

# **Integrating** *Gender and Culture* *in Family Therapy Training*



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*Toni Schindler Zimmerman*

*E d i t o r*

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*Integrating Gender and Culture in Family Therapy Training* has been co-published simultaneously as *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy*, Volume 12, Numbers 2/3 and 4 2001.



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# Integrating Gender and Culture in Family Therapy Training

## CONTENTS

Preface: Integrating Gender and Culture in Family Therapy Training <i>Toni Schindler Zimmerman</i>	xiii
The Weave of Gender and Culture in the Tapestry of a Family Therapy Training Program: Promoting Social Justice in the Practice of Family Therapy <i>Toni Schindler Zimmerman</i> <i>Shelley A. Haddock</i>	1
Therapists' Gender Assumptions and How These Assumptions Influence Therapy <i>Tal Harris</i> <i>Laurie B. Moret</i> <i>Jerry Gale</i> <i>Karen L. Kampmeyer</i>	33
Differences Making a Difference: Cross-Cultural Interactions in Supervisory Relationships <i>Kyle D. Killian</i>	61
Neither Mask nor Mirror: One Therapist's Journey to Ethically Integrate Feminist Family Therapy and Multiculturalism <i>Laura A. Bryan</i>	105
Conversations with the Founders of the Women's Project on the Integration of Gender and Culture in Family Therapy Training <i>Shelley A. Haddock</i>	123
Feminism, Moral Consultation, and Training <i>William J. Doherty</i>	151

When a Family Therapist Goes Pop <i>David MacPhee</i> <i>Toni Schindler Zimmerman</i> <i>Shelley A. Haddock</i>	157
A Movie Review of Will, Cole and Kate <i>Frank Pittman</i>	163
Experiencing Feminist Family Therapy Supervision <i>Anne Prouty</i>	171
Therapy with Families in Poverty: Application of Feminist Family Therapy Principles <i>Scott J. Ziemba</i>	205
A Conversation with Evan Imber-Black, PhD: Progress and Challenges in Integrating Gender and Culture in Family Therapy Training <i>Shelley A. Haddock</i>	239
Reflections on Current Feminist Training in Family Therapy <i>Rhea V. Almeida</i> <i>Miguel Hernandez</i>	243
Index	251

## ABOUT THE EDITOR

**Toni Schindler Zimmerman, PhD**, is Associate Professor at Colorado State University. She has been the Director of the Marriage and Family Therapy Program at CSU for ten years. This program is strong in both research training and clinical skill training. The CSU MFT Program has been widely recognized for its tremendous efforts for integrating gender and culture in family therapy training. Toni Schindler Zimmerman has been a leader in gender and family therapy integration. In 1999, the MFT Program that she directs was given the AAMFT National Training Award. In 1997, she was awarded the Ruth Strang Research Award by the National Association for Women in Education. Also, in 1997, she was honored as the Colorado Marriage and Family Therapist of the Year by the CAMFT. Currently, she is editor for *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy* and has over 50 publications in the area of Marriage and Family Therapy. Her research, teaching and outreach efforts are in the areas of gender and culture integration in marriage and family therapy, work and family balance issues in family therapy, and gender and parenting. She currently has a grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation for \$206,000.00 studying successful balance of work and family. She is considered an outstanding teacher and trainer by her students and colleagues.



# Preface:

## Integrating Gender and Culture in Family Therapy Training

In the past twenty-five years or so, the field of family therapy has undergone significant changes. Prior to this time, therapists and trainers did not consider gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, and spirituality as relevant to their work with clients. Today, many trainers and therapists consider these constructs to be organizing principles of society, people's lives and relationships. Rather than treating these principles as peripheral or "special topics," many family therapists fully integrate gender and culture into every therapy and supervision session, course, and interaction with students and colleagues. Although a full integration has not been realized by all trainers and therapists, we have much to celebrate.

These accomplishments have been realized through meaningful and difficult dialogue, in which persons in the field began to recognize and bring themselves and one another through the fog of sexism, racism, homophobia, and classism. As the fog continues to lift for each of us (e.g., clients, trainees, and ourselves), we are able to not only see the dynamics of power and oppression; we can also see how our own privilege and fear blind us. Our own transformation and effectiveness as trainers and therapists are realized when—in the face of our own blind spots—we take responsibility, are humbled, and continue to participate in this profound and often difficult dialogue. We continue to change.

