

AMERICAN FAMILY THERAPY ACADEMY, INC.

*SUPPORTING COUPLES, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITIES TO
LIVE AND LOVE FULLY ACROSS THE CIRCLE OF LIFE – WITH
A PLANET IN CRISIS*

**BRIEF PRESENTATION
AND INTEREST GROUP
DESCRIPTIONS**

BRIEF PRESENTATION DESCRIPTIONS

Thursday, June 27, 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM

BRIEF PRESENTATIONS

Differentiation of Self: A Multicultural Model

Presenter: Mariana Juras

Bowen's theory and formulated concepts have been continuously studied. Differentiation of Self has consistently demonstrated its impact on physical, emotional, and social well-being and adjustment. However, most of these studies have been conducted in Western countries with ethnic majority populations, with growing literature about its applicability to ethnically diverse people. This presentation will 1) include a discussion of results from several countries that examined the differentiation of self and its four dimensions (emotional reactivity, I-position, emotional cut-off, and fusion with others) in relationship with several outcomes; and 2) propose a multicultural model for the concept of differentiation of self, considering variances between independent and interdependent cultures, that foster different values regarding connection and separation from family of origin and other people. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Understand the differences between the concepts of autonomy and independence; (2) Reflect on the dynamic process of differentiation of self that varies across developmental stages in a constant movement between connection and separation from family of origin; and (3) Engage in discussion about multicultural variances and different optimal levels of differentiation of self, considering cultures that foster independence or interdependence.

Systems 2.0: Systemic Constellations - Informing and Transforming Our Clinical Practice and Beyond

Presenter: Linda Longo-Lockspeiser

Constellation work is a way of seeing how systems work in real time. It is a process originally designed for a group setting with participants standing in as representatives for the relevant members or attributes in the client's story. It uses the facts of the story, the reports of the somatic experience of the representatives, and the systemic orders of love to guide the process of uncovering the unseen dynamics operating in chronic symptoms. Beyond group, however, Constellation principles and practices can be easily integrated not only into our way of thinking about our clients' dilemmas but also in what we focus on and how we intervene. These principles and practices can be useful especially with seemingly intractable problems and patterns in the clinical setting with individuals, couples, and families, as well as in supervision and consultation, and beyond. This is especially urgent in a world that is struggling with unacknowledged and unhealed intergenerational issues not only in families but in the larger society we live in. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** (1) Participants will identify the systemic Orders of Love supporting Family Constellation work; (2) Participants will identify ways they can integrate the theory and practices of Constellation work into their present work setting; and (3) Participants will recognize how consciously holding Constellation principles can expand their understanding of the healing process.

BRIEF PRESENTATION DESCRIPTIONS

Thursday, June 27, 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM

BRIEF PRESENTATIONS

Bringing Family Therapy to Trans Youth

Presenter: May R Fianna

Trans youth experience rates of physical assault, sexual assault, homelessness, and suicide attempts many times their cisgender peers. But one factor protects trans children from these outcomes: family support. After nearly a decade of experience, I share my hard learned lessons for working with families of trans youth using family systems theory. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Name risk factors affecting trans youth; (2) Translate family systems theory for use with trans youth; and (3) Understand the lived experiences of trans youth and their families.

Child Sexual Abuse in Countries of Former Yugoslavia

Presenter: Jelisaveta-Sanja Rolovic

Over the past two decades and in the aftermath of socio-political violence that resulted in the breakup of Yugoslavia, all countries have faced many challenges from legislative to social and healthcare reform policies. Throughout the years of turmoil, in order to address child maltreatment, significant legislative measures have been undertaken to facilitate the protection of children from abuse and neglect. In 2009, Serbia officialized a special protocol, mandating all healthcare providers, social welfare workers and the police to protect children from abuse. However, despite these efforts, there remains a culture of profound social stigma around discussion of CSA which leads to a trend of under-reporting by children and families. Furthermore, it prevents health care workers from providing adequate services to children who have been victims of sexual abuse. This is the first study to examine mental health care workers' perceptions and beliefs of CSA, as well as their competence in dealing with such issues in this part of the world. We surveyed psychologists (n=250), pediatricians (n = 358), pediatricians in Montenegro, and 60 pediatricians in Republic of Srpska-RS (Bosnia and Herzegovina) on their encounters with CSA in their practice, their competence in dealing with such issues and their beliefs about the nature of CSA. In this brief presentation, I present findings and we invite you all to join in discussing the ways of overcoming social, institutional, and professional biases as well as the stigma surrounding child sexual abuse (CSA) in countries of the Former Yugoslavia. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Discuss reasons for underreporting CSA worldwide; (2) Discuss ways we can offer educational and psychosocial support to enhance the ability to recognize signs of CSA and speak openly with patients; and (3) Discuss how we can help create a collaborative/learning environment for healthcare providers, social welfare workers, policy makers one which will facilitate an open dialogue.

A Microanalysis of Practitioner Influence on Patient/Practitioner Conversations

Presenters: Vaida Kazlauskaitė, Benjamin Finlayson, and Sara Jordan

Medical family therapy (MedFT) is a growing critical component of our health care system and CFT curriculum. Flattening hierarchy in clinical judgment are discussed in the literature as important concepts (Aasland et al., 2018; Laderman et al., 1999). We believe that language reflects these constructs and can be analyzed through the use of Microanalysis of face-to-face dialogue (MFD). Microanalysis of face-to-face dialogue (MFD) is the detailed and replicable examination of any aspect of observable communicative behavior as it occurs, moment by moment, in face-to-face dialogue (Bavelas et al., 2012). Microanalysis of face-to-face dialogue captures precise, moment-by-moment exchanges in dialogue. MFD has been used to

examine various types of interactions such as the language of accountability within apologies of crimes committed against Aboriginal peoples by Canadian churches (Bavelas, 2004; Bavelas & Gerwing, 2014), the language of violence used in court hearings that promoted consensuality rather than violent offense (Coats et al., 1994; Bavelas & Coates, 2001). This study examines what words/phrases the practitioners use are later adopted by the patient. This work builds on the analysis of patient/practitioner dialogue of formulations (summaries; Finlayson, Kazlauskaitė, & Jordan, 2023). The application of this work illustrates common practices between provider and patient, a relevant topic of MedFT. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Identify and define the process and use of microanalysis; (2) Recognize how microanalysis illustrates the practitioners influence on dialogue; and (3) Gain insight on practitioner/patient interactional process.

Still Radical After all these years: Whole Family Care in Cancer Care

Presenters: Talia I. Zaider and Peter Steinglass

Background/Theme: Seminal work in the field of medical family therapy has supplied us with roadmaps for understanding the family's experience with serious illness. Yet in oncology, these frameworks are rarely put into practice. The prevailing approach to cancer care engages the caregiving system in parts vs whole, with role designations (e.g., "patient", vs "caregiver") dictating how psychosocial support is designed and delivered. When supporting families affected by cancer, clinicians in this setting struggle to maintain the 'double vision' needed to simultaneously honor patient and family perspectives. Purpose: The overarching purpose of this presentation is to provide an overview of support and dissemination strategies that have been implemented at a major cancer center to advance a paradigm of whole-family care. Goals: Specific goals of this presentation are: (1) To describe interventions delivered collectively to the patient and family affected by cancer (e.g., Multiple Family Discussion Groups for management of chronic treatment and post-treatment survivorship; Family Focused Grief Therapy in Palliative Care); (2) To describe training interventions directed to oncology clinicians seeking to better partner with families (e.g., Communication Skills Training Program); (3) To discuss our successes and struggles in introducing a family-as-patient perspective in the medical care setting. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Learn about the unique benefits and challenges of providing family therapy in a cancer care setting; (2) Learn about specific interventions that have been tested and implemented to advance whole-family care in the setting of chronic and advanced cancer; and (3) Learn about existing training interventions to disseminate family engagement strategies among medically trained oncology providers.

Therapeutic Obstacles Working with Asian Americans

Presenters: Alexander Hsieh, Hao-Min Chen, Li Ping Su-Kubricht, and Tabitha Webster

Asian Americans have historically underutilized mental health resources although the level of mental health struggles have been comparable to other cultures. This workshop seeks to present a qualitative study looking at the experience of therapeutic obstacles which divert Asian Americans from seeking therapeutic services. The presenters will introduce the themes emerged from the qualitative data and the corresponding researched interventions recommended. Themes include lack of trust in therapists and in therapy in general, language barrier and lack of cultural understanding by therapists, fear of therapists being racist, and risk of being blamed by therapists for my problem. The presenters will also include empirically valid therapeutic interventions that could aid clinicians working with Asian American individuals, couples, and families to address these obstacles identified by the research participants. For example, techniques that would build therapeutic trust, such as joining and cultural humility, can improve clients' lack of trust in therapists and their feelings of lack of cultural understanding by therapists. Externalizing interventions and questions may be used to separate the clients and their problems and to reduce the risk of clients feeling blamed by therapists for their problems. Situating comments may also help the clients to understand where the therapists are coming from and promote therapeutic alliance by facilitating understanding. The specific interventions seek to directly combat therapeutic obstacles and give therapists a more culturally competent and humble approach to working with Asian Americans in therapy. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) List the obstacles Asian and Asian American clients encounter in mental health services; (2) Identify empirically valid therapeutic interventions that could aid clinicians

working with Asian or Asian American individuals, couples, and families to address these obstacles; and (3) Apply these empirically valid therapeutic interventions to address these obstacles.

