

CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS: RECOGNIZING THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT OF DAILY LIFE

There is no discussion taking place in the world today that is more crucial than the debate about strategies of resistance.

—(Arundhati Roy, 2004, p.55).

Critical consciousness brings with it an awareness of the sociopolitical context of daily life. It often illuminates realities that we take for granted about how the world operates—for example, the manner in which family therapy and mental health service delivery systems are structured according to hierarchies of class, profession, gender, race, sexual orientation, disability status, and most importantly, funding sources. Critical consciousness empowers therapists to avoid replicating domination within intervention practices, and it empowers clients to gain a comprehensive perspective (meta-perspective) on the distress they are experiencing.

For example, a client who develops critical consciousness may learn that her depression is not exclusively a medical illness driven by organic factors she cannot change. Instead, she discovers that expectations rooted in patriarchy—her husband's desire that she take care of him, her unsatisfying employment, her financial worries—also contribute to her depression.

A strictly medical model gives her two choices: to consume or not consume a prescribed antidepressant medication. But a broader understanding of her situation, awakened by critical consciousness, opens up a range of options, including strategies for gaining equal power within her intimate partnership, opportunities for more satisfying employment, and steps toward a more secure financial status.

She moves from being simply a patient to becoming an agent in her own process of evolution.

At the same time, the therapist who gains critical consciousness becomes a collaborator and fellow explorer in the client's healing process instead of taking a dominant role.

In this chapter, we examine

- The elements of critical consciousness.
- The role critical consciousness plays in therapy.
- How to help therapists develop critical consciousness.

Consciousness raising should be fundamental to any social justice-oriented therapy. We agree with liberation theorists and feminists who assert that the personal is political—that a person's gender, race, sexual orientation, sexual identity, culture, and ethnicity have a profound impact on personal and social relations. Moreover, the failure to break down the broader social dimensions in the therapeutic process makes us complicit with practices of domination.

WHAT IS CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS?

What tools do we need to build critical consciousness? First, we must ask important questions: "What? Why? How? To what end? For whom? Against whom? By whom? In favor of whom? In favor of what?" (Freire & Macedo, 2000, p. 7).

These questions force us to consider issues broadly, including our reason for being, our purpose in life, and how we handle life's unique challenges. When this process is integrated into therapy, clients are empowered toward liberation. They also become aware of the cost to themselves and their families when others are marginalized.

A prominent Latin American liberation psychologist, Ignacio Martin-Baro, wrote:

There is no person without family, no learning without culture, no madness without social order, and therefore neither can there be an I without a We, a knowing without a symbolic knowing, a disorder that does not have reference to moral and social norms. (1994, p. 41)

CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS: INTEGRATING COLLECTIVISM, SOCIAL EDUCATION, AND SOCIAL ACTION

Through educator Paulo Freire's direct experiences teaching literacy to Brazilian peasants, he developed the process of "awakening consciousness" (1971), which emphasizes the link between intrapersonal dynamics and sociopolitical context. Freire originated the use of culture circles as his teaching forum. Collective discussions prompted critical reflection and dialogue about the life circumstances of the

participants. Freire believed that individuals could develop an increased awareness of their own place in the world via reflective dialogue combined with social action.

Freire's work was originally used to organize working-class communities in Brazil to challenge their social and economic disenfranchisement. This process is similar to the liberatory base Christian communities in Mexico and South America that help marginalized people improve their social conditions.

Freire's concept of critical consciousness focused primarily on social class and political power. We expand his concept to include all dimensions of a person's social location: gender, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, and physical ability. An inclusive critical consciousness provides a platform for family therapy that incorporates social justice.

We suggest that, like Freire, therapists work to bring together clients from diverse backgrounds and ask them to consider their respective places in life, society, and the political process. When clients are grouped together, they move from a pointed focus on individual personal problems to empowerment as they develop an understanding of the social conditions that cause and contribute to problems.

Therapists, clients, and communities working together to develop critical consciousness provide a first step toward building more just relationships for all involved parties. Critical consciousness propels therapists and clients through experiences of empowerment and accountability, which are cornerstones for liberation.

This approach, which works within a framework of social justice, promotes balance between self-interest and the interests of one's community and family. For example, in an Asian family in which the revered, newlywed older son was accustomed to placing his own desires above those of the women in his life, social justice-oriented therapy offered him the opportunity to engage in discussions with other men. Through such discussions, the son learned to counter his self-focus and pay equal attention to the dreams of his new bride.

