



PSY 980

Couple Therapy

S1 Day 2015

Department of Psychology

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Jac Brown

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Credit points

4

Prerequisites

(Admission to MClInPsych or DClInPsych) and PSY904 and PSY961 and (PSY962 or PSY978) and (PSY965 or PSY977)

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description

This unit introduces students to basic techniques for counselling couples. Key themes are identified including love, intimacy, power and sex as common underlying dynamics to couples' presenting problems. The basic processes of engaging and holding two people as they present their divergent views of the problem, as well as exploring the differing perceptions and contexts surrounding their presenting problems are emphasised. A framework of exploring couple problems at the levels of behaviour, meaning, belief and emotion is presented. Basic in-session interventions and therapeutic tasks are elaborated. Finally, a range of special couple issues are examined such as separation and divorce, domestic violence, sexual problems and same-sex relationships.

Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates>

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

1. Demonstrate skills in problem exploration to develop conceptualisations that are linked to an integrative meta-framework.
2. Articulate a conceptualization of a relationship problem together with appropriate intervention strategies.
3. Articulate general strategies for dealing with special problems such as domestic violence, affairs, and separation and divorce in couple therapy situations.

4. Reflect upon personal beliefs and attitudes regarding relationships and how those beliefs and attitudes may influence the therapy done with couples.

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Due
<u>Reflect on Readings</u>	20%	13/03/15 to 5/06/15
<u>Couple Conceptual Analysis</u>	60%	15/05/15
<u>Beliefs About Relationships</u>	20%	20/03/15 to 12/06/15

Reflect on Readings

Due: **13/03/15 to 5/06/15**

Weighting: **20%**

Key readings (which are starred *) from the text book and other sources will form the basis for the unit discussion board where students will be encouraged to comment. Discussion should relate not only to readings. While other readings should be read, only 8 (2 starred for each of the first four workshops) will be posted on the unit discussion board.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- 2. Articulate a conceptualization of a relationship problem together with appropriate intervention strategies.
- 4. Reflect upon personal beliefs and attitudes regarding relationships and how those beliefs and attitudes may influence the therapy done with couples.

Couple Conceptual Analysis

Due: **15/05/15**

Weighting: **60%**

This assignment will assist you to think about and articulate a beginning understanding of how you may conceptualise presenting problems from a couple perspective. Frequently one person will present in therapy with issues that can be more fully understood in considering their personal relationships with family and partner. Choose a case that you have worked with, are currently working with in a therapeutic manner or some relationship you know well enough to comment on dynamics. The case may be an individual or couple and there may be some gaps that you will need to fill in from your imagination. This will be acceptable for this exercise. The essay should focus on how you can begin to understand the presenting problems from a systemic perspective. You should articulate how some psychodynamic concepts or themes might complement your systemic perspective. The essay should focus on conceptual tools and practice strategies and techniques that you have either already found helpful or that you think you might be able to utilise with sufficient practice in the future. It should draw on seminars,

workshops, and your reading.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- 1. Demonstrate skills in problem exploration to develop conceptualisations that are linked to an integrative meta-framework.
- 2. Articulate a conceptualization of a relationship problem together with appropriate intervention strategies.
- 3. Articulate general strategies for dealing with special problems such as domestic violence, affairs, and separation and divorce in couple therapy situations.

Beliefs About Relationships

Due: **20/03/15 to 12/06/15**

Weighting: **20%**

1. This will be an opportunity for you to reflect on your own relationships to better understand what beliefs and attitudes you bring to couple therapy. Pick 3-5 of the most important romantic or other intimate relationships you have had in the past. Consider these relationships from an objective frame of reference. You may like to use the four key themes for exploring relationship dynamics of love, intimacy, sex, and/or power. What did you learn about intimate relationships from your own family of origin? How did this learning impact on the relationships that you have formed? How did your relationships begin? How were the two of you attracted to each other? What did you learn about love? Intimacy? Trust? Self disclosure? What have you learned about making relationships work? How might all of these ideas influence your work with clients? What type of client relationships will cause you to be more understanding or less understanding? How might your understanding influence the way you conduct couple therapy? How do your ideas relate to the literature on couple relationships? This may be written in the form of a learning journal and should have 4 entries, corresponding to the four workshops.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- 4. Reflect upon personal beliefs and attitudes regarding relationships and how those beliefs and attitudes may influence the therapy done with couples.

Delivery and Resources

This unit will focus on theoretical underpinnings and the associated practice in working with couples who are experiencing relationship problems. Students will learn to focus on the key skills of engaging both partners simultaneously, exploring presenting problems, and

conceptualizing these problems within a meta-framework from an integrative position. In addition to managing couple therapy sessions, students will be able to practice skills to explore their conceptualization as well as designing appropriate interventions based on their assessments. Special topics associated with couple therapy will be presented, along with general strategies for managing these special situations. Emphasis will be placed on working with couples around separation and divorce issues, working with couples where there has been an affair, and managing situations where intimate partner violence is suspected.