Parent-child Relationships in South Asian Families

Presenters: Rajeswari Natrajan-Tyagi, Shruti Poulsen, Cristina Diaz, and Irene Su

The South Asian (SA) American population in the U.S. includes individuals who trace their ancestry to Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. SA individuals are reported to be at risk for suicide, depression, anxiety, and domestic violence (Raleigh, 1996; Rastogi & Suthakaran, 2004). Research studies in the U.S. have focused on Asian Americans as a group with few studies focusing on South Asians. The purpose of the study was to study the perspectives of second-generation SA adolescents regarding their experiences within the parent-child relationship and its impact on their intra-personal and inter-personal functioning. In this qualitative study ten adolescents ranging from 13-17 years of age were interviewed, followed by two focus group interviews to verify the findings. The SA adolescents identified several nuances of communication dynamics within their families, disciplinary strategies, and common parent-child conflicts, including the challenges and opportunities faced by second generation adolescents. After the presentation of the results of the study, the authors will discuss a bicultural parenting framework that can help guide parents on how to approach parenting their second-generation children in a way that helps them root their children to their cultural traditions and values and also honor the way of life and values of the dominant White American culture (Ochocka & Janzen, 2008; Papastergiadis, 2000). The presenters will also share clinical examples of parenting related concerns that may emerge in family therapy with South Asian-Indian families and provide information on working with first generation immigrant parents on responsive bi-cultural parenting.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: Participants will: (1) Identify the specific communication patterns and dynamics within the parent-child relationships of second-generation South Asian American adolescents and their first-generation parents; (2) Assess the impact of the family communication patterns and dynamic on both the intra-personal development (i.e. emotional well-being, self-esteem etc.) and inter-personal development (i.e. relationship with parents, social interactions and peer relationships) of the adolescents; and (3) Describe a framework for bicultural parenting that is responsive to the experiences of both the immigrant parents and their second-generation children.

BRIEF PRESENTATION DESCRIPTIONS

Thursday, June 27, 12:45 - 2:15 PM

BRIEF PRESENTATIONS

Healing Power of Green Spaces

Presenters: Nakisha Castillo, Melani Natneil, Sara Lee, and Martha Morgan

The purpose of this presentation is to discuss the importance of having green spaces in our community and the impact of it on human holistic well-being. Presenters will draw on insights from reputable sources such as the American Psychological Association (APA), the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), Mental Health America, and the National Institute of Health (NIH), our clinical experience, as well as the lived experiences of our clients, underscores the significant influence of the environment on human behavior and relationships. It becomes evident that individuals with limited access to green spaces may encounter a heightened presence of negative mental health symptoms compared to those with more abundant exposure to nature. This lack of access to green spaces manifests as a holistic impact, affecting spiritual, mental, physical, and psychological well-being. The client's surroundings play a pivotal role in shaping how they interact with and respond to stressors as it impacts their mental well-being. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Gain an understanding of the impacts of accessing green spaces; (2) Learn the specific benefits and risk of having limited access to green spaces on a person's well-being; and (3) Engage in activities providing them with tools to promote the benefits of accessing green spaces in order to live a meaningful life.

The Virtual Third: Online Couples Therapy

Presenter: Alon Aviram

This presentation introduces "The Virtual Third," an innovative framework poised to offer fresh insights into online couples therapy. It combines social constructionism, the technology acceptance model, and ecological systems theory, providing a lens for understanding nuanced dynamics in virtual therapeutic settings. Central to this framework is the concept of the online environment as a 'third entity,' integral to the therapeutic process. We'll explore how this virtual dimension enhances telepresence, deepens the therapeutic alliance, and navigates boundaries, addressing the unique, intersectional sociocultural needs of diverse couples. Our discussion will delve into practical strategies for therapists to leverage the power of the Virtual Third, enhancing therapy outcomes. This involves tailoring approaches to couples' distinct sociocultural contexts, reducing relational disparities, and marginalization. We'll emphasize the model's ability to promote fairness and inclusivity in therapeutic practices, demonstrating how technology can drive social change and influence policy reform. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Learn about the Virtual Third framework, its theoretical underpinnings combining social constructionism, technology acceptance, and ecological systems theory, and its application in online couples therapy; (2) Gain practical strategies for enhancing telepresence, strengthening the therapeutic alliance, and effectively managing therapeutic boundaries in the context of diverse sociocultural backgrounds of couples; and (3) Equip therapists with insights on how online couples therapy can address relational inequities, marginalization, and the interplay between human systems and their ecological context.

Community Sense and Religiosity in Bisexuals of Color

Presenter: Rashmi Gangamma

Contributor: Anh-Khoi Nguyen Le

Our presentation aims to discuss the relevance of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) community connectedness and religiosity in alleviating the negative impact of homophobia and race-based and sexuality-based discomfort on psychological well-being among bisexual individuals of color (BIOCs). A fraction of studies dedicated to sexual and gender minorities presented distinct results for bisexual participants. Only seven percent of those published articles reported results for those who also self-identified with a minoritized ethnic-racial identity (Ghabrial & Ross, 2018). The lack of studies at this intersection of identities that are often invisible in dominant discourses is problematic and limits our understanding of factors that may contribute to their well-being. Therefore, we want to shed light on this underdeveloped area and promote the audience's understanding of the population and crucial mechanisms that play a significant role in facilitating its members' well-being. We will present our quantitative study built upon the minority stress model and intersectionality theory. A path analysis was examined to test our hypotheses. Overall, the hypothesized path model demonstrated a good fit to the observed data. Furthermore, only perceived homophobia and sexuality-based discomfort displayed direct effects on well-being. While LGB community connectedness partially mediated the impact of perceived homophobia, religiosity mediated fully and partially, respectively, the influence of race-based and sexuality-based discomforts on well-being. Our study shows that although BIOCs face multiple challenges, they have unique ways of drawing strength from multiple communities of support. We will discuss relevant clinical implications and future research directions with the audience through the presentation. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Recognize the intersection of external and internal forms of minority stress; (2) Interpret different pathways through LGB community connectedness and religiosity that minority stress can impact BIOCs' well-being; and (3) Formulate conceptualization and helping plans in clinical work with BIOCs.

Incorporating Trauma Theory and Intervention into Core Curriculum of SW

Presenter: Linda Batson

Introduction: In the last two decades, communities in the United States have experienced multiple epidemics that impacted attitudes and behavior and changed how we manage living as individuals, families, and communities. The opioid epidemic, violence in school, an increase in the rate of suicide, and an increase in illicit drug use converged with the COVID-19 pandemic and has a profound impact on our daily life. More clients are presenting with trauma symptoms, including anxiety, aggressive behaviors, adjustment disorders, and hypervigilance. Master of Social Work students are not prepared to diagnose and treat trauma clients due to a lack of education and training regarding trauma theory, assessment, and interventions (Abrams & Shapiro, 2014; Goodwin & Tiderington, 2022; Strand et al., 2014). **Objective:** This article aims to advocate for the inclusion of trauma theory, assessment, and intervention in the core curriculum for social work graduate education. **Study Design:** A conceptual content analysis of student handbooks, curricula, or course descriptions was conducted. A sample size of twenty-four programs listed in the New York State Schools was used in the analysis. **Results:** Based on this analysis, the core curriculum does not indicate the word trauma. **Discussion:** Clinicians and social workers require education in trauma theory and have a clear understanding of trauma symptoms and effective interventions to treat trauma symptoms. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Gain knowledge on the value of establishing a trauma theory framework; (2) Identify prevalent trauma symptoms exhibited by clients; and (3) Learn where they can secure training on evidence-based interventions.

Incorporating Resilience Models in Clinical Training: Writing Strength-Based Treatment Plans

Presenters: Martha Morgan and Christie Eppler

Resilience is finding environments of comfort and ease, overcoming and coping with adversity, finding purpose in challenges and change, and focusing on interconnections and personal strengths. The ability to survive, cope, and flourish in the face of

transitions contributes to resilience. These constructs are central to therapy, but new clinicians often do not know how to integrate client problems, family therapy theories and models, and the traits and processes that contribute to resilience. The purpose of this presentation is to explore how concepts from resilience frameworks can be incorporated in clinical training, especially writing theory-informed, strength-based treatment plans to assist clients in living fully. Family therapy theories and models, when viewed from a resilience-based lens, can guide clinicians to facilitate and document growth and positive outcomes for the individuals, couples, families, and groups they serve. This presentation will emphasize the ways in which instructors and supervisors can use resilience theory and evidence-based resilience concepts in case conceptualization and treatment planning to assist trainees in their work with aiding clients in living more full lives. Participants will explore these ideas through case examples and interactive activities. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Learn about the importance of emphasizing resilience when applying family therapy theories and models; (2) Learn to amplify clients' strengths when developing theory driven treatment plans; and (3) Engage in interactive activities to aid in resilience focused treatment plans.

