

MARRIAGE, FAMILY AND SMALL GROUP THERAPY

OBJECTIVES:

In this course we will focus on the dyad and, to a lesser extent, the family as the target of clinical concern. We will review issues raised in theory and research that pertain to marital assessment, intervention, psychopathology, and determining outcome efficacy. The course uses the marital dyad as a model for evaluating numerous aspects of therapeutic intervention.

The major readings will be found in two current edited collections: *The Psychology of Marriage: Basic Issues and Applications*, edited by Fincham and Bradury (1990), and *Clinical Handbook of Marital Therapy*, edited by Jacobson and Gurman (1986). The two books are very different: one is essentially theory and research, the other is explicitly clinically focused. I also will select readings from other sources and make these available to you in the Taylor Room (Departmental Library or in the Reserve Book Room in the Library). I have placed two important volumes on reserve in the main library: Fletcher & Fincham (Eds.) (1991), *Cognition in Close Relationships*, and Gurman & Kniskern (Eds.) (1991) *Handbook Of Family Therapy, Vol. 2*. During the term I suspect an important special issue of *JCCP* devoted to marriage issues will appear; I will be hounding you to read some of these articles as well.

Many of the theoretical and applied issues that we encounter in this course as we attempt to understand marital therapy will also be useful to your understanding of other therapy modalities. The material from this course should transfer nicely to therapy in general. A unique feature of this content area (relative to a focus on individual therapies) is familiarity with a much broader psychosocial context for viewing assessment and intervention; learning how to read not just what people say they do, but how they function in their social contexts.

By taking this course you do not commit to taking the marriage practicum Winter and Spring terms. However, if you are planning on taking the marriage practicum it is recommended that you first take this course. The practicum will be offered only Winter and Spring terms this academic year.

Among the specific goals for this course are the following:

1. To examine the knowledge base for understanding adult intimacy from different psychological perspectives; what do some of the social psychological approaches offer to clinical researchers and therapists?
2. To examine specific models of marital dysfunction in terms of supporting research. What is the interplay between theory and empirical findings with regard to assessment and intervention? What are some of the issues in measuring the effectiveness of marital therapy?
3. To become familiar with the leading assessment approaches to marital and family dysfunction. What approaches seem most promising? What is the cost effectiveness of various approaches?
4. To examine specific relationships between various topics in psychopathology and marital-family functioning. Among the likely topics we will examine depression, alcoholic marriages, sexual dysfunctions, abuse, and families with a schizophrenic member.
5. To become aware of the unique ethical challenges encountered in doing marital and family therapy and research.

COURSE STRUCTURE

I wish to maintain a balance between the research and the applied aspects of the field. Although the course is not designed to teach specific marital intervention skills (those are covered in the Marriage practicum), students will have an opportunity nevertheless to learn about these techniques through readings and demonstrations. I plan on lecturing for the first half of each session, developing the issues and providing context for the readings and introducing new materials. The second half of each session will be devoted to either (a) clinical considerations (e.g., review of assessment devices, therapy techniques, case demonstrations, etc.) or (b) student-led clinical discussions on an assigned topic (e.g., strategic therapy, specific use of group therapy etc.). This will ensure that we divide our resources in terms of basic and applied considerations.

I have invited Karen Angel to be a contributor to the course and I am pleased that she has agreed to do so. Her role will be to assist me in lecture and discussion presentations. She will also be available as a resource person (e.g., with your papers, suggesting articles, and as a clinical adjunct person).

GRADING

The only requirements for this course are your class participation (based on the readings), taking responsibility for presenting material based on your term paper topic. Given that there are no formal exams I do expect you to do the readings so that you can speak and write in this area in an informed manner. Depending on class size, I plan on having members present the substance of their papers (not the completed paper!) as part of a lecture-discussion. We will work details of topics and times after we see how many people we have and what topics are to be covered.

I am very flexible as to the kind of paper you may choose to write. Length is negotiable according to topic requirements (e.g., a comparison paper may be longer than a psychopathology paper). Here are three suggestions for general categories that provide good writing opportunities:

1. Theory development-comparison paper

Critically examine an approach to marital, family or group therapy going beyond the coverage in class. For example, any of the psychodynamic approaches, the systems or, more specifically, strategic approaches, or the cognitive behavioral approaches, etc. For example, comparisons between Alexander's functional family therapy and other approaches such as those emphasized by Oregon Social Learning group may be interesting. You may also consider various enrichment and/or prevention approaches. Some specific examples:

Select three from among the four larger categories and compare--

- (a) Strategic/Systems Models -- Haley et al., Minuchin, Bowen
- (b) Behavioral/Social Learning Models-- Patterson, Wahler, Alexander
- (c) Cognitive-Behavioral Models-- Baucom and Epstein, Ellis
- (d) Integrationist Models

2. Marital and family assessment/intervention methodologies

What are the conceptual and methodological issues in assessing relationships? What approaches are available, what are their strengths and weaknesses. This type of paper can also include approaches for evaluating outcome effectiveness.