Although there are many reasons to be optimistic, there is still much work to be done. This work will require all of our voices and a

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commitment to remain in this necessary conversation. Each of these contributions attempts to continue this dialogue as it pertains to training and the socialization of the next generation of family therapists. This collection is dedicated to the many courageous and wise women and allied men—the lighthouses in the fog—who have been the beacons in our search for social justice.

*Toni Schindler Zimmerman*

# The Weave of Gender and Culture in the Tapestry of a Family Therapy Training Program: Promoting Social Justice in the Practice of Family Therapy

Toni Schindler Zimmerman  
Shelley A. Haddock

**SUMMARY.** Family therapy training programs are being challenged to ensure that future generations of family therapists are proficient in addressing gender, culture, and social justice issues in their practice of therapy. To address this challenge, MFT program faculty must fully integrate the organizing principles of gender and culture throughout every aspect of the curricula. This article describes specific ways that the faculty members in a marriage and family therapy training program weave gender and culture throughout the tapestry of a training program. It provides specific, concrete, and transferable strategies, activities,

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This article is dedicated to the students and alumni of CSU's HDFS Department who are the best teachers and inspiration of the HDFS faculty.

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ideas, and resources for integrating gender and culture in family therapy courses, supervision, research, service, and clinical environments. [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-342-9678. E-mail address: <getinfo@haworthpressinc.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> © 2001 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]

**KEYWORDS.** MFT training, gender, culture, graduate training, instruction, therapy

In response to the feminist critique, the field of family therapy is in the process of widening its systemic lens to more accurately reflect the fundamental organizing principles of gender and culture on relationships and families. Although several studies (e.g., Gilbert, 1995; Haddock, 1995; Leslie & Clossick, 1996; Werner-Wilson, Price, Zimmerman, & Murphy, 1998) have revealed that many practitioners and trainers have yet to fully adopt and/or apply this more systemic perspective (Taggart, 1985), there is evidence that this widening lens is gaining currency. For instance, there has been a proliferation of articles related to incorporating gender and culture in the practice of family therapy, and the Commission on Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE) now requires that gender and culture are addressed in the curricula of accredited training programs.

It is incumbent upon training programs to ensure that future generations of family therapists are proficient in addressing gender, culture, and social justice in their practice of therapy for several reasons. First, as several scholars have argued, it is unethical not to do so (e.g., Avis, 1989; Weiner & Boss, 1985). Because we are all products of a racist, sexist, classist, and homophobic society, we must directly challenge these attitudes and behaviors in ourselves. Failing to do so will result in therapists providing less effective treatment, and most likely, even unwittingly causing harm to clients. For instance, in Gilbert's (1995) study, 53% of a sample of AAMFT clinical members did not address safety in their treatment plan for a situation involving wife abuse. Second, given the growing diversity of our society coupled with professional standards calling for therapists to be skilled in working with a diverse clientele, therapist without such training will be at a distinct professional disadvantage. And, third, a multicultural and gender emphasis enriches the theories and practice of family therapy in general.

For instance, as stated by Green (1998a), “the multicultural lens will bring into clearer focus the uniqueness of each race’s normative family experience . . . . In addition, the study of therapist-client interracial differentness will help illuminate the more general process of negotiating differentness between therapist and client, regardless of race” (p. 95).

Although a burgeoning literature exists related to the practice of gender and culturally sensitive therapy, less has been written about addressing these fundamental categories of human experience in our training programs. When addressing gender in training and supervision, there are several excellent resources available. For instance, Avis (1989) and Leslie and Clossick (1992) outlined key assumptions and general guidelines for teaching a feminist perspective to family therapy trainees. Helmeke (1994) elaborated on specific ways to foster a safe atmosphere for discussing gender in family therapy training programs. Wheeler, Avis, Miller, and Chaney (1986) proposed a model that delineates the perceptual, conceptual, and executive skills that trainees must obtain to practice from a feminist perspective. Other authors have described specific activities for integrating gender in a family therapy course (Haddock, Zimmerman, & MacPhee, in press; McGill Roberts; 1991; Sirles, 1994; Storm, 1991), supervision (Ault-Riche, 1988; Haddock et al., in press; Nelson, 1991; Wheeler et al., 1986), or program curriculum (Storm, York, & Keller, 1997). Finally, there also have been articles related to special considerations when training women and men in the practice of feminist-informed family therapy (Nutt, 1991; Reid, McDaniel, Donaldson, & Tollers, 1987).