Intimate Witnessing Practices: Love and Justice in Narrative Couples Therapy

Presenters: Tom Carlson and Sanni Paljakka

This presentation will highlight a unique approach to couples therapy that centers partners' relational and ethical commitments as the site of accountability, love, and justice in intimate relationships. We will share how therapy is awesome and better. Drawing on Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy's and Michael White's unique ideas on relational ethics, as well as a feminist analysis of power relations, this presentation will highlight a unique approach to couples therapy that centers partners relational and ethical commitments as the site of both accountability and change in couple relationships. The Intimate Witnessing approach to couples therapy seeks to help partners to: 1) experience an intimate appreciation for the shaping effects that their actions have on their stories of self; 2) take a position of accountability for the ways that their actions may have intentionally or unintentionally shaped their partner's stories in ways that go against their best hopes, and 3) enter into intentional relationship practices that shape their partner's stories in more preferred and loving ways. This ethics centered approach to couples therapy relies on a unique practice called "Intimate Witnessing Practices" where partners are asked to take a radically relational perspective by stepping into and speaking from inside the experience of their partner. This approach dramatically decreases the defensiveness that is so common in couple relationships and increases partners' capacity for acknowledgment and accountability. This presentation will include many examples of our own work with couples through therapeutic poems, transcripts and videos of our most recent work applying these ideas with couples. This approach to couples therapy has been published in the International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work as well as the Journal of Contemporary Narrative Therapy. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Learn about ways to center ideas of relational ethics, justice and accountability in their work with couples; (2) Learn a practice called "intimate witnessing" that quickly bypasses common problems of defensiveness in couples therapy by encouraging partners to embrace a radical relational reorientation that invites them to enter into (by way of speaking from the position of the other partner) and defend the experience of the other; and (3) Learn ways to help partners enter into an ethic of accountability for the shaping effects of their partner's stories of self and to take up intentional relationship practices that nurture their partner's stories of self in enriching ways.

The Contradiction of Love in a Neoliberal Society

Presenters: Justine Wu and Iman Dadras

Within family and couples therapy, love is often a concept and variable critical in sustaining connection and growth that is critical to human life. However, it is also a concept that is often decontextualized and detached from the political and social climate it exists within. There is a lack of empirical evidence to understand how love operates under a neoliberal paradigm

and a gap in understanding how economic and emotional discourses inform one another. The theorist Fromm has argued that under a neoliberal capitalist paradigm, love has taken an individualized form where love has been defined in terms of market relations rather than true intimacy and nurturance. The theorist Illouz takes this notion one step further by asserting that the roots of psychotherapy and the conceptualization of the self, have allowed for the leveraging of emotions to fuel consumer behavior and economic growth. Therefore, when understanding love and emotional life under a neoliberal capitalism paradigm, inherent contradictions are mediated through capitalizing on emotions to shape identities to further consumerist goals. Therefore, this presentation aims to offer an inquiry into the principles of love and how they are operationalized to understand how neoliberal capitalist values inhibit our capacities for greater social change and understanding. This presentation will also show how the neoliberal capitalistic paradigm has evolved into exploiting human emotions to fit in with its consumerist goals by promoting a specific definition of well-being. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Contextualize love within a neoliberal paradigm; (2) Show the contradictions that exist between holistic love and neoliberal values; and (3) Expand on this notion by showing how economic discourses and emotional discourses inform one another.

Serving Our Communities: Person-of-the-researcher Experiences

Presenters: Shruti Singh Poulsen and Raji Natrajan-Tyagi

We will present our collaboration with a South Asian organization, Saahas for Cause. We will describe our work in sharing our research expertise to further Saahas's goals of supporting the South Asian community to give voice to experiences of bias and discrimination and the impact on BIPOCs in the US. We will describe what we have learned through this collaboration, our challenges and benefits, and perspectives on this service to our South Asian community. The presenters identify as South Asian and will describe how this collaboration allows us to connect our own community to which we want to contribute and support. Our work provides us opportunities to bridge the gap between academia and larger communities. This work allows engagement with our community by sharing scholarly knowledge and our social location and identity as South Asians to support the hands-on community efforts benefitting the lived experiences of South Asian individuals and families. This collaboration focuses on immigration, grief and loss, the impact of the global events such as the pandemic, the experiences of aging, and the experience of discrimination and bias events in South Asian lives. Our collaboration with our own community through Saahas is founded on the desire to honor and give voice to the unique, intersectional sociocultural locations and experiences that we are also a part of. This presentation will describe these efforts that are intended to address systemic and relational inequities and injustice our community experiences but often is not seen or heard, and therefore marginalized. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Identify opportunities for engagement and service in the communities with which they are a part of; (2) Describe ways to support and serve their own communities of interest through sharing their own personal and professional experience and expertise; and (3) Formulate their abilities and plans to engage with their communities of interest.

BRIEF PRESENTATION DESCRIPTIONS

Thursday, June 27, 12:45 - 2:45 PM

BRIEF PRESENTATIONS

This session is 2 hours

Learning Self-Care: Transparent Dialogue between MFTs Coping Post Pandemic

Presenters: Rochelle S Clake, Lori Pantalea, and Natalie Rothman

Self-care continues to permeate all aspects of professional and social life. Oftentimes it is an added activity given to someone and may or may not individually address issues they are experiencing. These self-imposed interventions were once thought of as a resolve to reducing levels of compassion fatigue. According to Schwartz et al., 2020, specialized training for pandemic-induced changes and normalization provisions for mental health support is needed. As Marriage and Family Therapists (MFTs) we are processing meaning as we listen to narratives in session. Post pandemic, client narratives shifted to multiple losses from direct (loved one) to indirect (reports of mass deaths) and its impact on daily life. While studies show the impact of vicarious trauma, seldom are forums developed to help MFTs process their own experiences, after all the pandemic touched all lives. Taylor and Asmundson (2020) detailed evidence suggesting PTSD in medical and non-medical health providers due to the pandemic. This presentation is designed to highlight stressors associated with the pandemic on mental health professionals, discuss self-care research trends, and navigate conversations between presenters and participants to identify strengths and resilience. The goal is to create supportive systems for MFTs to manage stressors post COVID by engaging in process activities to build support within our MFT community and customize self-care. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Discuss pre and post pandemic challenges mental health providers are facing; (2) Identify and distinguish key coping mechanisms used to process the impact of COVID-19; and (3) Develop structures and learn fundamentals of creating individualized coping activities.

Expanding our Voices and Deepening Community Connections for Early/Mid-Career MFTs

Presenters: Jessica ChenFeng, Dana Stone, and DeAnna Harris-McKoy

In our roles as women of color MFT educators and academicians, we continue to work with minority students and supervisees who have the experience of being one of the few, if not the only, in their context. Especially for clinicians of color who are carrying race-related historical and sociocultural burdens, this isolation can fuel experiences of burnout. In this brief presentation, our purpose is to offer our own narratives as mid-career women of color in terms of how we have navigated our intersectional identities in the field, found and made meaningful professional relationships, redefined productivity and how all of this contributes to our sustainability in the field. We hope for attendees to feel seen, less isolated, and to know they have models and mentors in the field. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Identify areas of intra and interpersonal need in their development as a helping professional; (2) Discuss and practice networking and communication skills helpful for expanding and deepening their professional community connections; and (3) Generate a personal plan for sustaining their sense of whole person well-being.

BRIEF PRESENTATION DESCRIPTIONS
Thursday, June 27, 12:45 - 2:45 PM

BRIEF PRESENTATIONS

2-hour session continued

Self in Community and Context: East Asian American Reflections on how the Personal is the Professional
Presenters: Lana Kim and Jessica ChenFeng

Though there has been increased awareness of the lives and experiences of Asian Americans (anti-Asian hate, increased representation in media), this does not necessarily translate into understanding the way that Asian American racialization affects individuals' intra and interpersonal relationships. In this brief presentation, two Asian North American colleagues reflect on their experiences as East Asian North American women MFT educators, co-authors/editors, and the intersections of their personal and professional identities. The hope of this presentation is to offer not only a sociocultural perspective on Asian American identity, but to engage discussion around the experience of being Asian American family therapist educators who seek to ground themselves in community and relationship for a personal and professional life fully lived. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Conceptualize Asian American identities through a sociocultural lens; (2) Discuss the personal, professional, and political intersect in the lived reality of Asian American family therapy educators; and (3) Develop increased awareness about the ways in which Asian American communities are racialized and how we can begin to construct counter narratives.

