CPSY 6601 Couple and Family Dynamics

Summer 2020

Final Exam

100 points

Read the following case study. My suggestion is that you draw a genogram of the family and cycles of interaction circles for your own organization of your answers.

USING THE CASE STUDY BELOW - Discuss the following:

1. Choose a theory of family therapy – YOU WILL USE ***Systems theory*** which is a framework for thinking about families that has it's origins in many fields such as biology and anthropology. This unit and next will focus on the core ideas that drive working with families. How would your chosen theory approach and conceptualize what is causing the problem to continue in this family? **Be specific to the family** (application). Do not just describe the theory only.

2. What family life cycle stage are they in? How do you know? What task are they struggling with the most (back up your answer)? How would it inform your approach (Be specific to the stage)? *(remember, there is a chart at the beginning of our Nichol’s text ATTACHED (p. xiii that will assist you with this!)*

3. Identify **one primary goal** of the theory and **how it would be tailored for this specific family** case. Again, please do not only describe the goal of the theory in general terms, I must see application to the family.

4. Identify **2 techniques** used by that theory that could be utilized with this specific case and then explain how you would **apply them to the family**? Please do not only describe the technique.

**Scoring Distribution**

Conceptualization of the problem (40 points)

Family Life Cycle Stage (20 points)

Goal (20 points)

2 Techniques (20 points)

Please do not discuss the overall beliefs and tenets of your chosen theory- this is not a theories paper. **You must write specifically about the application of the theory to the case**. **Do not spend time introducing the theory, just go directly to applying it.** Every part of the theory you discuss should be applied (so if it’s mentioned, you must show how it applies to the case).

Your response should be clearly organized, supported by the text, and be 6-10 pages. **Please no abstracts, no cover page, no citations, and no reference page**. Your content should only be the answers to the questions. You should only need the books and materials from the class. Do not use outside sources. **APA style is not required or necessary.** You will not be graded on grammar, but make sure I can understand your points. To help me when I read it, **separate the paper with headings by question**. You will lose five points for less than 6 or more than 10 pages. Please use 12pt, Times New Roman font, double spaced, 1 inch margins, no spaces between paragraphs, and no running headers. You will lose 5 points for not following this format. You will lose 10 points for not using a theory that we covered.

Case Study

Olivia sought help for her 14-year-old niece (Claudia) whom she had just acquired custody of as a foster parent. Claudia’s doctor had contacted family Services after he learned of the conditions under which Claudia and her 12-year-old sister (Sierra) were living. Their mother (Kay) had begun drinking heavily when her sister passed away during the previous year and her husband (Marvin) had been drinking heavily for years, especially at night after returning from work. It had become commonplace in the house for both parents to be passed out on the couch while the girls were free to do as they pleased. Olivia, the paternal aunt, agreed to care for the girls while the parents found sobriety. Marvin and Kay have been married for 15 years.

Olivia was concerned about Claudia’s emotional well-being and wanted to find a therapist that Claudia would feel comfortable talking to. Claudia and Sierra had refused to confide in Olivia, believing it was a betrayal to their parents. Olivia was particularly concerned because Claudia was spending an inordinate amount of time talking to her mother on the phone and insisting that she needed to go back home to “fix things”. Olivia reported that Claudia was extremely oppositional, that she was struggling in school, and she suspected that Claudia was smoking cigarettes, marijuana, and was drinking.

After her sister died, Kay’s drinking made her physically and emotionally unavailable. During the previous year, Claudia typically came home from school to find her mother sitting in the living room so drunk that she was incapable of talking or walking. Her father worked long hours, would typically begin drinking on his way home from work, and would continue drinking until bedtime. Upon arriving at home, father would immediately engage in verbal warfare with mother, berating and insulting her for being a “pathetic” wife, mother, and housekeeper and then watch television until bedtime. Marvin had limited positive interaction with wife or children. During the verbal battles between Kay and Marvin, Claudia would intervene, believing it was her job to protect mother. Claudia described her mother as quiet, powerless, and in need of protection. Claudia explained further that she believed that it was her job to protect her younger sister during these battles and would send her up to her room to hide until it was over. Claudia stated that she has trouble sleeping, that she often feels down, that she has trouble concentrating in school, that she becomes anxious when she knows that her father is on his way home from work, and that she doesn’t like to leave her mother alone with her father.

Olivia, Kay, Marvin, and the two girls attend the first session. Marvin sat with Sierra on one couch, mother sat with Claudia on the opposite couch, and the Olivia sat in a chair by herself. In that session, you learn that the parents have been clean and sober for 60 days, are committed to getting custody back of the two girls, attending an outpatient recovery program in addition to AA meetings, and diligently working with DYFS.

During the session, you observe a highly conflictual relationship between Marvin and Olivia, between Olivia and Claudia, and between Claudia and Marvin. It was also apparent that Kay and Marvin are distant but trying to cooperate with one another in an effort to reunite the family. Further, Claudia takes an extremely protective stance towards her mother and Sierra towards her father. For example, whenever Claudia would verbally attack father, Sierra would make a soothing physical gesture towards him like rubbing his leg or leaning against his shoulder. This would often calm him down. Sierra presented as a quiet, gentle adolescent does well in school, helps around the house and works part time.

Marvin has been drinking since he was 12 years of age. He was the middle child of three, that he came from a ‘looking-good family’ and that he was the identified problem in his family-of-origin, while his younger brother got scholarships for his stellar baseball skills. Yet, he reported conflict between his sister (the oldest sibling) and his father, which was often interrupted by Marvin’s brother in some way that could detour them to a topic that would make them forget why they were fighting. Marvin’s brother felt very close to his father and would spend time with him whenever he could. Marvin’s father also drank daily. The only time he wouldn’t drink was at his son’s games.

Kay, on the other hand, was the youngest of two daughters whose parents divorced when she was two-years-old. Her father died of alcoholism when she was 14. She would often get in the middle of her parents fights until they got tired and went to bed. She was extremely close with her mother and had been distant from her sister. She would side with her mother while her sister would side with her father. Sometimes the sisters wouldn’t speak because of the allegiances to their parents.