Although resources exist related to the incorporation of cultural variables in the practice of therapy (e.g., McGoldrick, 1998; McGoldrick, Pearce, & Giordano, 1996), less has been written in the family therapy literature on methods for providing trainees with the skills to address the organizing principles of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation in their work with clients. Hardy and Laszloffy (1995) proposed the use of cultural genograms in training, and Falicov (1988; 1995) introduced a multidimensional, comparative framework for integrating culture in therapy and training. Four chapters in *Re-Envisioning Family Therapy* (McGoldrick, 1998) provide guidelines for transforming our theory and training to overcome the dominant culture’s blinders to racism (Green, 1998b; Hardy & Laszloffy, 1998; Akamatsu, 1998).

With this article, we hope to contribute to the dynamic and necessary dialogue related to effective methods for training therapists to incorporate gender and culture in their practice. Although we describe training philosophies and assumptions, our primary contribution will be to provide specific and concrete activities, strategies, ideas, and resources for integrating gender and culture as a critical overlay in a Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) Program. Our intention is to highlight activities and strategies that would be easily adopted by other family therapy trainers. These activities and strategies, however, cannot fully portray the importance and nature of the daily intricacies of interaction and environment that are foundational to creating a gender and culturally sensitive program. Specifically, we will describe the specific ways that faculty members in the Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) Program at Colorado State University (CSU) integrate gender and culture throughout the major components of the program, including teaching, supervision, research, and service. This program was awarded the 1999 AAMFT Training Award in recognition of its integration of gender and culture in its curriculum.

### ***TRAINING PHILOSOPHY AND ASSUMPTIONS***

As many writers have persuasively argued (e.g., Avis, 1989; Falicov, 1995; Green, 1998; Hardy & Laszloffy, 1998; Storm et al., 1997), widening students' lenses to include gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation requires much more than adding readings or devoting a few class sessions to these "special topics." We agree with Storm et al. (1997) that a complete "transformation" of the program and curriculum is required. The curriculum of the CSU MFT Program is based on the premise that gender and culture—like age—are organizing principles of relationships and families (Falicov, 1995; Goldner, 1988). Likewise, we believe that gender and culture necessarily must be central organizing principles of the entire program. Considerations of gender and culture provide the framework from which theories are taught and applied, research is conducted and critiqued, clinical supervision and therapy are conducted, programmatic decisions are made and implemented, and perhaps most importantly, from which the daily intricacies of interaction between faculty, students, and clients are enacted. Metaphorically speaking, in the tapestry of the training program, gender and culture are woven through all other areas or topics. It

is our experience that this truly integrated approach produces a stronger, richer, and more colorful tapestry. When these philosophies are realized within a training program, trainers' and students' lives are "transformed" (Storm et al., 1997) personally and professionally, allowing them to be more conscious and effective in both arenas.

### *Foundational Assumptions of the Program*

The curriculum is based on four basic assumptions about how to best integrate gender, culture, and social justice issues in training methods.

1. *Consistency of process and content.* The process of training is ideally consistent with the content (Avis, 1989). Rather than addressing gender and multicultural topics simply through dissemination of information, it is best for trainers to provide students with opportunities to experience feminist and multicultural principles in the every day interactions of the program. This can be accomplished by attending to power dynamics among students, between students and faculty, and among the faculty. For example, relationships between faculty and students need not be characterized by rigid hierarchy in order to create respect; maintaining "human, flexible" (Avis, 1989) relationships is more consistent with feminist and multicultural principles.
2. *Atmosphere of humility.* It is important to cultivate an atmosphere of humility and safety around feminist and multicultural topics. This can be accomplished through maintaining a shared conviction that because we are all influenced by the sexist, racist, and homophobic messages of our society (Avis, 1989), we will all have "blind spots" and will continually need to challenge ourselves in these areas (Lerman, 1994).
3. *Attention to theory and application.* Feminist and multicultural principles are taught ideally on a theoretical and applied level. Trainers should facilitate students' rethinking of the societal and familial relationships through extensive reading, theoretical discussion, and personal exploration (Avis, 1989; Goodrich, Ramage, Ellman, & Halstead, 1988; Storm, 1991; Wheeler et al., 1989). However, training must go beyond theoretical issues to stress practical application (Haddock et al., in press). In other words, training should address the intricacies and practicalities

of specific ways that therapists can attend to gender and culture in interactions with clients.