INTEREST GROUP DESCRIPTIONS

Thursday, June 27, 2:45 - 4:45 PM

Couple Therapy Interest Group: How do you think about your approach? Integration or specialization?

Chairs: **Corky Becker and David Wohlsifer**

In this year's couple interest group, we will discuss the use of an integrative approach to couple therapy, vs. a more specific approach (EFT, Gottman, IFS, etc.). We invite you to share your own experience of learning or practicing one particular model of couple therapy; and/or finding ways to integrate from different models in your work. If you do use an integrative approach, we invite you to reflect on how you bring together different ideas and interventions from various schools of therapy. Is your integration intentional, or more intuitive? Do you see any difference between being integrative vs. eclectic in your work? How much do common factors impact your work?

We invite you to share your own journey of integration if you practice in an integrative way. Do you weave together ideas from various teachers you've had, workshops attended, books or articles read? How would you describe the development of your own thinking as a couple therapist, especially with regard to integration? If you prefer to use one approach, please share your preferred model and the impact it has on your practice.

As starter dough for our conversation, we co-organizers will address some of the larger questions of integration vs. loyalty to a specific model; we will share some of our stories along the path of integration as we have developed in our careers; and we will address how to navigate integration vs. specific models in a teaching context with graduate students. Please come with your own reflections, questions, and readiness to share! **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Describe the difference between integrative and eclectic approaches to couple therapy; (2) Give an example of an eclectic approach compared to an integrative approach to couple therapy; and (3) Identify influences in their own approach to work with couples.

Teaching, Training, and Supervision

Chair: **Saliha Bava**

AFTA has been a home for systemically oriented teachers and trainers who share philosophies and practices of teaching and learning as they reflect together. It's in that spirit, that the Teaching, Training and Supervision in Systemic-Relational Practices IG is being formed. Our aim is to provide a space for us to reflect together on the challenges and possibilities for current day learning, teaching, and training. We invite all voices—trainees, trainers, researchers, practitioners—as we are all learners on this relational journey of systemically engaged practices in teaching and learning. Join the conversation and shape the conversations. Every year we will take up a theme for the conference and craft ways to stay engaged, in the interim, in support of each other's efforts.

With the recent developments in artificial intelligence (AI), particularly the release of AI-powered tools like ChatGPT, the landscape of teaching and learning for systemic trainers is rapidly evolving. These advancements have wide-ranging implications for various aspects of training and therapy, including research methods, writing techniques, teaching strategies, development of training materials and processes, and therapy practices and delivery. Let's meet-up to discuss how we are framing and responding to both challenges and opportunities of this AI-turn in teaching/training/ supervision. Experimenting with AI in real time, we will explore the following questions.

1. What potential effects of AI on families and communities should we anticipate, so that we can adequately equip our students to address them?
2. Given the multiple contexts and the rapid developments in AI-informed practices that are impacting pedagogy, practice, and training, how can we, as teachers/trainers adopt an intersectional perspective that accounts for the complex relationships between various social identities, power structures, and AI-influenced environments?
3. How can we prepare trainees to be digitally literate and bring forth a critical gaze to AI-informed practices as it shapes the nature of therapeutic engagement (beyond teletherapy services)?
4. As AI continues to influence various parts of our lives, what new forms might systemic practice take in the next five years beyond private practice and community clinics, and how can we guide future MFTs to explore these emerging career options?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: Participants will: (1) Discuss and reflect on the complex intersections between social identities, power structures, and AI-influenced environments in their teaching or training practices; (2) Identify pedagogical practices for incorporating digital literacy and AI-informed processes into their training/teaching, and for navigating the evolving nature of therapeutic engagement in the age of AI; and, (3) Identify potential effects of AI on families and communities and will learn how to prepare their students to address these issues in their clinical work.

Living in Recovery

Chairs: **Shawn Giammattei, Jacqueline Hudak, and Judith Landau**

Substance use disorder is a relational phenomenon. Yet our field can be stubbornly silent on living with the illness as well as the particulars of living in recovery. This is a group for those who have personal and/or professional involvement with living in recovery from substance use, co-occurring, or compulsive disorders. Our aim is to share, both personally and professionally, the work of living in recovery. What does this entail for us as clinicians and as family members? We invite you to join us for this connection and exploration. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Articulate current definition of addiction, co-occurring, and compulsive disorders; (2) Discuss the efficacy of abstinence-based recovery options; and (3) Address the harm reduction model.

INTEREST GROUP DESCRIPTIONS

Friday, June 28, 11:15 AM - 12:45 PM

Murray Bowen: The Man and The Theory

Chair: **Sally Eisen Miller**

"Murray Bowen: The Man & the Theory" commenced at the New Orleans AFTA meeting in 2009 where Dr. Judy Bowen, Dr. Bowen's niece, painted a picture of what it was like growing up as a member of the extended family and her uncle's influence in her becoming a psychiatrist. A discussion occurred which helped clarify facts from fiction in the field. Continuing with this focus over the years, invited guests have been present who studied with Dr. Bowen. They have had different research and clinical interests which provided an enriching conversation. Murray Bowen: The Man & the Theory will feature Kent Webb, LCSW, Denver family psychotherapist and leadership consultant, who has a "Practice of Inclusion." For many years, he has had a research interest in male homosexuality and has served on the mayor's LGBTQ Commission. He is vice president and Board member of the Murray Bowen Archives Project. He also runs The Leadership Edge, a unique, cutting edge, science-based leadership development training program which is highly rated by participants as dynamic and transforming. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Explain how homosexuality is an example of variability in nature & humans;

(2) Identify the factors that have contributed to the presence of fear and anxiety; and (3) Learn the role of acute & chronic anxiety in generations of family members.

Integrating Arts, Humanities, and Play into Couple and Family

Chairs: **Peter Fraenkel and Saliha Bava**

This interest group will focus on the various ways that therapists can integrate the arts (music, spoken word/rap, visual arts (including painting, sculpture, and photography), crafts, dance, theater); the humanities (poetry, literature, philosophy); and creativity in couple and family therapy theory and practice, as well as training. A large body of research, including neuroscience, examines the impact of the arts on emotions, brain states, relationships, and health, both physical and psycho relational. The founding members of this group have all reflected on, and in some cases, utilized these resources in therapy with couples, families, and communities. Several members have written about their work in this domain. In this first meeting of the group, we will invite attendees to speak about the ideas and practices in integrating the arts, humanities, and creativity in therapy theory and practice. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Be able to list at least three ways in which music, visual arts, dance, or theater have been incorporated into systemic theory and practice; (2) Be able to list at least two ways in which poetry, literature, or philosophy have been incorporated into therapy practice; and (3) Be able to list at least three ways that the spirit of creativity can transform the therapeutic encounter.

Family Constellation Work & Trauma

Chair: **Linda Longo-Lockspeiser**

Constellation work is a brief, solution focused phenomenological process that makes visible the unconscious dynamics at the root of the client's problem. The process relies on the intuitive, somatic experience of volunteers who serve as representatives in the client's story, as well as on systemic principles and the historical facts of the system. They help answer the questions:

- What or who is missing and what needs to be acknowledged?
- What is this symptom trying to manifest, balance or heal?
- In what situation does this symptom make sense?

In widening the lens of the narrative beyond the individual in real time, the client gains new perspectives, often allowing them to release beliefs and responsibilities that are obstacles to their growth and healing, while simultaneously helping them reconnect to their family system in a healthier way. It is especially helpful when the origin of suffering is unacknowledged social issues that affect the collective. The goals of this interest group is to give participants an experience of being a representative in someone else's story and to channel another's energy, to expand their appreciation for the often invisible impact of a legacy of unprocessed transgenerational trauma and loss, and to discuss ways Constellation theories and practices can be used as an adjunct to their own work. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Identify the "orders of love" that organize systems and recognize how they impact the development of healthy relationship patterns through the generations; (2) Identify how Constellation work uses intuitive and somatic ways of knowing; and (3) Integrate Constellation thinking in assessment and early intervention with clients.

Family Therapy and the Climate Crisis

Chairs: **Larry Freeman and Hinda Winawer**

What makes people not deal with the climate crisis and how can therapist better handle this? Utilizing the insights of a book about this predicament, *Don't Even Think About It* by George Marshall, we will prepare for the following day's intense immersion, and issues around the climate crisis, how we in AFTA are affected by it and how it is pertinent to our work. The problem of looking away is one that all of us share, and we need to learn how to resist more effectively with ourselves, our

colleagues, and the people who come to us for assistance. We will make an effort to understand better, in itself, how this has been a significant challenge and what lessons can be drawn from that fact. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Describe how brain functions hinder addressing climate change; (2) Describe interventions to overcome reluctance; and (3) Create collaborative relationships that will continue after the conference.

BRIEF PRESENTATION DESCRIPTIONS

Friday, June 28, 4:15 PM – 5:45 PM

Mapping Emotion and Social Power: A Guide

Presenter: Carmen Knudson-Martin

Emotion connects your body with the world around you. It is always situational. Your emotional system reads how safe you are and your power position, and almost instantaneously tells you how to respond while communicating to others. It is a relational experience that tells you what is important and enables you to adapt to your social environment. Drawing on Socio-Emotional Relationship Therapy, this presentation addresses how relational therapists can recognize the links between emotion and social power and address them in clinical practice. Participants will learn how to socioculturally attune to emotion in session and be introduced to “My Emotional Map,” a tool to help clients contextualize and process their socio-emotional experience. The emotional map helps link physical sensation, thought, and action with sociocultural messages and the socio-relational flow of power. The presentation helps counter the societal idea of emotion as an individual, internal experience by examining emotion as a process created and sustained within sociopolitical relationships. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Consider how to conceptualize emotion as a relational, sociopolitical process; (2) Learn five steps to attuning to sociocultural emotion in session; and (3) Be introduced to “My Emotional Map,” a tool to raise client awareness of their emotions and how these connect to their place in the world.

From “Disquieting” Therapy Moments to Generativities

Presenters: Monica Sesma-Vazquez and Lauren Birks

Contributor: Fazila Shariff

In this brief presentation, participants will be immersed in a reflexive exercise delving into those emotional and occasionally difficult moments with family therapy clients. The focus will be on how these moments have served to propel the therapeutic process and foster stronger therapeutic relationships. Throughout therapeutic conversations, there arise instances where we discern an element of discord, awkwardness, or challenge. Our bodies may react to certain client interactions, behaviors, narratives, or content. Sensing that our words, inquiries, or actions may elicit a sense of “disquiet” in certain family members is not uncommon. Moreover, we might observe instances of verbal or non-verbal communication among family members that signify emotional “disquiet,” and on occasion, we find ourselves reacting in tandem. It is essential to recognize that these disquieting moments hold intrinsic value in and for the therapeutic process, as they can serve as a catalyst for generating insightful questions and reflections that contribute to the progression of therapy. In this brief presentation, facilitators will engage in a dialogic exercise, sharing their most memorable moments, pearls of wisdom, and key learnings derived from the Calgary Family Therapy Conference in August 2023. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Get immersed in the history and context of the relational disquiet and generativities work at the Calgary Family Therapy Centre in Calgary (CFTC), AB, Canada; (2) Learn about the key learnings and sparkling moments that the presenters had after participating at the CFTC 2023 conference; and (3) Critically examine how they could enhance their family therapy practice when moving from disquieting interactions to generativity processes.

Navigating Diversity: Challenges and Assessment Tools for Multi-Heritage Couples in Therapy

Presenters: Guanyu Wang and Doneila McIntosh

As diversity in the U.S. increases, marriage and family therapists encounter more multi-heritage couples in therapy. Recent research indicates that around 11% of adults are married to someone from a different racial or ethnic group, rising to 19% among new marriages (Pew Research Center, 2021). The term “multi-heritage couple” is intentionally selected and defined

as couples who are inherently different among multiple aspects of heritage, including but not limited to, “race, gender, ethnicity, religion and spirituality, sexual orientation, national origin, indigenous heritage, geographic region, and other cultural factors” (Henricksen & Paladino, 2009, p. xiii). Multi-heritage couples experience many unique challenges that need to be addressed within the context of therapy. However, many therapists have not yet been adequately trained in culturally attuned assessment tools that can effectively evaluate the unique needs of these couples. Therefore, this presentation will address the unique challenges faced by multi-heritage couples in therapy and explore existing assessment tools suitable to meet their needs. In a review of existing literature, this presentation will underscore the dearth of standardized and unstandardized assessment tools available for therapists working with multi-heritage couples. This interactive session invites practitioners to collaboratively discuss and examine the existing assessment tools. By fostering dialogue and shared insights, our aim is to empower therapists to better address the distinctive therapeutic needs of multi-heritage couples. This presentation is a call to action, urging professionals to actively contribute to enhancing the therapeutic toolkit in response to the evolving demographic landscape. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Identify unique challenges faced by multi-heritage couples; (2) Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of existing assessment tools in working with multi-heritage couples; and (3) Discuss future directions urging professionals to actively contribute to enhancing the therapeutic toolkit in response to the evolving demographic landscape.

Awareness of Water: Deconstructing National Identity and ways in which Nationalistic Attitudes and Beliefs Shape Our Clinical Work as Family Therapists

Presenters: Jelisaveta-Sanja Rolovic and Tatiana Glebova

Though family therapy has devoted great attention to addressing various aspects of diversity, limited attention is given to examining national identity and the ways it informs our clinical practice. Given that we do not come politically neutral to our work, it is for this reason that loyalty to one's country, to its politics, to its histories, religious traditions, and cultural rituals, all profoundly affect the ways in which we think and work as family therapists. In this brief presentation, using personal and clinical examples of two therapists coming from East Europe and living and working in the US, we will invite participants to discuss ways in which national identity and loyalty to one's country shape our values and beliefs, how they intertwine with clinical work, and how they create political seepage into family therapy and training. Using the metaphor of “fish in the water” we suggest possible reasons of why we have omitted including nationality as a part of our social location. The benefit of privilege is not having to recognize your privilege; thus, fish do not question the “privilege” of the water in which they are swimming as long as it remains constant. Only when the water ruffles or fish from other oceans swim in and thus intrude upon what is familiar—only when our existence, identity, and sense of safety are threatened—we are challenged to explore that which is given or taken for granted. Only then do we have to ask who we are, and how are we seen in the eyes of others? **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Recognize ways in which power and privilege of living and working in the United States has drawn us away from including nationalism and national identity as an critical aspect of diversity; (2) Identify ways in which nationalism shapes their values, beliefs, and behaviors; and (3) Identify cultural blind spots existing in the prevailing western/white/American world.

Systemic Family Therapy in the Age of Complexity

Presenter: Nathan Hardy

Ours is an age of increasing complexity and the problems of today's world need solutions at the level of their systemic complexity. The early pioneers of family therapy (Bateson, Haley, Whitaker, Bowen, Minuchin, Satir, etc.) were profoundly influenced by the revolutionary systemic paradigm (Bertalanffy, 1968; Wiener, 1948) which rejected reductionism (understanding phenomena by breaking down and analyzing its individual parts) in favor of holism (the whole is greater than the sum of its parts). They applied systems thinking to understand mental illness as part of living family systems that, if properly understood and treated, could unlock systemic transformation and individual healing. Nowadays however, I believe family

therapists are slipping back into old ways of thinking, such as reducing complex patterns into individual labels, avoiding whole family therapy, and relying on manualized treatments. Although systems thinking evolved in the field with contributions incorporating intersubjectivity, lifespan perspectives, socioecological contexts, and so forth, family therapists have generally not continued theorizing using the latest advancements in systems theory, which is now a vast interdisciplinary endeavor known as complexity science. In this presentation, I will (1) describe the evolution of family therapy around systems theory, (2) present an overview of complexity science and its elucidation of concepts and methods, (3) propose how family therapists can adopt complexity science to vastly improve systemic thinking, diagnosis, and treatment, and (4) imagine how family therapists, as global citizens, can use complexity science to become systems innovators and tackle the major crises facing families and communities around the world. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Assess the evolution of systems thinking in family therapy and evaluate the degree to which the field is currently systemic; (2) Label and define several key concepts and methods used in complexity science; and (3) Apply concepts and methods from complexity science to diagnosis and treatment in systemic family therapy.

N.E.A.R. Sciences, Common Factors, and Cybernetics

Presenter: Lucas Volini

As much progress as family therapy scholarship has made since the 1960s, the industry of for-profit healthcare organized around a disease-based medical model primed on individualized pathology has failed to evolve along with our research. To date, Managed Care continues to reimburse family/couple therapy at a lower rate than individual therapy, imposing a financial disincentive to practice relationally. When we do practice relationally, we do it through a single client chart billed through an individual's DSM-5-TR diagnosis. Despite dense research substantiating the deficiencies of such practices, for-profit insurance companies aren't swayed by professors and research. They're swayed by executives in corporate healthcare systems. That's why I became one. With the resources of a national mental health company at my disposal, my work at Ellie Mental Health is necessarily evolving the industry of behavioral healthcare service delivery by collaborating with third-party payors. Doing so required engineering a new system of data-driven care that measures what's relevant to clinicians, empowers providers to practice from subjectively integrated models, and introduces a relational charting system to generate alignment between systemic practices and managed care. Moving beyond a constrained focus on disease-based symptom reduction, the new model of service delivery organizes around the N.E.A.R. Sciences framework (neurobiology, epigenetics, attachment, and resilience) supplemented by common factors research. Healthcare shouldn't be about reducing symptoms. Healthcare should be about optimizing wellness, and 21st century research makes clear that wellness cannot exist outside of a relational context. This workshop reviews the development of this innovative model of service delivery while providing the blueprint for a system of healthcare reimaged. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Review the current state of affairs for relational therapists existing within the constrained of a for-profit, disease-based medical model; (2) Identify inadequacies in current practices of measurement-based care organized around individualized symptom reduction; and (3) Introduce and review Bruce Perry's N.E.A.R. Sciences framework that integrates teachings across neuroscience, epigenetics, attachment, and resilience to better understand human development across the lifespan.

