

The Rutgers DSW Program

Module Title: Sexuality and Norms: A Queer Perspective

Instructor:

Residency: November 2018

Date:

Module Description:

Sooner or later, happily or unhappily, almost everyone fails to control his or her sex life Perhaps as compensation, almost everyone sooner or later also succumbs to the temptation to control someone else's.

Michael Warner, The Trouble with Normal.

In our society, sexual monogamy in a married or committed relationship between two persons is thought to be sine qua non and thus, is rarely questioned. But perhaps now is the time to revisit the seemingly irrefutable connection between love, commitment, and sexual exclusivity. In this module, using a constructivist, queer theory perspective, we will examine the prevailing norms of sexuality and relationships and how clinical social workers consciously or not, enforce these norms. Using Gayle Rubin's (1992) conceptualization of "good sex" (monogamous, in a committed relationship, heterosexual) and "bad sex" (fetishes, nonmonogamy, sex for pay) we will critically examine norms that reflect a bias toward sexual exclusivity, mononormativity, and monosexism. Relevant research and theory supporting alternative, marginalized sexual arrangements and family forms will be discussed to determine what can be learned from these relationships including how to determine when such an option might be viable, how to introduce the topic for discussion in therapy and, if relevant, ways to help the couple establish rules and boundaries to protect their primary relationships.

Module Objectives:

As a result of this module, students will be able to:

1. Articulate and critically evaluate societal norms and values regarding sexuality and relationships using a queer theory perspective.
2. Acknowledge the role of clinical social workers as potential agents of social control in the area of sexuality.
3. Help clients consider alternative sexual agreements and relational styles in clinical settings

Required Readings:

LaSala, M. C. (2007). Old maps, new territory: Family therapy theory and gay and lesbian couples. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, 3(1), 1-14.

Warner, M. (1999). *The trouble with normal: Sex, politics, and the ethics of queer life*. New York: The Free Press (Chapter 1: The Ethics of Sexual Shame).