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LoPiccolo, Joseph

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Introduction

Dr. Joseph LoPiccolo has been one of the most significant clinical psychologists and researchers in the field of couple and sex therapy, with a particular focus on female sexual response. LoPiccolo has coauthored a book and many other publications in highly reputable professional journals. LoPiccolo currently resides in Columbia, Missouri, with his wife. In his free time, LoPiccolo enjoys spending time with his family, reading, hiking, and outdoor wildlife photography (a recent interest that developed after retiring from SCUBA diving and underwater photography).

Career

In 1965 LoPiccolo received his bachelor's degree from the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) majoring in psychology with a focus on research. As an undergraduate student, he worked with physical psychologist Richard E. Whalen, conducting research on the effects of estrogen on pregnant rats.

LoPiccolo went on to attend graduate school at Yale University earning his PhD in psychiatry. He had an internship at the Connecticut Health Center and became known as the designated sex therapist in his program. It was during this internship that LoPiccolo was introduced to Dr. William Masters who was a guest speaker at the university and among the professing psychiatrists.

In 1969, LoPiccolo was offered his first job at the University of Oregon, where he became the director of the psychology program. In 1974, LoPiccolo was recruited to work at SUNY Stony Brook in the Department of Psychiatry where he established the Sex Therapy Center, which served as a training, research, and service unit.

A decade later, LoPiccolo joined Texas A&M University as a professor in the Department of Psychiatry where he spent the next 3 years of his career until 1987, when University of Missouri sought him out to take over as the chair of the Department of Psychological Sciences. LoPiccolo officially retired from teaching in 2012 and is currently active as a Professor Emeritus at University of Missouri where he is available for consultation for the master's and doctoral students working on their clinical cases and ongoing research.

Contributions to the Profession

LoPiccolo has had a significant role in deepening our understanding of the treatment of sexual

dysfunction within the field of couple and family therapy. LoPiccolo dedicated his career to (a) researching sexual response and the most efficacious methods in practicing sex therapy and (b) the development of a treatment program for orgasmic dysfunction in women.

In 1974, LoPiccolo received a grant from the National Institute for Mental Health (NIMH) to fund his proposed research examining the effectiveness of couples therapy with a dual sex co-therapy team compared to a single therapist. Contrary to the model that Masters and Johnson had presented in their book, *Human Sexual Inadequacy* (1970), LoPiccolo believed that having a dual sex co-therapy team would not make a difference clinically and was impractical for most mental health providers in terms of staffing and insurance coverage.

Throughout the 3 years of this research study, LoPiccolo and his staff saw half of their cases alone and half as part of a co-therapy team. The therapists encouraged patients to share their feedback and speak up if they felt their issues were not being understood at any point; male therapists advised female patients that they had female therapists to consult with and vice versa. LoPiccolo and his team informed patients that both partners in a couple would be involved in therapy and all treatment changes would be collaborative ones. LoPiccolo's hypothesis that a dual sex co-therapy team would not produce any clinically relevant differences was supported and the grant was renewed.

The following NIMH study evaluated frequency of therapy sessions; patients were seen weekly over the course of 15 weeks, compared to having 15 sessions daily over 3 weeks; the latter was structured similarly to the program developed by Masters and Johnson where patients had to come to Saint Louis for treatment. LoPiccolo's research findings largely influenced how sex therapy is conducted with couples today – using a relational approach to address dysfunction and define therapy goals to treat the couple as the client, instead of focusing solely on an individual's problem. In response to his efforts in these

invaluable research studies, LoPiccolo received the “Masters and Johnson Memorial Award” from the Society of Sex Therapy and Research (SSTAR) and the “Alfred Kinsey Memorial Research Award” from the Society of Scientific Study on Sexuality (SSSS).

Another contribution for which LoPiccolo should be remembered, and by far his most significant contribution to the field, is his development of a treatment program for orgasmic dysfunction in women. LoPiccolo hired Julia Heiman, Ph.D., as his Associate Director for Research Services at the Sex Therapy Center, where they focused their understanding on the physiological and psychological contexts necessary to facilitate female orgasm. LoPiccolo and Heiman were asked to continue writing together and coauthored the book, *Becoming Orgasmic: A Sexual and Personal Growth Program for Women*, which was initially published in 1976 and has since generated a second edition and become available in five foreign languages and various countries.

Cross-References

- ▶ [Co-therapy Team](#)
- ▶ [Couple Therapy](#)
- ▶ [Orgasmic Dysfunction](#)
- ▶ [Sex Therapy](#)

References

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Joseph Paul LoPiccolo (April 28th 1918 – May 21st 1978) was a New York criminal and a soldier in Gambino crime family, he was also a member of Santo Trafficante, Jr.'s drug cartel. His specialty was narcotics trafficking. Born in Chicago, Illinois, on April 28, 1918, LoPiccolo was the son of Felipo and Margherita LoPiccolo. He had two brothers, Anthony and Frank, and two sisters, Loretta and Carmella.