In another example, a lesbian client in her late 30s, because of her self-centeredness, experienced difficulties with colleagues and partnerships. Her rigid self-focus evolved from her childhood: She was one of many children and little attention was paid to her daily well-being. Neglected by her mother, she fell prey to the focus by her alcoholic father only in the service of his own needs. She coped by becoming overly self-reliant, competitive, and by elevating achievement at work. These rigid traditional norms, as well as her tendency to denigrate feminine sensibilities and nurturing skills, constrained many of her relationships. These internalized male norms kept her from being vulnerable and nurturing in relationships.

We asked her to learn to cook, buy kitchenware, nurture herself with baths, and cook one dish a week for others in her friendship circle. Simple tasks like these help clients challenge hierarchies of power, privilege, and oppression. They help to resocialize people toward a more collective understanding of their lives and circumstances. This experience normalizes the issues for which clients have sought therapy and empowers them, offering a new and expanded vision of self and relationship to others.

These tasks also help clients distinguish rights from privileges. We have a right to necessities, such as the air we breathe, shelter, and safety. Privileges convey unearned advantages based upon gender, race, sexual orientation, age, family background, ableness, and other human characteristics. The critical consciousness curriculum addresses the entire matrix of human diversity and social context, including broader social issues.

Because of their social status, race, sexual orientation, and religion, those who have the privilege of defining “reality” are often people with powerful and privileged social positions. Consequently, they have little incentive to explore the experiences of those who are “less fortunate.” While people are often acutely aware of those who hold more power and privilege than they do, they are usually less aware or concerned about those who have less power.

The process of building critical consciousness requires that we simultaneously transform ourselves while we transform our relationships with others and our communities. Through dialogue, reflection, social education, and action, families remodel their lives along with their communities.

Family interaction normally takes place within a societal context that teaches people to judge and value others according to their identity characteristics: skin color, gender, sexual orientation, immigrant status, class, and the like. These variables infuse interactions within the family and within society with patterns of inequality that too often go unacknowledged and unchallenged. It is crucial to examine and expose these patterns in order to heal.

WHAT ROLE DOES CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING PLAY IN THERAPY?

Critical consciousness develops as clients examine their own expressed concerns against the backdrop of the sociopolitical realities of the larger world. Developing critical consciousness can be supported in a number of ways. Clients may be encouraged to get involved in social action projects relevant to their own issues, to read, or to watch popular films and documentary clips pertinent to the issues. These activities must have a context for dialogue and inquiry.

Therapy has historically been a Western, cognitive, intellectual enterprise. As a result, its structure has been less useful for people who are not introspective or who lack the ability, willingness, or inclination to articulate their thoughts and feelings. The use of films, narratives, music, and supporting handouts—in English and other languages—can engage clients and make therapy more accessible. In addition, these tools can help clients build their critical consciousness as they link their personal concerns to patterns in society.

Developing critical consciousness is especially important because many institutions that make up our society, and especially workplaces, indoctrinate us with values that promote hierarchy, domination, and discrimination. This point is demonstrated in Case 2.1.

CASE 2.1

FACING POWER, PRIVILEGE, AND OPPRESSION IN THE WORKPLACE

Clyde, a middle-aged white male corporate director, manages outside vendors for his corporation. To get better service, Clyde's boss, a vice president, encouraged Clyde to verbally chastise those vendors. Clyde saw his harshness toward the vendors as loyalty to the corporation. After all, he was "just trying to make the vendors deliver on their contracts." Obscured within his "naive" consciousness were the ties between the corporate culture and his increasing dehumanization of self and others.

He believed that his commitment to the corporation was mutual. In fact, that was not the case. The corporation showed no interest in reciprocating Clyde's loyalty. Corporations have a legal mandate to create short-term profits for their shareholders. Few modern corporations offer loyalty to employees, their families, or communities.

Yet Clyde, like many other organizational employees, committed his life to his employer, devoting 50 to 60 hours per week to

his job. When his loyalty was not rewarded, he became enraged. In therapy, Clyde was asked to broaden the examination of his rage. Rather than focusing solely on his rage at incompetent vendors, the therapeutic team encouraged him to consider the politics of the vendor-corporation contract. He was asked to consider how his corporation operates within the larger political and social context. This exploration mobilized Clyde's rage and underlying depression in a new way, transforming them into a healthy anger. Like others who have been oppressed, Clyde began to feel that he deserved equity.