Such a paper would have a heavier methodological bent than some of the other options (e.g., consideration of meta-analyses, use of change scores, problems in defining outcome measures, etc.). Some specific examples--

Intervention Issues

- Marital therapy as treatment for depression
- Measuring effectiveness of marital and family therapies
- Prevention/enrichment programs: fact or fantasy

3. Marital/family therapy for specific groups and/or psychopathologies

Here the focus is on some clinical problem treated within the context of marital or family therapy. The emphasis is on the intersection of the treatment and the psychopathology, not just the psychopathology. Thus in the case of depression we would want to focus on treating depression in the context of marital therapy, rather than dealing with the etiology of depression or a complete review of treatments for depression. An interesting area is the relationship between marital adjustment and physical health status (e.g., stress and adjustment). Does marital functioning influence physical health? How so? What are marital-family treatments for eating disorders or agoraphobia? (Lots of possibilities here.) Some specific examples of issues--

- Depression and marriage
- Role of Expressed Emotion in family functioning (schizophrenia and depression)
- Health issues (broadly) and marital functioning
- Alcoholic and drug related marriages
- Spouse abuse
- Children: effects on marital adjustment

4. The Ethical, Cultural, and Socio-political Context of Marital and Family Therapies

Are marital and family therapies guilty of promoting the status quo? Do they adequately serve members of diverse groups? Should feminist issues, raised in the context of marital and family therapy, be taken seriously in order to offer effective therapy? What are the limitations of marital and family therapy? What are the contraindications to such therapies?

In all of the above instances (as well as any that you may define for yourself) please be sure to cover relevant empirical studies.

My plan is to have as much student involvement as practical while also being able to provide a broad exposure to this area. Karen and I will gladly assist you in locating materials and making suggestions for your paper.

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READINGS

F&B = Fincham & Bradbury; F&F = Fletcher & Fincham (Reserve);
G&K = Gurman & Kniskern (Reserve); J&G = Jacobson & Gurman

I. Adult Intimacy: Social Psychological Facets [9/25 - 10/7]

The social psychology of marriage: *Levinger & Huston*, F&B Chapt. 1

Gender differences and sex role identity in marriage: *Baucom, Notarius, Burnett & Heffner*, F&B Chapt. 5

Children and marriage: *Belsky*, F&B Chapt. 6

Employment and marital functioning: *Barling*, F&B Chapt. 7

II. Assessing Relationships: Conceptual and Clinical Issues [10/7 - 10/21]

The study of interdependence in marriage: *Robbins*, F&B Chapt. 2

Observation of marital interaction: *Weiss & Heyman*, F&B Chapt. 3

Cognition in marriage: *Fincham & Bradbury*, F&B Chapt. 4

III. Models of Marital Therapy [10/21 - 11/4]

(Note: See *Gurman and Kniskern* for fuller accounts of models)

A contextual model for the advancing the study of marital interaction; *Brdbury & Fincham*, F&F chapt. 6

Theoretical orientations in the treatment of marital discord: *Segraves*, F&B Chapt. 9

Psychoanalytic marital therapy: *Dare*, J&G Chapt. 2

Marital therapy: a social learning cognitive perspective: *Jacobson & Holtzworth-Munroe*, J&G Chapt. 3

Structural-strategic marital therapy: *Todd*, J&G Chapt. 4

Bowen family systems marital therapy: *Aylmer*, J&G Chapt. 5

Emotionally focused couples therapy: *Greenberg & Johnson*, J&G Chapt. 10

Integrating marital therapy and enrichment: The Relationship Enhancement Approach: *Guerney, Jr., Brock, & Coufal*, J&G Chapt. 6

Prevention: *Markman, Floyd, Stanely, & Lewis*, J&G 7

IV. Psychopathology and Therapeutic Applications to Special Groups [11/4 - 12/2]

Marriage and psychopathology: *Gotlib & McCabe*, F&B Chapt. 8

Strategic marital therapy for depression: *Coyne*, J&G Chapt. 22

Sexual dysfunction and marriage; *Heiman & Verhulst*, F&B Chapt. 10

Treating sexually distressed marital relationships; *Heiman*, J&G Chapt. 16

Physical aggression in marriage: *O'Leary & Vivian*, F&B Chapt. 12

The treatment of marital violence: *Rosenbaum & O'Leary*, J&G Chapt. 17

Marital therapy with schizophrenic patients: *Anderson, Reiss, & Cahalane*, J&G Chapt. 24

Marital therapy in the treatment of alcoholism: *O'Farrell*, J&G Chapt. 23

Marital therapy for narcissistic disorders: *Lansky*, J&G Chapt. 25

V. Accountability: Efficacy and Ethics [12/2 - 12/9]

The effectiveness of marital therapy: current status and application to clinical setting; *Baucom & Hoffman*, J&G Chapt. 27

Social Cognition and the relationship repair process: Toward better outcome in marital therapy; *Beach*, F&F 12

Ethical issues in marital therapy: *Margolin*, J&G Chapt. 28

Values and ethics in family therapy: *Doherty & Boss*, G&K Chapt. 20

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SYLLABUS

9/30 Introduction, course organization, psychosocial approaches
Demonstration: Tape of "Fighting Couples"

10/7 Assessing Relationships: Conceptual and Clinical Issues
Demonstration: Specific assessment devices

10/14 Assessment Cont'd
Behavioral observation

10/21 Models of Marital Therapy
Conceptualizing cases

10/28 Models con't
Presentation:

11/4 Psychopathology and Therapeutic Applications to Special Groups
Presentation:

11/11 Depression
Presentation:

11/18 Sexual and Abuse Issues
Presentation:

11/25 Schizophrenia and all others
Presentation:

12/2 Measuring Efficacy: Accountability
Presentation:

12/9 Ethical Considerations
Presentation: