

# Social Threats in Challenging Times: How Families and Other Human Systems Adapt

41<sup>st</sup> Pittsburgh Family Systems Conference and Symposium

*Online Conference via ZOOM*

October 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020

**Western Pennsylvania Family Center**

## **Friday, October 23, 2020**

- 8:45-9:15      Opening Remarks – Cynthia Larkby, PhD, Moderator  
35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the WPFC - Allison Whitney
- 9:15-10:20      *Who's Got Time for a Theory When All Systems Scream "Fire!"* - Mick Landaiche, Ph.D.
- 10:20-10:30      10 Minute Break**
- 10:30-11:30      *Disinformation Playgrounds for Bots and Trolls* - Kathleen M. Carley, Ph.D.
- 11:30-12:15      Panel Discussion
- 12:15-1:00      Lunch**
- 1:00- 1:30      *Thinking Systems: Thoughts on Societal Regression* - Arthur Zipris, Ph.D.
- 1:30- 2:00      *Merging Four Congregations During a Pandemic: Managing One's Anxiety* -  
Father John Rushofsky
- 2:00-2:30      *A Family's Response to a COVID Death* - Rosemarie Perla, M.S., M.A., P.C.
- 2:30-3:00      *Comedy in Crisis* - Allison Whitney
- 3:00-3:10      10 Minute Break**
- 3:10-4:15      Panel Discussion and Comments on the Day

## **Saturday, October 24, 2020**

- 8:45-9:15      Opening Remarks – Mick Landaiche, Ph.D.  
Programs of the WPFC - Allison Whitney
- 9:15-10:00     *Surviving Through Adversity: One Organization’s Story* - Sandra Caffo, L.C.S.W.
- 10:00-10:30    *Managing Societal Projection Processes in Child Welfare* - Walter Howard Smith, Jr.,  
Ph.D.
- 10:30-10:40    10 Minute Break**
- 10:40-11:15    *Pandemic Improvisation: How “Compassionate Conversations” Increased Self of the  
Therapist Awareness in a Graduate MFT Training Program* - Christopher Burnett, Psy.D.
- 11:15-11:45    *Thinking Systems in a Psychological Environment* - Tricia Collins, MS
- 11:45-12:30    Panel Discussion
- 12:30-1:15      Lunch**
- 1:15-2:00      Antecedents to the Concept of Societal Emotional Process:  
A Review of Archival Materials - *Catherine Murphy Rakow, M.S.W.*
- 2:00-2:30      *Flashes of Insight Beginning with the Day the Tree Fell on Our Roof & Opened a Pathway  
to New Insights about Human’s Relationships with Nature* - Pat Comella
- 2:30-3:00      *Whiteness Makes the World Go Round: Societal Regression and Racism* -  
Brianna Totty, L.M.F.T.
- 3:00-3:10      10 Minute Break**
- 3:10-4:15      Panel Discussion and Comments on the Day

## **Speaker Biographies**

**Mick Landaiche** – Dr. Landaiche has worked since 1989 as a psychotherapist and training supervisor with individuals, couples, and families in agency, university, and private-practice settings. He has also applied a systems approach to consulting for nonprofit and government organizations. He currently coordinates the Basic Seminar in Bowen Theory for the Western PA Family Center.

**Kathleen Carley** – Dr. Carley is a Professor of Computer Science in the Institute for Software Research, IEE Fellow, and Director of the Center for Computational Analysis of Social and Organizational Systems (CASOS) and Director of the Center for Informed Democracy and Social -Cyber security (IDeaS) of the Center at Carnegie Mellon University.

**Arthur Zipris** – Dr. Zipris is a licensed psychologist, practicing at the Pittsburgh Pastoral Institute, where he sees individuals, families, and couples. He has studied Bowen Family Systems Theory for over 30 years, and has done many presentations on different applications of the theory, both in Pittsburgh and elsewhere. He is also on the faculty of the Western Pa. Family Center, and has taught Family Systems theory for many years as an adjunct lecturer with the MFT program at Seton Hill. He is the primary author of the BFST workbook, and developed, along with other faculty members, the on-line program of the theory at the Family Center, as well as being a facilitator of the Basic Seminar at the Family Center.

**Father John Rushofsky** – A graduate of Clarion University (B.S.), Mount Saint Mary's Seminary (M.Div.) and Duquesne University (M.S.Ed.). Ordained a priest of the Diocese of Pittsburgh on September 29, 1979. Served several area parishes including St. Anne in Castle Shannon, St. John the Baptist in Plum Borough, founding pastor of St. Martin de Porres in McKeesport, and Director of Clergy Personnel for the Diocese of Pittsburgh (2000-2008). Currently pastor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish. Particularly interested in the application of Bowen Family Systems Theory to clergy/congregation relationships.

**Rosemarie Perla** – Ms. Perla is a licensed psychologist and professional certified coach. She has a company, Perla Coaching and Consulting, which offers organizational consulting and Leadership Coaching to companies and individuals.