4. *Attention to the interlocking nature of gender and culture.* Rather than addressing gender and culture as separate dimensions (e.g., a section in a course on gender, another section on race, and a third on sexual orientation), faculty should assist students in understanding the intersections of gender and culture. Trainees ideally recognize that experiences of power, oppression, and socialization vary according to an individual's "ecological niche" and position vis-à-vis the dominant culture (Falicov, 1995).

Having described the primary assumptions that inform our approach to training, we will provide specific examples of how we operationalize these assumptions in teaching, supervision, research, and service.

## **TEACHING**

Within our curriculum, we have chosen not to include a separate course on gender and culture. Rather, these topics are infused throughout virtually all courses in the curriculum. The majority of faculty members in the Human Development and Family Studies Department (within which the Marriage and Family Therapy Program is housed) have participated in two university-sponsored programs on methods for integrating gender and culture in their courses (MacPhee, Kreutzer, & Fritz, 1994; MacPhee, Oltjenbruns, Fritz, & Kreutzer, 1994). Therefore, in family therapy courses, for instance, all theories (e.g., solution focused, strategic, structural) and presenting problems (e.g., domestic violence, eating disorders, substance abuse, sexual and communication difficulties) are viewed through a feminist and multicultural lens. In developmental courses, each phase of the life span is examined with regard to gender, ethnicity, race, and sexual orientation. Because of space limitations, we are unable to describe the way in which each course in the curriculum infuses these topics. Instead, we will showcase three of the therapy courses—an introductory marriage and family therapy theories course (HD534: Marriage and Family Therapy Theories), an ethics course (HD677: Legal and Ethical Issues in Marriage and Family Therapy), and an introductory course on basic skills in family

therapy (HD686: Professional Skills Development). The first two courses are taught by the first author, and the third by the second author.

### *HD534: Marriage and Family Therapy Theories*

Students enroll in this course during their first semester of the program. The goals of the course are to: (a) introduce students to four metaframeworks—systemic, constructivist, feminist, and multicultural—and the integration of these metaframeworks, (b) introduce students to six family therapy theories (e.g., solution focused, narrative), (c) critique and apply these therapy theories using the feminist and multicultural frameworks, and (d) encourage application and integration of the metaframeworks and family therapy theories in the practice of therapy.

As recommended by Avis (1989), students read a great deal of material on gender and culture in the course. In addition to reading a basic marriage and family therapy text (e.g., Schwartz & Nichols, 1998), students also read *Ethnicity and Family Therapy* by McGoldrick, Giordano, and Pearce (1996), and *Equal Partners, Good Friends* by Rabin (1996). Additionally, students read a collection of selected articles that includes additional material on gender and culture. As described below, the instructor provides both lecture material and opportunities for experiential activities in the course.

*Introduction to metaframeworks.* The first half of the course is devoted to introducing students to the metaframeworks. These metaframeworks form the foundation of the remainder of the course and are applied consistently to all other materials in the course. Before addressing each metaframework in depth, the instructor introduces the concept of metaframeworks in general, using a metaphor of an umbrella. The instructor conceptualizes the MFT theories as the handle of an umbrella, while the metaframeworks provide the “cover” (i.e., umbrella fabric). Students learn that—when they walk into the therapy room—regardless of which family therapy theory they have “in hand,” they should open their umbrella so they are “covered” by the metaframeworks. The metaframeworks are conceptualized as “safety” from “bad weather” (e.g., racism, sexism, classism, and homophobia).

The instructor describes therapists’ use of the metaframeworks as lying on a continuum from “1” to “5.” For instance, if a therapist fails to fully open their systemic umbrella (and therefore stays on the low end of the continuum), they will conceptualize problems and solutions from a linear perspective. If they fully open their umbrella

(moving to the upper end of the continuum), they will operate from the “safety” of a systemic perspective. Similarly, if they fail to open their constructivist umbrella, they will take an expert stance with clients; whereas the coverage of this umbrella will provide them the “safety” of considering multiple realities in their work with clients.

