

**In the winter of 2010, Steven Behling, a member of the Section on Child Maltreatment, conducted an interview with Gail Goodman, Ph.D., the second President of the Section. The interview was conducted as part of a celebration of the Section's 15-year history. Below is a transcript of the interview.**

STEVEN BEHLING: Thanks Gail for taking the time to talk with me this evening. The first question is, who were the individuals leading the initiative to start a Section on child maltreatment?

GAIL GOODMAN: Well as I recall it was Dr. Barbara Bonner and Diane Willis and I think both were from the University of Oklahoma or thereabouts and I wasn't on the Executive Committee at the time so I'm not positive about who else might have been involved. It is possible Dr. Karen Saywitz was involved as well and Jeffrey Haugaard might have been also involved because he ended up being the first president.

STEVEN BEHLING: That makes sense. The 2<sup>nd</sup> question: why did they think the Section was needed and give me your own thoughts on why the section was needed?

GAIL GOODMAN: Well APA didn't really have any other forum specifically to address child maltreatment issues. It wasn't really focused on that topic and yet it was clear it was such an important topic. Since that time I have been on APA Council and I have actually been surprised at how few child and developmental issues they address.

STEVEN BEHLING: Wow.

GAIL GOODMAN: And so once I had that experience—actually in retrospect—I thought even more why the Section was needed so they would have a focus and a forum for child issues and child maltreatment issues specifically.

STEVEN BEHLING: Sounds like a definitely important aspect of Division 37. Any other reasons why the Section was needed at the time it was organized?

GAIL GOODMAN: I think child maltreatment has always, unfortunately, been with us but in those years there was still momentum for trying to bring attention to child maltreatment and solve the problem of child maltreatment and the realization of just how prevalent some forms of child maltreatment are in society and the devastating consequences it can have. So that was another motivation.

STEVEN BEHLING: I'm going to read to you the mission of the Section of Division 37 and then I'm going to ask you a question about whether it is still relevant 15 years later.

"The purpose of the Section shall be to promote the general objectives of the American Psychological Association and the Division of Child, Youth, and Family Services to support and encourage the development of the scientific study of child maltreatment and of sound professional practice relevant to child maltreatment, to provide up-to-date information about

maltreatment, to encourage networking across divisions and sections in the area of child maltreatment, and to advance scientific inquiry, training, and professional practice in the area of child maltreatment as a means of promoting the well being, health, and mental health of children, youth, and families". Do you feel this mission is still relevant 15 years later?

GAIL GOODMAN: Yes, definitely. You know child maltreatment can be very a controversial issue, and to have a forum for people who really have expertise in that area that APA and others can go to when issues of child maltreatment come up is really important; I think APA has relied on the Section at times when they needed that.

STEVEN BEHLING: What were the critical issues in child maltreatment at the time that you were president of the Section?

GAIL GOODMAN: Well one of the big ones while I was president, as I recall, was what was called the "Rind controversy".

STEVEN BEHLING: Ok, the Rind controversy. I know that very well. I did a paper on that in graduate school.

GAIL GOODMAN: Oh did you? Good for you! This, of course, was where the *Psychological Bulletin*, one of the most prestigious journals in psychology published by APA, came out with this article that basically caused a big uproar because they were doing a meta-analysis that said sex with children, especially adolescent boys if they were willing, was not necessarily a bad thing and one of the talk show hosts, Dr. Laura, had gotten her hands on that and Congress was about to sanction APA. So it was very good that the Section existed because APA came to us and we, of course, were already mounting our resources to respond to the whole controversy. So several of us in the Section wrote a counter article that appeared in the *Psychological Bulletin* countering what Rind et al had published and then others of us were asked to write an article for the *American Psychologist* as well and to help review brochures and pamphlets that would go out about child sexual abuse and various things like that. So that was quite a moment of time in the Section. There was an uproar on the other side where scientists were saying APA shouldn't censor journals and journal articles and shouldn't review or interfere with the peer review process and so there was a counter reaction because APA had agreed to try to ward off Congress sanctioning APA; it would be a big deal for APA to be sanctioned by Congress. To ward off a sanction, APA had agreed to do a little more monitoring of the journal, and that was very controversial to the scientists.