Speaking the Unspeakable in Interracial Relationships

Presenters: Shruti Singh Poulsen and Gita Seshadri

Interracial relationships and societal acceptance of these relationships continue to increase in the US. However, the experiences of people in interracial relationships continue to be negatively impacted by discrimination, racism, and prejudice from society at large. These experiences are painful and challenging to the health of the relationship. Racism and prejudice might even be experienced by couples and exerted by others in various forms, including microaggressions, within the relationship itself as well as in the larger family systems within which the couple resides. An additional challenge is that experiences of racism and prejudice may at times even be experienced within the relationship itself between the partners. Talking about these

experiences and processing them within the relationship is extremely difficult and painful but may be a necessary and crucial journey that couples can engage in as part of their healing and resilience as they weather the racism and prejudices of their larger social contexts. This presentation will focus on describing the experiences of interracial relationships within the couple and familial context, the experience of intercultural differences and challenges such as racism and prejudice, navigating cultural and racial borders, and how partners and difficult conversations can be a source of healing, resilience, and resourcefulness. Case examples and discussion of clinical implications for culturally informed and socially just approaches to working with IR couples will also be provided. This presentation will offer scholarly and clinical work guided by anti-oppressive, inclusive, strengths-based and decolonial psychological principles when working with intercultural couples and their families. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Identify the challenges related to racism and prejudice that interracial couples experience; (2) Examine how these negative experiences can manifest within the relationship itself; and (3) Determine how therapy can provide an environment for couples to have difficult but healing conversations about their experiences of racism and prejudice.

Integrative Culinary Therapy

Presenter: Racine Henry

ICT is a collaborative, systems-oriented approach informed by cultural competence and sharing traditional foods. By identifying, incorporating, and respecting each partner's social location and cultural identity, the ICT therapist will collaboratively address and resolve issues within the romantic relationship using the act of cooking and eating traditional foods. Couples will be challenged as a unit, as well as individually, to explore their socio historical background through the cultural significance of various ingredients, foods, and meals. Inspired by the West African folklore of Sankofa, this approach to couples therapy highlights the multigenerational transmission of heritage, self-identity, and the unique coupling habits of marginalized populations. Rather than normalizing the societal standard, ICT validates and empowers the diversity of minorities and the way we establish and sustain romantic relationships. ICT is informed by Bowen Family Therapy, Collaborative Therapy, Ecological Systems Theory, Critical Race Theory, and Integrative Systemic Therapy. During this conference workshop, attendees will engage in a short ICT exercise and be able to experience how this approach helps couples orient to a more relatable form of therapy while being led through transformative conversations. There will be an introduction to the ICT model with theoretical context and background information about how this model was developed. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Unearth relevant multigenerational information which can add to couple's intimacy; (2) Identify the unique needs of minority couples in therapy; and (3) Differentiate the ICT model from existing approaches to treating couples.

Social Justice Approach to Critical Course Revision Work

Presenters: Bobbi J. Miller, Jennifer Cates, LaTonya Dulaney, and Shruti Singh Poulson

This brief presentation will provide one CFT program's process in revising a core CFT MA level course to reflect the programs and the field of CFT's vision and mission of social justice and cultural responsiveness in CFT training and education. The presentation will focus on the process of revising a course focused on addressing power, oppression, and working with clients experiencing marginalization in family therapy. This revision focused on 1) examining the existing content and teaching strategies for their congruence with the concept of decolonizing the learning experience; 2) moving from a content-based to a process-oriented course format; and 3) increasing focus in both the somatic (Menakem, 2017) and systemic origins and impacts of oppression, as well as the importance of integrating both of these into a family therapy approach. The course is taught in two different formats. Feedback from faculty who participated in the development of the course and in teaching pre and post revisions, as well as students who have taken the revised course will be presented for themes regarding the impact of teaching/taking the course and the overall process of the revision collaboration. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Identify points of connection and disconnection in teaching strategies and content for courses addressing oppression,

power, and marginalization; (2) Describe how to revise a course to be process versus content focused and to integrate more macro and micro level systemic influences into case conceptualization and intervention; and (3) Learn students' and faculty member' experiences of the revision process and the revised course to help inform teaching practices.

Inclusive Relationships: From conference room to classroom

Presenters: Joanna S Stratton and Jennifer Cates

This presentation's purpose is to identify key elements that contribute to a healthy academic setting and describe how to create structures, develop prosocial norms, and reinforce relational growth from the conference room to the classroom. First, there must be acknowledgement and sense of accountability that each person impacts the dynamic. Second, administrators, faculty, staff, and students acknowledge, in front of others, that all persons in a system possess both unique skills and areas for growth. Third, healthy systems encourage all members to examine their social locations and how these identities inform values, beliefs, and behaviors. These themes are discussed across topic and situation and presenters will discuss methods for increasing relational equity and decreasing marginalization. Fourth, inclusive relationships thrive when policies and procedures are well documented. Group members are clear about expectations and bi-directional feedback informs how each person can contribute meaningfully and professionally. Finally, healthy systems support the wellbeing of the human spirit when inevitable external stressors impact both work and personal life. Presenters will also discuss common relational dynamics that detract from an environment and how to respond productively. This presentation delivers a deeply systemic understanding of the interconnectedness between the conference room and the classroom and how to bolster inclusive relationships in both environments. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Identify the essential elements in healthy work and learning environments; (2) Describe how to better incorporate social location and cultural context to increase relational equity and decrease marginalization in academic settings; and (3) List barriers to healthy relational dynamics in academia.

BRIEF PRESENTATION DESCRIPTIONS

Saturday, June 29, 11:15 AM - 12:45 PM

Sustaining Therapeutic Change: Couple to Society

Presenters: Lana Kim and Carmen Knudson-Martin

Sustaining therapeutic change involves disrupting problematic societal patterns that persist over time and across generations, i.e., third order change. This presentation focuses on the invisibility of emotional and relational labor (“care work”) as a societal-based problem that continues to affect couples and families despite shifts in gender roles and emergence of “soft” masculinity. Drawing from Socio-Emotional Relationship Therapy, the presenters offer clinical guidelines that (1) make the contributions of care work and what it involves visible in session, (2) help clients attune to the sociocultural context of their care work, (3) collaborate with clients to develop strategies to disrupt the invisibility of care work in their relationships, and (4) engage couples to take therapeutic dialogues around supporting mutual care as a relational guideline into their social networks and communities. Participants will consider the kinds of interventions that help expand “consciousness of care work” beyond the therapy room, to affect society. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Learn why the invisibility of care work is a relational problem requiring disruption of a societal pattern; (2) Identify at least four clinical strategies that disrupt the invisibility of care and its relational consequences; and (3) Consider how sustaining change can be facilitated by expanding interventions beyond the clinical space to the places and communities in which clients live.

“She Asked Me to Consider Her:” A Pro-Feminist Approach to Relational Accountability with Men and Boys

Presenters: Tom Carlson and Garrett Rutz

This presentation highlights an approach to working with men and boys that seeks to counter the effects of the often-self-centered training that men receive in a patriarchal culture and the negative effects it has on their relationships and their own lives. Relational accountability is an invitational approach to therapy that encourages men and boys to take up a more other-centered ethics in their relationships with women, children, and other men. Drawing on pro-feminist and narrative ideas, moves beyond the traditional teaching of anger management skills by inviting men to extend themselves and reach for the ways in which their actions have shaped their relating partner’s stories of self in impoverishing ways. By inviting men to experience the weight of intimate accountability, men can more easily name and step more fully into their own preferred relational ethics in their lives and relationships. Ironically, as men become more acquainted with the real effects of their actions on relating to partners—as they feel the weight of intimate accountability—it has the effect of decreasing shame and inspiring conviction. Ultimately, relational accountability is achieved as men enter intentional ways of being that shape their relating partner’s stories of self in nurturing and loving ways. The presentation will highlight examples of our practice through videos, transcripts, and therapeutic documents. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Learn about ways to counter the effects of the often-self-centered training that men receive in a patriarchal culture and the negative effects it has on their relationships and their own lives; (2) Learn a practice called relational accountability that encourages men and boys to take up a more other-centered ethics in their relationships with women, children and other men; and (3) Apply this practice via a demonstration of this approach through the use of therapeutic poems, transcripts and videos of the presenters’ actual work.