It is important to discuss the application of metaframeworks as falling on a continuum for several reasons. First, it is more reflective of what typically occurs in therapy. As Haddock et al. (in press) argued, it is typically not accurate to label any one session—or even an intervention—as “feminist” or “not feminist.” Typically, a therapist incorporates some principles from feminist and multicultural meta-theories in a session while neglecting others; further, an intervention may have had a feminist-informed *intention*, but be *delivered* in a less feminist-informed manner. Using a continuum emphasizes the fluidity of and progression in therapists’ behaviors and skills. In conceptualizing the application of metaframeworks on a continuum, the instructor can challenge students to “open their umbrella” more fully (or move towards the upper end of the continuum) while also recognizing that this is a challenging process—one that none of us do perfectly in every session. For instance, metaphorically speaking, sometimes the wind catches our umbrella; sometimes we forget to carry it with us; sometimes our umbrella gets holes in it that we may not at first notice. Regardless, it is our responsibility to keep our umbrella in good shape, hold it against the wind, and use it for the “safety” of our clients. Following this general introduction, the instructor describes each metaframework in depth. In this article, we will only address how the instructor introduces the feminist and multicultural metaframeworks. Although these metaframeworks are initially introduced separately, the instructor emphasizes the interlocking nature of gender and culture throughout classroom discussions and assignments.

*The feminist metaframework.* To introduce the topic of gender, the instructor uses two primary methods to facilitate her lecture material. The first, a modified version of “In-the-Box, Out-of-the-Box” (Creighton & Kivel, 1992), invites students to examine the socialization process for women and men and how this process influences their relationships. See Appendix A for a brief description of this model and ideas for presentation. Following a full discussion of this model, the instructor transitions to a theoretical discussion of the feminist critique of family therapy, and the importance of conceptualizing gender as an

organizing principle of relationships. Students are given an opportunity to discuss the assigned readings in this context. The film *Tough Guise* (Bailey, 1999), a powerful portrayal of the construction of masculinity in American society, is shown. Students also view *Still Killing Us Softly* (1987; a new version is due in year 2000), which illustrates issues central to female socialization through images in advertising.

As mentioned above, given our experience that students typically have more difficulty with *enactment* rather than *assimilation* of feminist principles, the instructor uses the *Power Equity Guide* (Haddock et al., in press) to facilitate a discussion of how gender can *specifically* be addressed by therapists in their work with clients. Rabin (1996) and Whipple (1996) are excellent resources in this context because each includes theoretical and practical guidance to therapists. Following a detailed review of the *Power Equity Guide*, students are shown clips from two AAMFT Master's Series tapes—one that depicts a therapist working on the upper end of the feminist continuum, and one that depicts several interventions that are at the lower end of this continuum. Students use the *Power Equity Guide* to critique the therapists' work at various points in the tapes according to feminist principles, and brainstorm specific ways that the therapist could have moved further up the feminist continuum. The instructor also provides therapy for a client of the CSU Marriage and Family Therapy Clinic so students may observe the case from behind the one-way mirror. Students are directed to focus their observations on application of the metaframeworks and integration of family therapy theories reviewed in the course.

*The multicultural framework.* In introducing the multicultural framework, the instructor has four primary goals: (a) providing students with a safe and supportive environment where they can develop the skills, emotional capacity, and desire to acknowledge their own racism, classism, and homophobia in an ongoing manner; (b) inviting students to take responsibility for developing multicultural sensitivity while encouraging them to be comfortable with "not knowing everything" and enthusiastic about learning more (Green, 1998); (c) facilitating students to develop intracultural sensitivity (e.g., an awareness of cultural differences and their importance); (d) assisting students to develop intercultural sensitivity (e.g., an awareness of the institutionalized privilege and power of some groups relative to others); and

(e) assisting students in understanding the intersections of culture and gender.

To introduce a discussion of racism, the instructor begins by showing and facilitating a discussion of two powerful films, *The Color of Fear* (Mun Wah & Foo, 1994) and *The Way Home* (Butler, 1998). The instructor encourages students to apply the content of these films to the practice of therapy (e.g., How will the content of these films influence your work as a therapist? What did you learn about how to address power differentials between clients? What did you notice about the invisibility of power differentials to those group members who belonged to the majority group? How might this invisibility affect the therapeutic process and families in general? What did you learn about the way in which gender socialization varies for individuals of diverse racial backgrounds?)

To promote intracultural sensitivity, the instructor leads discussions based on the students' reading of *Ethnicity and Family Therapy* by McGoldrick, Giordano, and Pearce (1996). This book allows students to learn culturally specific information, such as family relationships, class structures, and help-seeking behaviors. This culturally specific information is discussed with the recognition that families are acculturated at different levels, and therefore will reflect this general information to varying degrees.