STEVEN BEHLING: Sounds like you guys organized the Section just in time.

GAIL GOODMAN: Hey, that's a good way of thinking about it! I had never thought about it that way.

STEVEN BEHLING: Because this happens during your year which was only the second year of the Section, correct?

GAIL GOODMAN: Was it the second? I can't remember whether it was the second year or whether the term was 2 years for president at that point.

STEVEN BEHLING: Well, that's a super critical issue during the time that you were president. Wow, I'm so glad you were there to help APA as they navigated such a difficult, controversial, and still talked about public article that was published. And again, the corresponding responses, I probably cited you. I'll have to go look to see if I cited one of your rebuttals!

GAIL GOODMAN: I wasn't the lead author so it might have been an et al.

STEVEN BEHLING: The Rind et al issue is definitely a big one. Any other critical issues in child maltreatment that you dealt with or addressed during your presidency?

GAIL GOODMAN: Boy, hard to remember if there was more. That was so dominant and so domineering.

STEVEN BEHLING: Right, I'm sure that kept you busy.

GAIL GOODMAN: Yeah, that kept us busy. I'm sure we did other things though. We were also putting out training material for classes on child maltreatment for the parents and also organizing symposia and talks for APA. We might have also been involved in a congressional briefing, but I've been involved in so many different divisions with APA and I'm trying to remember if it was Division 37 or Division 41, or it could have been my presidency of Division 37. But I know we did some congressional briefings for child maltreatment that Gary Melton helped organize.

STEVEN BEHLING: Now the courses on child maltreatment...were those for college students or professionals? Who were those targeted for?

GAIL GOODMAN: For college classes.

STEVEN BEHLING: Ok, so college courses.

GAIL GOODMAN: I think we also did them for high school classes as well. At least eventually.

STEVEN BEHLING: So then just a couple more questions and thanks again for taking the time to talk with me this evening. How has the field changed and what are the current challenges related to child maltreatment that the Section should be addressing at this time?

GAIL GOODMAN: How have they changed since I was president or just in general?

STEVEN BEHLING: Yes, since you were president, how has the field of child maltreatment changed?

GAIL GOODMAN: Well, I can't remember exactly when it happened. There used to be a national center on child abuse and neglect that was part of the federal government and they dissolved that after some of the preschool cases involving allegations of child sexual abuse. The federal government dissolved it and created an office on child abuse and neglect that hardly has any funding, so the funding on child abuse and neglect is much more difficult now and more diversified across different agencies that may or may not care about funding this kind of work. So that was one change that was unfortunate. It actually can be hard to get research funding on child abuse work because some of the necessary methodological and ethical issues one faces. Random assignment to groups can be difficult and some review panels are not sympathetic so I think that's one that I'd love to see changed back again.

STEVEN BEHLING: To have a federally funded center?

GAIL GOODMAN: Specifically that funded child abuse and neglect research.

STEVEN BEHLING: So when you said, and again since I'm fairly new to the field as well, you had said some of the issues of preschool sexual abuse...how would that impact or how would that lead to the government dissolving a bureau for that sort of thing?

GAIL GOODMAN: Well, the Martin preschool case and Little Rascals where there were potentially egregious interviewing of the children and possible false reports that were produced.

STEVEN BEHLING: Oh, as a consequence of some of the research being funded by the agency?

GAIL GOODMAN: Yes, some of the research was linked to the research funded by that center and some of the people who had helped start the center and very involved in the center.

STEVEN BEHLING: Well, I can see why that connection could potentially lead to dissolving that branch, but I think you're right, it is such a crucial thing that we need to make sure we're staying on top of and preventing and being able to fund it is key.

