

LOVE MATTERS
Voices Summer Issue 2011

Matters of Love are *the* constant in the daily solos and symphonies heard by therapists. And, love indeed matters in our own lives, an intangible constant in our connections with our clients, friends, families and communities. Love is complex and elusive, known and mysterious, universal and highly individual. Expertise in love is the province of the wise and the foolish, the hero and the victim, the idealist and the pragmatist.

In *Love at Goon Park: Harry Harlow and the Science of Affection* (2002), Deborah Blum presents the life and work of psychologist Harlow. His work with primates demonstrated that those deprived of touch, warmth and interactive affection during early development were, as they matured, physically, socially and behaviorally impaired. Harlow also researched the first “therapy” for the rehabilitation of those affection-deprived primates, a form of “group therapy” with younger, healthier peers. Harlow’s perspective was in contrast to the popular work of his contemporary, behaviorist B.F. Skinner, whose focus on the centrality of behavior led him to parent his own daughter in a “Skinner Box.” The gradual acceptance of Harlow’s work and its implications dovetailed with the similarly groundbreaking work by British researcher John Bowlby, who demonstrated the centrality of the human infant’s bond to its mother in establishing healthy psychological development. Current researchers and theorists take for granted the “bonding” that Harlow and Bowlby studied, confirming the importance of touch, affection and loving bonds for lifelong health.

Ironically, Harlow’s personal life reflected some of the darker, more painful aspects of love. Unlike Skinner, whose professional beliefs and personal life actions reflected congruence, Harlow seemed unable to bring his intellectual research to bear on his personal relationships. His loving commitments as a father, husband, and colleague were highly impaired; he was even cruel to his research primates.

Blum’s biography of Harlow juxtaposes Harlow’s profoundly influential affirmation of love with his failure to express love in his life. Is our intellectual understanding of the importance of love any help to the rest of us in our attempt to live lives informed by love? Are we more consistent professionally and personally in living up to our ideals with regard to love? What role does love play in fostering development or in healing those wounded by the vicissitudes of love?

The Summer 2011 issue of *Voices* is a prelude to AAP’s 2011 I&C in Santa Fe, New Mexico, “Love Matters.” We are interested in therapists’ personal and professional wisdom and development in love. Through articles, poetry, art, we invite expression of triumph, defeat and paradox with regard to love, psychotherapy, and psychotherapists. Information about submissions can be found on the AAP website on the *Voices* page. Submissions must be in electronic form. Direct inquiries to Co-Editors Doris Jackson (dorisj@comcast.net) and Penelope Norton (psymorton@aol.com).

Blum, D. (2002) *Love at Goon Park: Harry Harlow and the science of affection*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing.

Deadline for submission: April 15, 2011.