To encourage synthesis of the material covered thus far in the course, the instructor assigns a metaframeworks synthesis paper, which requires students to develop a short case scenario. For this case, they are to describe how they would provide therapy if they were working from the low end of the continuum (with their umbrella down) versus if they were working from underneath a fully opened umbrella. For each end of the continuum, students are asked to address the following questions: What are the specific questions you would ask? What kinds of interventions would you use? What kinds of homework assignments would you give? For instance, in discussing the feminist and multicultural metaframework, one student wrote, "If I had my metaframeworks umbrella up, I would openly encourage an egalitarian relationship between this couple by . . . ." Another student wrote, "If I had my umbrella up, I would investigate in what ways does acculturation, racism, and gender socialization affect the client's depression."

*Application of the metaframeworks to MFT theories.* In the second half of the course, six family therapy theories are introduced. For each therapy theory, two students are assigned to create a videotaped role play of a therapist applying the family therapy theory (e.g., solution focused, narrative). This videotape is shown to the class when that particular family therapy theory is introduced by the instructor. “Clients” in the role play represent a marginalized group (e.g., a gay or lesbian couple, a family from a marginalized ethnic or racial group, or a family living in poverty), allowing students an opportunity to operationalize multicultural competencies. Students are also expected to incorporate feminist principles in their role played therapy session, addressing specific ways that gender socialization interacts with culture for this particular client.

For this assignment, it is helpful to have a teaching assistant—a more advanced student in the program—to act as a mentor or coach to the students in developing their videotape. Typically, the assistant will provide specific suggestions on additional ways to include the concepts and techniques of the therapy theory and to move their work further along the metaframework continuums (e.g., maintaining a non-hierarchical stance with clients, empowering clients to explore non-traditional gender choices, or actively assessing the influence of racism or homophobia on the presenting problem). After receiving this feedback, students typically conduct and videotape the role play again; this improved version is shown to the class. Again, in a safe environment, the class and instructor provide feedback on the videotape with regard to application of the particular family therapy theory and their incorporation of the metaframeworks.

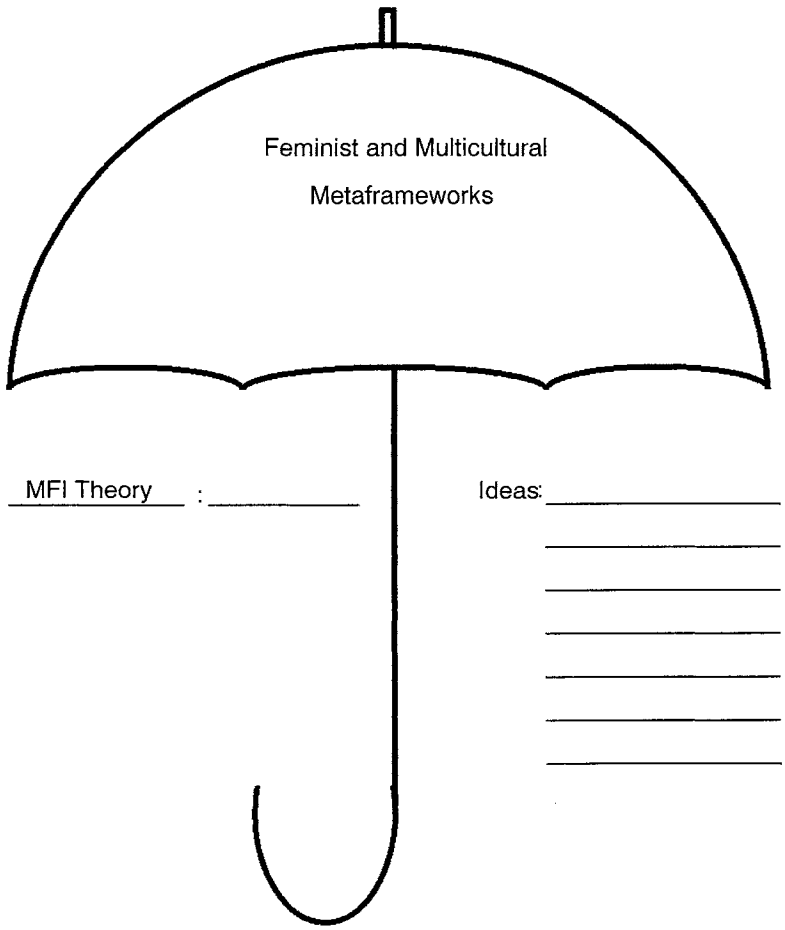
Another course assignment is used to encourage students to apply the feminist and multicultural metaframeworks to particular family therapy theories and techniques. For each family therapy theory covered in the course, students complete an “Application of Feminist and Multicultural Metatheories to Family Therapy Theories” worksheet (see Figure 1). On this worksheet, the “metaframeworks umbrella” is depicted. Directions on the worksheet ask students to brainstorm ideas for applying these principles to a particular family therapy theory (e.g., narrative). Space for their ideas is provided on the worksheet underneath the “metaframework umbrellas.” For instance, a student may write: “When you consider a client’s problem-saturated dominant story, ask them in what ways their gender and culture have in-