GAIL GOODMAN: Yeah and the agency specifically had research money and funding for child abuse research and conferences every year for the grantees. I can understand in retrospect perhaps, although I didn't think it was a good idea back then I can understand them needing to do something, but now it's a whole different era. It's a good time to rethink that and start again.

STEVEN BEHLING: Do you remember what the agency was called?

GAIL GOODMAN: It was called the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect. It was part of the federal Administration on Children and Families.

STEVEN BEHLING: So that's a really big way that the field had changed. Any other big changes that you can think of?

GAIL GOODMAN: Well, in my own specific area of studying children's testimony and child witnesses there's been a huge amount of research conducted and it has become a more worldwide endeavor. But that's just one little part of child abuse work

STEVEN BEHLING: But an important part.

GAIL GOODMAN: Thank you. I think so

STEVEN BEHLING: I think so for sure. So now looking at the field, what are some of the current challenges related to child maltreatment that you feel the Section should be addressing at this time?

GAIL GOODMAN: Well I just really see a need for psychology to better inform the whole child protective services system in terms of children's needs. For instance, a lot of child protective services agencies see their mandate as safety and permanence; but child well-being in terms of *emotional* well-being, they aren't prepared or can't handle that or they don't have that on their purview. For me, that should be the crux of child protective services and I think the Section possibly could do some work to help with that agenda or effort.

STEVEN BEHLING: In your experience, what would be the best way of going about doing that?

GAIL GOODMAN: That's a good question because there is such turf issues. I think it needs to come from the top, from the federal government probably. The federal government has child indicators that each state is supposed to report to the federal government every year about how kids in the child welfare system are doing and if the federal government is putting more emphasis on child well-being it would basically force the system to include that in what they do.

STEVEN BEHLING: So having the government mandate in those annual reports—having the child's wellbeing measured—in determining future funding...or things like that?

GAIL GOODMAN: And also from the bottom up, that was the top down approach, but from the bottom up I think the education in child welfare needs to have much more attachment theory and a deeper understanding of child development and psychological needs of children and children's mental health. We could do a lot more with foster parents, to support having better foster parents. And, of course, prevention. Wouldn't prevention be nice? A lot more pieces on prevention.

STEVEN BEHLING: So the last question that I have, and again thank you taking the time to talk with me tonight. How has your own career developed and changed since you were president of the section?

GAIL GOODMAN: Well my career has been really an interesting experience, especially given I was trained in neurocognitive development and then in my postdoctoral years and assistant professor years developed expertise in applying some of that education to child abuse, and that really opened up a whole new world to me. Since that time, I've continued publishing and getting grants and doing research on child maltreatment. The state of California approached me several years ago and helped me establish a center at the University of California at Davis where we work with the department of social services particularly on child maltreatment and child protection issues for the state. So in addition to my laboratory where I have my doctoral students and postdocs and the work we do on children as witnesses, we also now do a lot of work with the state government to try to assist in child protection issues. For instance, right now we're doing a huge survey of all newly trained 17 year olds in foster care as part of a federally required initiative called the National Youth in Transition Database Project and in California that involves surveying 6000 youth all over the nation about how they're doing. It's a big job and we have 45 days to survey each youth as they turn 17, so its time intensive. The goal is to follow a subset of youth over time as they turn 19 and 21 and resurvey them, and see how they're doing. I've learned a lot about the state government and how that works since I've been president. If I had to do it over I think I would have a much broader perspective now on the issues of child protection in the United States. I've also served as a faculty at the University of Oslo in Norway and helped establish a center dealing with childhood trauma, so I've also gotten a little more of an international perspective.

STEVEN BEHLING: And when did you do that?

GAIL GOODMAN: It was about 2 years ago; it had started 5 years before that.

STEVEN BEHLING: So you were there a long time?

GAIL GOODMAN: Well, I only went there a couple times a year because I still had my faculty position in Davis. I would go there for extended periods and teach classes and do research with them and then also do things from afar with them.

STEVEN BEHLING: Well sounds like you've been very busy for the cause of child maltreatment which is good to hear.

GAIL GOODMAN: Well thank you.