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](#). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

Academic Honesty Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic_honesty/policy.html

Assessment Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/assessment/policy.html>

Grading Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grading/policy.html>

Grade Appeal Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/gradeappeal/policy.html>

Grievance Management Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grievance_management/policy.html

Disruption to Studies Policy http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption_studies/policy.html *The Disruption to Studies Policy is effective from March 3 2014 and replaces the Special Consideration Policy.*

In addition, a number of other policies can be found in the [Learning and Teaching Category](#) of Policy Central.

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student_conduct/

Results

Results shown in *iLearn*, or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in [eStudent](#). For more information visit ask.mq.edu.au.

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit <http://students.mq.edu.au/support/>

Learning Skills

Learning Skills (mq.edu.au/learningskills) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to improve your marks and take control of your study.

- [Workshops](#)

- [StudyWise](#)
- [Academic Integrity Module for Students](#)
- [Ask a Learning Adviser](#)

Student Services and Support

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the [Disability Service](#) who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

Student Enquiries

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at ask.mq.edu.au

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit <http://informatics.mq.edu.au/help/>.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use Policy](#). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

Graduate Capabilities

PG - Capable of Professional and Personal Judgment and Initiative

Our postgraduates will demonstrate a high standard of discernment and common sense in their professional and personal judgment. They will have the ability to make informed choices and decisions that reflect both the nature of their professional work and their personal perspectives.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- 1. Demonstrate skills in problem exploration to develop conceptualisations that are linked to an integrative meta-framework.
- 2. Articulate a conceptualization of a relationship problem together with appropriate intervention strategies.
- 3. Articulate general strategies for dealing with special problems such as domestic violence, affairs, and separation and divorce in couple therapy situations.
- 4. Reflect upon personal beliefs and attitudes regarding relationships and how those beliefs and attitudes may influence the therapy done with couples.

Assessment tasks

- Reflect on Readings
- Couple Conceptual Analysis
- Beliefs About Relationships

PG - Discipline Knowledge and Skills

Our postgraduates will be able to demonstrate a significantly enhanced depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content knowledge in their chosen fields.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- 1. Demonstrate skills in problem exploration to develop conceptualisations that are linked to an integrative meta-framework.
- 2. Articulate a conceptualization of a relationship problem together with appropriate intervention strategies.
- 3. Articulate general strategies for dealing with special problems such as domestic violence, affairs, and separation and divorce in couple therapy situations.

Assessment task

- Couple Conceptual Analysis

PG - Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

Our postgraduates will be capable of utilising and reflecting on prior knowledge and experience, of applying higher level critical thinking skills, and of integrating and synthesising learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments. A characteristic of this form of thinking is the generation of new, professionally oriented knowledge through personal or group-based critique of practice and theory.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- 1. Demonstrate skills in problem exploration to develop conceptualisations that are linked to an integrative meta-framework.
- 2. Articulate a conceptualization of a relationship problem together with appropriate intervention strategies.

Assessment tasks

- Reflect on Readings
- Couple Conceptual Analysis
- Beliefs About Relationships

PG - Research and Problem Solving Capability

Our postgraduates will be capable of systematic enquiry; able to use research skills to create new knowledge that can be applied to real world issues, or contribute to a field of study or

practice to enhance society. They will be capable of creative questioning, problem finding and problem solving.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- 1. Demonstrate skills in problem exploration to develop conceptualisations that are linked to an integrative meta-framework.
- 2. Articulate a conceptualization of a relationship problem together with appropriate intervention strategies.

Assessment tasks

- Couple Conceptual Analysis
- Beliefs About Relationships

PG - Effective Communication

Our postgraduates will be able to communicate effectively and convey their views to different social, cultural, and professional audiences. They will be able to use a variety of technologically supported media to communicate with empathy using a range of written, spoken or visual formats.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- 1. Demonstrate skills in problem exploration to develop conceptualisations that are linked to an integrative meta-framework.
- 2. Articulate a conceptualization of a relationship problem together with appropriate intervention strategies.
- 4. Reflect upon personal beliefs and attitudes regarding relationships and how those beliefs and attitudes may influence the therapy done with couples.

Assessment tasks

- Reflect on Readings
- Couple Conceptual Analysis
- Beliefs About Relationships

PG - Engaged and Responsible, Active and Ethical Citizens

Our postgraduates will be ethically aware and capable of confident transformative action in relation to their professional responsibilities and the wider community. They will have a sense of connectedness with others and country and have a sense of mutual obligation. They will be able to appreciate the impact of their professional roles for social justice and inclusion related to national and global issues

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- 1. Demonstrate skills in problem exploration to develop conceptualisations that are linked to an integrative meta-framework.
- 3. Articulate general strategies for dealing with special problems such as domestic violence, affairs, and separation and divorce in couple therapy situations.
- 4. Reflect upon personal beliefs and attitudes regarding relationships and how those beliefs and attitudes may influence the therapy done with couples.

Assessment task

- Beliefs About Relationships