fluenced or participated in the problem saturation. In what ways does your culture or gender influence your ability to participate in an alternative story?"

The final examination is held during the second to the last class period. For this exam, students are shown a clip of a therapy session.

FIGURE 1. Application of Feminist and Multicultural Metaframeworks to Family Therapy Theories

DIRECTIONS: Brainstorm Ideas for Applying Feminist and Multicultural Principles in the Application of the Therapy Theory Indicated



They randomly select a therapy theory and develop a detailed treatment plan for the case based on this theory. Additionally, the students randomly select a societally marginalized status (e.g., gay or lesbian, African American, Jewish), and discuss potential special considerations in working with the family on the videotape if one or more of the members were from this marginalized group. It is an expectation that treatment plans incorporate feminist principles.

During the last session of class, the instructor returns the students' graded exams. The students take turns briefly describing their treatment plan for the case. This activity is beneficial for several reasons. First, it allows students the opportunity to see how a case can be approached from a variety of family therapy theories. Second, it provides students with an opportunity to see how a case would be handled differently based on the clients' "ecological niche" (Falicov, 1995), e.g., their ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or sexual orientation. For instance, if the case involved a family with a truant adolescent, the student who selected "gay or lesbian client," may emphasize the influence of the "coming out" process and societal homophobia on the adolescent's behavior. One of the therapist's interventions might involve referring the young man to a group for gay youth and his parents to P-FLAG (a national organization for Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays). The student who selected "African American client" may emphasize that the young man is one of five African-American students in a predominantly Caucasian school. The treatment plan might include initiating a conversation between the young man and his parents about racism and ways they have dealt with it in their own lives, facilitating dialogue with school staff to address racism, and empowering the adolescent by encouraging peer relationships and acknowledging his experience.

Student feedback on this course has been consistently positive. Students report experiencing a paradigm shift, allowing them to recognize the influences of gender and culture on individuals and their relationships and the importance of integrating these issues in therapy.

### *HD686: Professional Skills Development*

Students enroll in this course concurrently with HD534: Marriage and Family Therapy Theories during their first semester in the program. The goal of this course is to provide students with basic therapy skills (e.g., joining, assessment, goal setting), and to transition them

into their practicum experience in the Marriage and Family Therapy Clinic as therapists (by teaching them the policies and procedures of the clinic). Additionally, opportunities are presented to students to begin the ongoing process of self-examination in terms of their own “ecological niche” (Falicov, 1995). Excellent resources exist for these training purposes (e.g., Hardy & Lazsloffly, 1995; Falicov, 1995; Papp & Imber-Black, 1996; Storm, 1991). Because it is taken concurrently with HD534, the course is also designed to provide students with additional opportunities to apply family therapy theories and metaframeworks in the practice of therapy. The following three assignments in this course are particularly relevant with regards to integration of gender and culture.

*Application of the metaframeworks during therapy observation.* The first assignment requires students to observe from behind the one-way mirror fifteen hours of therapy conducted by second-year students in the program’s Marriage and Family Therapy Clinic. To encourage students to focus their observation on those aspects central to the course, they are required to address several questions related to (a) basic skills (e.g., “Specifically, how is the therapist joining with the client? Specifically, how is the therapist structuring the session—e.g., initiating closure to the session, interrupting problematic interactions?); (b) the systemic metatheory (e.g., What are one linear and two systemic hypotheses about the case?); and (c) feminist and multicultural metatheories (e.g., How did the therapist include gender as a topic? How did the therapist manage the hierarchy in the therapist-client relationship?) Students also indicate what they might have asked or done in the session to further integrate the metaframeworks.

