

COUPLING: AN INTERPERSONAL PERSPECTIVE ON ADULT DEVELOPMENT

Mary-Joan Gerson, Ph.D.

This course will focus on the dynamics of intimate, dyadic relationships. We will first examine how the capacity for intimacy develops from a multiplicity of psychoanalytic perspectives. The psychoanalytic perspectives will be buttressed by and integrated with relevant readings in the family systemic as well as the attachment literature.

We will look at how relationships repeat and reinvent early experience, as well as how therapy—both individual and couples--can expand relationship schema. I will encourage slightly extended presentations, ask for brief vignettes and will show relevant videotaped material.

Week One: Psychoanalytic perspectives

I: Didactic presentation followed by group discussion of the following questions:

How is intimacy viewed psychoanalytically as well as culturally and systemically? What is the nature of the self in relationship? How do the Interpersonal, Freudian and Object Relational views of intimacy differ?

III Case Presentation

Readings:

"The Tango of Integration in Couples Therapy". 2015. In J. Bresler & K. Starr (Eds), Relational Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy Integration (pp. 197-210. . New York: Routledge Press.

Mitchell, S. (1997). Psychoanalysis and the degradation of romance. Psychoanalytic Dialogues. 1 (1), 23-42.

Catherall, D.R. (1992). Working with Projective Identification in Couples. Family Process, (31) 4, 355-368.

Sullivan, H.S. (1964). The illusion of personal individuality. In Fusion of Psychiatry and Social Science. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc. pp. 215- 221.

Recommended:

**Ruschyynski, S. (1993). Chapter 11: Thinking about and working with couples. In Psychotherapy with Couples: Theory and Practice at the Tavistock Institute of Marital Studies. Ed. By St. ruszczynski. London: Karnac Books.

**Kernberg,O.F. (1995). Love relations: normality and pathology. Chap. 6:Aggression, love and the couple.

Coontz, S. (2005). Marriage: A History. New York: Viking Press. Pp. 1-47.
New Haven: Yale University Press.

Learning Objectives:

1. Identify the multiple psychoanalytic perspectives on the development of the capacity for adult intimacy.
2. Conceptualize the nature of the self in relationship, including reciprocal co-construction, multiplicity of self states, and conflicts about dependency versus autonomy.
3. Conceptualize how intimacy is viewed from the perspective of family systems theory.
4. Develop an awareness of the cultural and historical context for the shifting ideas about adult bonding.

Week Two: Attachment Theory, Gender, Culture and Therapeutic Action

I. A presentation and discussion of attachment theory from a couples perspective. How does attachment theory inform a psychoanalytic/systemic perspective?

II. Didactic presentation followed by discussion of the following questions: How do we view intimacy from the lens of gender theory? How does cultural context and alternative family structures influence bonding and intimacy?

III.A videotape presentation as well as case vignettes will illustrate the readings.

Readings:

Johnson, S.M. & Whiffen, V.E. (1999). Made to measure: adapting emotionally focused couple therapy to partners' attachment styles. Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice, 6 (4),366-381.

Goldner, V. (2014). Romantic Bonds, Binds and Ruptures: Couples on the Brink. Psychoanalytic Dialgoues, 24, 402-418.

Falicov, C.J. (1992). Love and gender in the Latino marriage. AFTA Newsletter

Minuchin, S. S. (1981). Constructing a Therapeutic Reality. In E. Kaufman & P.N. Kaufman. Family Therapy of drug and alcohol abuse. New York: Gardner Press

Shimmerlik, S.M. (2008). Implicit Communication Processes in Couples. Panel presentation at annual meeting of Division 39, Section VIII.

Recommended:

**Greenan, D.E. and Tunnel, G. (2002). Couple Therapy with Gay Men. Chap. 1: The marginalization of gay couples; Chapter 2: Implications for Man-to-Man Closeness. N.Y.: Guilford Press.

**Iasenza, S. (2010). What is queer about sex? Expanding sexual frames in theory and practice. Family Process, 49 (2), 291-308.

**Scheinkman, M. (2005). Beyond the trauma of betrayal: reconsidering affairs in couples therapy. Family Process, 44 (2), pp. 227-244.

**Gerson, M.J. (2016) Unknowable, Unspeakable, and Unsprung.: Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Truth, Scandal, Secrets and Lies. Eds. J. Petrucelli and S. Schoen., New York: Routledge Press. Chapter 26: Privacy, self and other: Offline and On.

Learning Objectives:

1. Develop a working model of attachment theory as it relates to adult bonding.
2. Identify the specific aspects of clinical work with couples which derive from attachment theory.
2. Conceptualize the diversity of cultural perspectives on adult intimacy.
3. Identify the parameters of sexual choice and behavior as they relate to adult bonding, including assumptions about exclusivity, sexual identity, and privacy.

Week Three: Personal History; Expanding Interpersonal Awareness

I. Discussion of the therapeutics of intimacy. What is the place of personal history in the re-creation of relationship difficulties? How can reciprocal and circular dynamics be captured in the here and now? What approaches can the couples therapist use to intervene in order to expand relationship experience?

II. Didactic presentation: further exploration of couples therapy from an integrative perspective. Discussion: What is the nature of transference and counter-transference in couples therapy? What are the specific approaches that distinguish couples from individual therapy? Does simultaneous psychoanalytic and couples treatment enrich or muddle therapeutic action?

III. Videotape and case presentation

Readings :

Wachtel, E.F. (2016) The Heart of Couples Therapy. New York: Guilford Press. Chapter 8: The Genogram: A window into the Psyche

Marlin, E. (1989). Genograms. Chicago: Contemporary Books, Chapter 3.

Fulmer,R.(2003). Reframing in family therapy and psychoanalysis. Paper presented in seminar series, Project in Family Theory and Therapy, N.Y.U. Postdoctoral Program.

Maltas,C. 2001. The dialectics of individual and interpersonal change in couples. Paper presented at Panel sponsored by Division 39, APA meeting in San Francisco.

Gerson, M.J. 2009. The Embedded Self: An Integrative Psychodynamic and Systemic Perspective On Couples and Family Therapy (2nd edition). Taylor & France, The Analytic Press. Chapter 9: Interventions in family therapy; Chapter 10: The therapeutic relationship.

Gerson, M.J. (2009) Ibid. Chap. 12: Referrals: who? when? where?

Recommended:

Fishbane, M.D. (2011). Facilitating relational empowerment in couple therapy. Family Process, 50 (3), 337-353.

Leone, C. (2013). The unseen spouse:pitfalls and possibilities for the individual therapist. Psychoanalytic Dialogues, 23(3), 324-339. Discussion: Gerson, M.J. (2013). The analyst and the significant other: two's company, three's a crowd: Commentary on paper by Carla Leone.

**Berkowitz, D.A. (1999). Reversing the Negative Cycle: Interpreting the Mutual Influence of Adaptive, Self-Protective Measures in the Couple. Psychoanalytic Quarterly, LXVIII, pp. 559-583.

Gottman, J. M. (2009). The Marriage Clinic: A Scientifically Based Marital Therapy. New York: W.W. Norton, 2009. Chapter 6: Assumptions and Intervention Overview.

Learning Objectives:

1. Identify how personal history is garnered from a systems perspective and how that approach differs from the psychoanalytic inquiry.
2. Examine the approaches to couples treatment from a systemic, psychoanalytic and integrative perspective.
3. Conceptualize the view of the significant other in individual psychoanalytic treatment and how that view can be expanded from a systemic perspective.

4. Reflect on treatment choice, e.g., individual, couples or combined treatment relevant to the presenting problem.