The Power of Repair: Utilizing the Therapeutic Apology, to Repair the Parent-Child Relationship

Presenters: Betsy Scott and Allen Sabey

This presentation will introduce a systemic intervention, the “therapeutic apology”, that can be used to repair parent-child relationships. According to the developmental theory of attachment, the process of repairing is essential to the establishment

and maintenance of a close secure relationship across the lifespan (Goldsmith, 2010; Furrow et al., 2019). Structured repair (e.g., an apology) can be a powerful restorative tool that aids in healing for a parent, child, and their relationship. Parents report using apologies as a common way to repair with their child, which can happen as quickly and easily as a minor interactional error, but in the case of more profound or chronic relational injuries, a more substantial intervention, like a structured therapeutic apology, a step-by-step process of creating and delivering it, is needed to heal (Harach & Kuczynski, 2005). Emotion-Focused Family Therapy (EFFT) promotes such an intervention (i.e., therapeutic apology) to alleviate the effects of emotional and relational wounds and restore trust and closeness between parents and children (Lafrance et al., 2020). Our presentation will introduce this step-by-step process including how we help instruct parents to deliver this type of apology to their children. We will use relevant examples, share preliminary results from a research study, and discuss application of the intervention with attendees. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Identify the main components of a parental therapeutic apology; (2) Demonstrate the benefits a therapeutic parental apology has on the parent, child, and relationships; and (3) Examine how therapeutic parental apologies can be prioritized and integrated into couples and family therapy.

DEI and Justice: Program Leaders' Needs and Challenges

Presenter: Mudita Rastogi

Program Directors of accredited mental health programs hold leadership roles and oversight of the integration of DEIJ (diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice) issues in their curriculum and training (Sterrett-Hong, et al., 2023) in the U.S. Greater coverage of social injustice has been in the news and on the radars of the public since 2020. These include domestic and international events. Students and faculty, including those that are disproportionately negatively impacted, have sought greater efforts and opportunities to examine and act on DEIJ content and actions and turned to Program Directors for support, new initiatives, didactic material, advocacy, and allocation of material and emotional resources. Almost no leadership development is extended to program leaders on how to meet these disparate and crucial needs. This presentation will provide space for program leaders to share approaches and strategies that have worked for them while creating opportunities to brainstorm ideas for future collaborations. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Comprehend challenges faced by program leaders in responding to and meeting DEIJ needs of their programs; (2) Apply strategies and resources that are helpful in supporting program leaders in their DEIJ efforts; and (3) Contribute ideas for future collaboration among program leadership for training and development related to DEIJ needs of programs.

Culturally Contextualized Integration of Gottman, Emotionally Focused, and Systemic Approaches in Couple Therapy: An Analytical Case Study from Dhaka, Bangladesh

Presenters: Soyoul Song and Umme Kawser

This study provides a detailed analysis of a single case couple therapy conducted in Dhaka, Bangladesh, over one year, encompassing 25 sessions. The therapy team included a lead therapist, a co-therapist, and two reflectors, collaboratively working to improve the couple & relationship. The intervention uniquely integrated the Gottman Method Couple Therapy with elements of Emotionally Focused Therapy and Systemic Family Therapy, adapting these methodologies to the cultural context of Bangladesh. The Gottman Method, known for its research-based relationship-building approach, was central to the therapy. This method & emphasis on managing conflict, fostering admiration and affection, and creating shared meaning provided a structured framework for the couple's interaction. The integration with emotionally focused strategies aided in addressing the emotional underpinnings of the couple's issues, while systemic family therapy offered insights into the broader family dynamics influencing their relationship. Throughout the year, the couple experienced significant improvements in communication, conflict resolution, and emotional intimacy. These changes were documented through qualitative analysis of session recordings, therapist observations, and participant feedback. Notably, the couple reported increased understanding and respect for each other's perspectives and strengthened emotional connection. This case study highlights the effectiveness

of combining the Gottman Method with different therapeutic approaches in a culturally sensitive manner. It contributes to the emerging field of couple therapy in South Asia, emphasizing the need for culturally adapted interventions. The findings suggest promising directions for future research and practice in relationship therapy within diverse cultural settings. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Learn how to effectively combine the Gottman Method Couple Therapy, Emotionally Focused Therapy, and Systemic Family Therapy; (2) Understand the unique contributions of each approach and how they can be synergistically used to address various aspects of couple dynamics, especially in a culturally sensitive manner; and (3) Acquire techniques for managing conflict and fostering positive interactions in relationships.

Personality Traits as Predictors of Psychological Well-Being: Mediating Role of Marital Control

Presenter: Laleh Aflatooni

This study aimed to predict psychological well-being by considering five personality traits while mediating the role of marital control. The research followed a descriptive correlation method with structural equation modeling for data analysis. The study focused on married individuals residing in Western Azerbaijan (Urmia) in Iran and included 587 participants selected through convenience sampling. Key research instruments encompassed the Big Five Inventory (BFI-10), Marital Controlling Scale (MCS-21), and Ryff Psychological Well-Being Scale (RPWS-18). Path analysis through structural modeling was employed to assess the variables' direct and indirect effects. The findings demonstrated that the relationship between personality traits and psychological well-being is well-suited to mediating the impact of marital control. This research confirmed the mediating role of marital control in the connection between neuroticism, conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness to experience personality traits, and psychological well-being. However, the mediating role of extroversion was not established. Consequently, marital control emerges as a significant factor capable of mitigating the positive impact of various personality traits on couples' lives, potentially exposing them to detrimental influences on their psychological well-being. Clinical implications for working with married couples in Western Azerbaijan who are grappling with issues of marital control, including cultural sensitivity and an understanding of the unique dynamics present in the region, were highlighted. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Examine how the Big Five personality traits (neuroticism, conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness to experience, and extroversion) contribute to predicting psychological well-being; (2) Assess the mediating role of marital control in the relationship between personality traits and psychological well-being; and (3) Recognize the clinical implications derived from the research findings, particularly in the context of working with married couples dealing with issues of marital control.

A Social Constructionist Critique for Narcissistic Abuse Treatment

Presenters: Rebeca Brau Martinez and Saliha Bava

Our presentation is a social constructionist exploration of the current discourse on narcissistic abuse and its treatment. Despite the prevalence of discussions on narcissism, there is a significant gap of the family systems stemming from individualism which has resulted in epistemic injustice and marginalized diverse cosmologies. The narcissism discourse fails to capture the complexities of systemic, cultural, ontological, and relational contexts. Our critique challenges it, proposing alternative social constructionist frameworks that offer fresh perspectives to address issues of perceived narcissistic abuse. The presentation aims to inspire a social constructionist orientation that prompts a departure from the dominant pathologizing discourse. Join us to critically examine and discuss the embedded epistemic injustice within the dominant discourse and prevalent treatment approaches for narcissistic abuse. Our approach aims to cultivate a nuanced understanding by comparing the effects of the dominant pathologizing discourse with a social constructionist orientation, emphasizing empathy, relationship-building, and ethical values. The ultimate goal is to imagine new interventions that create opportunities for cultivating relationality and unlocking transformative possibilities. This involves nurturing epistemic capacities, fostering co-created, interconnected futures, promoting relational resilience, embracing complexity, and participating in intersectional, relational sense-making.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: Participants will: (1) Critically examine and discuss the epistemic injustice embedded in dominant discourse in the context of narcissistic abuse treatment; (2) Identify the prevalent treatment discourses for narcissistic abuse; and (3) Compare and contrast the effects of dominant pathologizing discourse with a social constructionist orientation as applied to narcissistic abuse.

Have You Found Your Theory-of-Change Soulmate? A Presentation on Systemic Theoretical Orientation Scale

Presenters: Gita Seshadri, Raji Natarajan-Tyagi, Manijeh Daneshpour, Anna Asaturyan, and Alex Hsieh

With the advent of Common Factors Theory and confirmation of the ‘Dodo Bird Verdict’ that comparative studies do not provide evidence for differential impact of theoretical orientation (Wampold, 2000) many may argue that theoretical orientation has become moot (Worthington & Dillon, 2003). However, emphasis on theoretical orientation remains an important part of graduate training in fields such as counseling and marriage and family therapy. The relevance of having a theoretical orientation is shown in how it functions as a guide for the therapists’ conceptualization and execution of interventions. It provides an important framework for therapists and educators to organize the various tasks involved in the psychotherapeutic process. Although there is a trend in the field to look for empirically supported treatments that are based on a single-theory manualized approaches, most mental health clinicians tend to identify two or more theoretical approaches that inform their work (Jensen, Bergin & Greaves, 1990). Although, number of scales have been developed to measure therapists’ theoretical orientation in the mental health field (Poznanski & McLennan, 1995), there isn’t one in the field of marriage and family therapy that focuses specifically on the various systemic theories. In this workshop, the presenters will first articulate the need for a personal theory of change, followed by the presentation of the Systemic Theoretical Orientation Scale (STOS) that the authors constructed. The presenters will discuss how to interpret the scores, ways of integrating theories and also gain feedback from the participants about the scale construction. This feedback will be used in the further refinement of the scale. The presenters will also discuss how students’ impressions interacted with their scores. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Identify opportunities for engagement and service in the communities with which they are a part of; (2) Describe ways to support and serve their own communities of interest through sharing their own personal and professional experience and expertise; and (3) Formulate their abilities and plans to engage with their communities of interest.