*Therapy simulations with theater students acting as clients.* For the second assignment, students are required to conduct a three-session therapy simulation with theater students acting as clients, an activity developed by Werner-Wilson (2000). To facilitate this assignment, the instructor requests assistance from the theater department on campus in recruiting and preparing theater students to act as therapy clients for this activity. Each pair of theater students is provided with a scenario from which to further develop characters and a situation. The scenarios depict clients of diverse backgrounds and involve presenting problems that are clearly influenced by gender and culture. For instance, one scenario involves a heterosexual couple who recently had their first child. The couple is struggling with topics that are typically

gender-laden, such as division of housework and parenting responsibility, and breadwinning pressures.

*Presentations of therapy simulations.* The third assignment requires students to present their simulated therapy case to the class—after the first or second session has been conducted. As part of the presentation, they show a videotape clip of their session and present their emerging treatment plan. During their case presentation, among other topics, students are required to discuss the possible influences of gender and culture on the presenting problem. Students have reported that the simulated therapy sessions and case presentation are very beneficial by allowing them to practice (a) clinic protocols (e.g., turning on the taping equipment, reviewing intake paperwork, administering assessments, and taking case notes), (b) basic therapy skills covered in the course, (c) case presentation, and (d) application of the metaframeworks and therapy theories introduced in HD534. The assignment generally leads students to experience heightened confidence in their abilities prior to beginning to work as therapists in the clinic with “real” clients.

### *HD677: Legal and Ethical Issues in Marriage and Family Therapy*

The goals of this course are to provide students with (a) a thorough understanding of the AAMFT Code of Ethics, and national and state laws governing therapist behavior, (b) skills for recognizing and resolving ethical situations or dilemmas, (c) skills for interpreting and applying ethical standards within the context of feminist and multicultural metaframeworks, and (d) information and skills related to various professional issues, such as operating a private practice, obtaining licensure, and conducting research. Three books are required reading: *Ethical, Legal, and Professional Issues in the Practice of Family Therapy* (Huber, 1994), *Feminist Ethics in Psychotherapy* (Lerman & Porter, 1990), and *Soul Searching* (Doherty, 1995). Additionally, a reading packet on ethics with many readings related to gender and culture is assigned.

The course begins with a review of ethics in general and the importance of interpreting ethical codes within the context of the organizing principles of gender, race, class, and sexual orientation. Students are encouraged to apply the feminist and multicultural metatheories to the topic of ethics. One of the primary considerations when applying

feminist and multicultural principles to ethics is the management of power differentials between therapists and clients (Haddock et al., in press; Whipple, 1996). It has been argued that minimizing and managing power differentials facilitates the healing potential of therapy, and reduces therapists' risk of violating ethical principles or harming clients (either intentionally or unintentionally). To illustrate this important principle, the instructor shows excerpts from the movie, *The Doctor*. This film is an excellent illustration of how taking an expert or power position with clients tends to lead to objectification of clients (and therefore an increased risk of committing ethical violations). Through his own personal experience with cancer, the doctor portrayed in this film reevaluates his approach to patients. Through this process, he learns to more effectively manage the power differentials between himself and his patients. The film also depicts the violation of several ethical principles, including situations of sexual harassment, professional dishonesty, and inappropriate uses of humor with patients, which provide additional material for class discussion.

The instructor then leads discussions based on Lerman and Porter (1990) and articles included in the reading packet to illustrate the importance of considering contextual issues in the application of ethical principles. For instance, ethical principles related to dual relationships are analyzed from the perspective of special populations, such as rural community members or gay and lesbian individuals. A discussion is facilitated on the way in which therapists handle confidentiality between the members of a couple where violence is an issue. Students also discuss the ethics of diagnosis from a feminist and multicultural lens. For instance, students learn that cultural biases lead to some diagnoses being disproportionately given to particular groups by therapists (e.g., women are disproportionately diagnosed as having borderline or dependent personality disorder, and African American men are disproportionately diagnosed as paranoid personality disorder) (Soloman, 1992; Cook, Warnke, & Dupoy, 1993).

As part of the course assignments, groups of students provide presentations to the class on topics that were selected from a list of possible topics at the beginning of the course, such as child abuse, suicide, homicide, adult violence, court testimony, licensure and certifications, and research ethics. These topics are those commonly addressed in graduate professional ethics courses. However, to fulfill the