**Sandra Caffo** – Ms. Caffo is a retired clinical social worker who received her MSW from Wayne State University and a Post Master's Certificate in Marriage & Family Therapy from the University of Pittsburgh where she later taught in the program. She began her study of Bowen family systems theory with the Basic Seminar in 1996 and has continued to study and apply the ideas to her own family, in clinical work and in business

Her career encompassed a clinical private practice, organization consultation and leadership coaching as part of a small firm, and 30 years work in the employee assistance field: first as a counselor and eventually as the executive director of an employee assistance company. She currently sits on several non-profit boards where she uses Bowen theory ideas in her role as board member.

**Walter Howard Smith, Jr.** – Dr. Smith is a trustee of the Casey Family Programs foundation based in Seattle Washington, and a board member of the Pittsburgh Foundation. He is the retired Deputy Director of Children Youth and Families and Clinical Director at the Allegheny County Department of Human Services. He is the retired executive director of Family Resources, a non-profit organization focused on child abuse prevention and treatment. He is a licensed psychologist with a private practice that specializes in treating children, families and couples.

**Catherine Murphy Rakow** – A graduate of the University of Pittsburgh, she studied Bowen family systems theory at the WPIC Family Therapy Institute and at the Georgetown Family Center. Mrs. Rakow is a licensed social worker retired from private practice. Currently, she is pursuing independent study of Dr. Bowen's research with families and schizophrenia conducted at the National Institute of Mental Health from 1954 to 1959 at the National Library of Medicine. Her interest is in how the observations of the live-in families contributed to the original theoretical concepts and how the data may yet contribute to extending Bowen theory.

**Pat Comella** – Ms. Comella's acquaintance with Bowen theory began in 1966. Serious study of the theory began in 1980. Over many decades, she has integrated Bowen theory into her professional life, including the practice of administrative law and the conduct of multinational negotiations to establish international standards of conduct involving peaceful uses of the atom. She was a member of the faculty of the Bowen Center for the Study of the Family (1993-2016), where she served on the organizing committees for many of the Center's spring conferences.

She has written and presented extensively about applications of Bowen theory to the study of societal issues and the human's relationship to the Earth. Her latest work "Extension of Bowen Theory to Include Natural Systems of Human Societies & Their Sustaining Environments," is found in the Keller-Noone edited "Handbook of Bowen Family Systems Theory & Research Methods: A Systems Model for Family Research."

Most of her career was in the USG, starting at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center, as a mathematician. She later served at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission where she became a Charter Member of the Senior Executive Service. Her last assignments were in the State Department, where she served as Vice Consul of the US Consulate in the Azores Portugal and as a Foreign Affairs Officer at Main State in the Bureau of Nonproliferation where she received the Department's Superior Honor Award for her contributions to negotiation of the Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material. Now fully retired, she uses her experience in pro bono work, with particular emphasis on environmental questions.

**Brianna Totty** –Ms. Totty is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in the city. In 2018 she launched her business, Choosing Destiny, LLC, with the mission of providing therapeutic services to couples, families, and individuals in need. Brianna joined The Center for Relational Change, where she is the Community Outreach Coordinator. Brianna has taught at the undergraduate and graduate levels, where she brought systemic thinking into the classroom and curriculum. Currently, Brianna is serving as the treasure for the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy’s topic group, Margins to Center: MFT’s of Color.

Brianna’s passion is around providing BIPOC a safe space to heal from systems of oppression and to create a space for thinking to possibly occur. Through her thinking she has observed the complexities of human interactions and relationships. She believes relationships and the individuals who are a part of them are interconnected and yet separate at the same time. This is the mindset and philosophy that Brianna takes into life with her and into relationships. Through thinking about relationships, we can better think about our individual selves and the way we choose to show up in the world around us.

**Tricia Collins** – Tricia is in her internship year of a counseling psychology doctoral program in Pittsburgh, PA. She has been studying Bowen Theory outside of her coursework after the theory was introduced in her own individual therapy with Dr. Zipris in 2018. She is currently taking the Bowen systems seminar for the first time.

**Allison Whitney** – Ms. Whitney has been engaged in learning Bowen’s Systems theory for over twelve years and had the privilege of building out her foundational work and thinking right here in Pittsburgh through the Center. Over the years, her BFST learning experience has been compounded by other various educational resources and events hosted around the country and the globe. One thing Allison is very clear about is that Bowen’s Systems Theory makes a hella lotta sense to her and predicts that there is a high probability she will gleefully pursue paths in life that allow for additional spacetime in exploring and applying the theory further. She currently holds the position of Board President for the Western PA Family Center.

**Christopher Burnett** - Dr. Burnett is an Associate Professor of Human Systems at the Department of Family Therapy in Nova Southeastern University. He is a faculty member of the Western Pennsylvania Family Center.