Basic Miracles: A love letter to Experiential Family Therapy

Presenter: Tabitha Webster

“We need to see ourselves as basic miracles” is one of Virginia Satir’s many infamous quotes. She is hailed as the Mother of Family Therapy during a time of innovation in family therapy that was predominantly male. Her family therapy model is taught as a foundational model in all Marriage and Family Therapy courses. She wrote her first book in 1964, *Conjoint Family Therapy*, and in 1972, *Peoplemaking* was published. She authored another 10 books before she died in 1988. Her work often goes uncredited, originating powerful ideas of healing touch in psychotherapy, the power of connection in families, externalizing our emotional experiences and parts-work. Her life, work, and legacy truly represent what it means to Live Fully and Die Meaningfully. This presentation will bring Satir’s foundational family therapy model to life for the participants. This presentation will connect these foundational principles to modern neuroscience and allow the participant to experience the interventions firsthand. Satir further devoted her work to multicultural families and groups, and her passion continues to be translated cross-culturally today. In addition, this presentation will include an intersectionality lens to highlight cross-cultural work from the model. This presentation will provide discussion and practice of self-of-therapist and social location reflection. This presentation will resonate with providers looking to explore intersectional systemic-based foundational principles of family therapy and with providers already using expressive, emotional, and attachment-based principles. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) State several basic principles of system theory; (2) Describe the theoretical

underpinning of Satir's Experiential Family Therapy; and (3) Utilize Satir's Experiential Family Therapy in their practice with families through an intersectionality lens.

BRIEF PRESENTATION DESCRIPTIONS

Saturday, June 29, 11:15 AM - 1:15 PM

This session is 2 hours

Honoring All of Us: Decolonizing the Supervisory Relationship

Presenters: Diane Estrada and Chelynn Randolph

The supervisory relationship has the power to construct meaningful experiences in the journey to decolonizing the couple and family therapy field. In order to decolonize our clinical practices, we must engage in rooted conversations about the impact of colonization on ourselves. The aim of this presentation is to illustrate ways to fully integrate our intersectional identities/social locations to enrich and decolonize the supervisory relationship. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Identify the barriers and strengths of engaging all parts of the supervisor and supervisee's intersectional identities; (2) Apply tools to create more courageous and honoring spaces in the supervisory relationship; and (3) demystify the relational process of engaging in decolonizing work.

BRIEF PRESENTATION DESCRIPTIONS

Saturday, June 29, 4:15 - 5:45 PM

Supporting End-of-Life Experiences Through Relational Ethics: Conceptualizing the Use of Contextual Therapy to Promote Healing and Hope

Presenters: Rikki Patton and Grant Morales

Aging and end-of-life are central to the human experience. Yet, the family therapy field has not provided substantial conceptual guides or intervention strategies to guide clinical. Some evidence-informed models from other behavioral health fields were developed to address end-of-life issues, such as dignity therapy and meaning-centered psychotherapy. However, the explicit application of a systemic conceptual framework for assisting client systems in navigating end-of-life issues is needed. To address this gap, we will present a conceptual model utilizing contextual family therapy theory to understand end-of-life issues and describe potential strategies that practitioners could use to guide clients. We aim to provide a summary of the contextual therapy model with a focus on relational ethics, how contextual therapy can be used to conceptualize later life, and how contextually focused interventions can be used in practice with clients experiencing end-of-life. A comparison of the contextual model with other evidence-informed models developed for end-of-life work will also be explored. We will apply this conceptualization to a case vignette to offer a pathway to navigate these challenges. In doing so, we hope to describe how contextual therapy can foster moments of healing at the end-of-life stage that can disrupt harmful intergenerational patterns, paving the way for a healthier family legacy. Through describing contextual therapy and end-of-life considerations, we will acknowledge and address crucial factors such as intersectionality and relational ethics within families and relationships. Doing so will allow for the development of a holistic and systemically oriented conceptual model for helping people navigate end-of-life issues. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Describe how relational ethics can be used to guide family systems toward relatedness, forgiveness, and exoneration during the end-of-life developmental period; (2) Explain how the contextual model aligns with other evidence-informed end-of-life therapeutic models, i.e., dignity therapy and meaning-centered psychotherapy; and (3) Apply relational ethics conceptually during end-of-life via a case vignette.

College Student Flourishing: Outcomes on Mental Health of College Mentoring Program Engagement

Presenters: Vaida Kazlauskaitė and Alyssa Maples

Flourishing definition is self-perceived success in areas such as: supportive relationships, optimism, feelings of purpose and self-esteem. College students who are considered flourishing experience higher academic achievement (Diener et al., 2010), have fewer mental health challenges (Jorgensen & Nelson, 2018), and are less likely to partake in risky behavior and substance-use (Graff-Low, 2011; Nelson & Padilla-Walker, 2013). Despite these benefits, research has not identified the experiences that increase and sustain college students' flourishing. College students need opportunities that promote positive feelings and lead to greater meaning in life. Participating in community-engaged service or volunteering may be one way to promote flourishing. One specific type of community engagement is participating as a youth mentor. This phenomenological study examined college students' perceptions about mentoring youth and its impact on flourishing and how specific experiences in the after-school mentoring program leads to flourishing. Aspects of the mentoring experience that contribute to college students' experience of flourishing and opportunities for growth are described. Research on youth mentoring and flourishing in college students, while relatively new, is promising for ways to increase positive personal interactions with staff, peers, and youth within the community, and through personal development. Results will be discussed from a clinical perspective, illustrating how therapists can encourage their college-aged clients to engage in various mentoring opportunities. Therapists can use the results to psycho-educate their clients about the importance of the mentoring program, the opportunities within the program outside of the mentor-mentee relationship, and the relationships with staff and peers within the program. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Understand what flourishing is and how it can impact college-aged youths' academic achievement and mental health; (2) Receive therapeutic approaches of talking about flourishing; and (3) Gather information about activities that can increase flourishing.

From Surviving to Thriving: Building Community for Counseling and MFT Trainees

Presenters: Dana Stone, Deborah Buttitta, and Shyrea Minton

Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) and LGBTQIA+ clinicians in training remain at an increased risk for exit from the field post graduate degree. Pre-licensed counseling and MFT clinicians who identify as BIPOC make up 34% and 31.59% of graduate students respectively, yet account for much less of the licensed clinician population (AAMFT, 2012; CACREP 2017; CAMFT, 2015). While there is no comparable data on pre-licensed LGBTQIA+ clinicians, O'Neill et al. (2022) found that in graduate school, LGBTQIA+ students reported increased symptoms of depression and anxiety when compared to their peers. Currently, services provided by these trainees are unprecedented in terms of the shared experience of witnessing and living through persistent crises (e.g., LGBTQIA+ inequities, anti-Black and anti-Asian racism, grief and loss, etc.) with their clients. Consequently, BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ pre-licensed clinicians may be overtaxed with the experiences of trauma that clients present with, causing compassion fatigue and burnout, which may hasten their exit from the field. Creating opportunities for connection is one way to combat this phenomenon. The focus of this presentation is two-fold: 1) to review literature and research outcomes from our pilot data that support building community for BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ clinicians in training and 2) to offer a model for community group support that will facilitate retention of BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ clinicians in training to foster belongingness, integrate self-care, and to counter compassion fatigue and burnout. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Identify common experiences that contribute to distress reported by BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ student groups; (2) Generate ideas for retention and support of BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ student groups; and (3) Have a framework for developing an affinity group to support BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ student groups.

No Ordinary Love: Neurodiversity in Intimate and Family Relationships

Presenters: Caron Starobin and Sarah Wayland

The purpose of this presentation is to build knowledge, awareness, and skills in understanding and working with autism and neurodiverse relationships. Topics to be covered and issues to be addressed include 1) the social and historical context of autism, neurodiversity, and ableism; 2) What a neuro-affirming mindset looks like; 3) Adapting relational models in couples and family therapy and parenting work when working with neurodiverse relationships. Relational Life Therapy and Relationship Development Intervention are the models we will reference. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Identify what autism is using a neurodiversity paradigm; (2) Identify at least three ways to shift to a neuro-affirming mindset; and (3) Define ableism and identify overt and covert ways that ableism shows up in relationships.

The Neurodiversity Affirming Therapist

Presenter: Tabitha Webster

The Neurodiversity Paradigm is an important modern cultural and community-based movement from an often overlooked, marginalized, and pathologized group. This presentation will explore the history of the movement. The presentation will define the important concepts and ideas of the movement, including affirming language and addressing the inherent cultural competency issues of ableism deeply embedded in the lived experiences of the community. The presentation will explore the paradigm as an identity factor, exploring common lived experiences. This presentation will practically explore what it means to be a neurodiversity-affirming therapist. **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Participants will: (1) Describe the affirming tenants of the Neurodiversity Movement; (2) Describe the correlations between neurodivergence and intersecting diverse identities; and (3) Apply an affirming lens to their work with Neurodivergent folx in clinical practice.