Association Committee on Couple and Family Psychoanalysis (COFAP) and TR, and including

IPI and IACFP as nominal co-sponsors, was held in a beautiful building in Marylebone next door to TR's new premises on Hallam Street. Colleagues from IPI who joined TR and IACFP colleagues from Europe and Israel to explore and debate the concept of unconscious phantasy in couple dynamics and treatment reported that this was one of the most stimulating of recent joint projects. We are always impressed as the entrepreneurial spirit and business savvy that enables TR to thrive as a centre of excellence in the teaching, clinical practice and research of psychoanalytic couple therapy, even though Great Britain has moved in the CBT direction. It was gratifying to see how well the move from Warren Street to Hallam Street had worked out.

Expanding directions

The collaboration between IPI and TR crossed new frontiers as David Scharff invited TR colleagues Chris Clulow, Damian McCann, Mary Morgan, and Amita Sehgal to teach with us at the continuous psychoanalytic couple and family therapy training course in collaboration with Peking University Counselling Department in Beijing, and on the online course for couple therapists at the International Psychotherapy School directed by Tatiana Onikova in Moscow. With David Scharff's appointment as Chair of COFAP, the IPA's Committee on Couple and Family Psychoanalysis on which Mary Morgan serves, their collaboration grew. It was Jill Scharff's great pleasure to review for this journal Mary Morgan's outstanding textbook *A Couple State of Mind* (2019) published in the Library of Couple and Family Psychoanalysis by

Routledge, a series co-edited by Susanna Abse, Brett Kahr, Chris Clulow of Tr, and David Scharff of IPI. With the impetus of COFAP, collaboration between TR and IPI presenters and authors continues through arranging international conferences and edited publications (Benioff & Morgan, in preparation; Keogh & Palacios, 2019; Scharff and Palacios, 2017; Scharff & Vorchheimer, 2017; Zeitner, in preparation). We congratulate the Tavistock Institute of Medical Psychology on its centenary, the work of its operational unit, Tavistock Relationships, and its sponsorship of this journal. We look forward to many more years of pleasure and inspiration from our transatlantic association.

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