In spite of the many reasons for his investment in the status quo, as Clyde examined his own family history of upward mobility and how it was connected to other people within the corporation of different status, he was willing to entertain the links between his personal story and larger patterns of power, privilege, and oppression in society.

For Clyde and for others dealing with corporate abuses of power, critical consciousness requires critical inquiry into the prevailing capitalist narrative: Who benefits? Who loses? Are there alternative options? How has the current age of corporate globalization been reshaping cultural sensibilities?

The 2002 International Forum on Globalization identified the following corporate values:

- Profit motive is sacred.
- Everything, including time and health, is regarded as a commodity.
- What you can get people to believe is more important than truth.
- The costs of social responsibility can and should be avoided.
- Immediate profit gain is prioritized (look no further ahead than quarterly return on investment).
- Knowledge and experience are compartmentalized.
- Accountability goes in one direction only: up the chain of command.
- Rigid hierarchy is the dominant social structure.
- Job security for employees is sacrificed to maximize economic gain for senior executives (and other stockholders).

For clients who are struggling with corporate or workplace issues, lists like this one can lift problems out of the personal realm and into the social realm; help them normalize their feelings, often of depression or rage; and can propel them into action.

We also recommend using excerpts from popular films as starting points for consciousness raising around corporate life. Relevant films include *Roger and Me*, *The Corporation*, *Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price*, *In Good Company*, and *Working Girl*.

- *Roger and Me*, a 1989 documentary directed by Michael Moore about the abandonment of Flint, Michigan, by General Motors, is both a dark comedy and a compelling indictment of an American Dream gone awry. Using the premise that he is trying to get an interview with the president of General Motors, Roger Smith, Moore explores the tragic fallout of closing down the GM plant in Flint: 25 percent unemployment; record rates of suicide, spousal abuse, and alcoholism; and skyrocketing rates of violent crime. Through live footage of the citizens, Moore shows the differential cost levied by the imbrications of race, class, and gender.
- *Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price*, a 2005 film directed by Richard Greenwald, explores the retail giant's assault on families and American values. Mixing statistics and employee testimony, Greenwald details the giant's business practices: coerced unpaid overtime, foreign sweatshop labor, and health-insurance packages that have forced thousands of employees to rely on Medicare.
- *The Corporation*, a 2004 film directed by Mark Achbar and Jennifer Abbott and written by Joel Bakan, explores the origins and nature of the dominant institution of our time. It illuminates the corporation's grip on our lives with footage from pop culture, advertising, television news, and corporate propaganda. Taking corporate legal status as a "person" to its logical conclusion, the film assesses the institutions, which have the rights of an individual but neither the social nor legal constraints of a human. The film includes 40 interviews with corporate insiders and critics—including Milton Friedman, Noam Chomsky, Naomi Klein, and Michael Moore—along with case studies and strategies for change.
- *In Good Company*, a 2004 film written and directed by Paul Weitz, depicts the corporate culture in which plundering victims and looting assets are shown on the books as growth. Dennis Quaid plays a middle-aged advertising executive who, the victim of a merger, gets a new boss who is half his age. While telling a romantic and amusing story, the movie raises the issues of mergers, downsizing, demotions, and ageism and explores their impact on male norms and family life.
- *Working Girl*—directed by Mike Nichols, written by Kevin Wade, and starring Melanie Griffith, Harrison Ford, and Sigourney Weaver—is a movie about life in the corporate jungle. While telling an entertaining Cinderella story, it explores class relations among women, corporate ladders and their dangerously serrated edges, and the way women can internalize male norms and mistreat each other as brutally as any patriarchal club wielder.

After the clients view these films on their own or view excerpts within a circle that the therapist arranges, follow-up discussions help the client define the cost of corporate life to individuals, families, and communities. Therapists must bring what is unseen, and perhaps unpleasant, to the surface. The challenge is to raise the issues—to make what has been invisible, visible; what has been comfortable, less comfortable; what has been absent, present—and to not lose the clients.

Raising difficult issues for scrutiny is not unique to therapy. What is unique is the objective: confronting issues of power, privilege, and oppression. Underlying the process is the sense that people's problems have roots in patriarchy, colonization, racism, and capitalism. The shared goal is to unravel the problems, the social and cultural system affecting the lives of the individual, couple, family, and community.

STRUCTURING SESSIONS FOR CONSCIOUSNESS RAISING

How sessions are initially organized sets the social justice course by defining what issues are relevant. The therapeutic team and the client must assess which issues are being addressed and which are not. We advocate that therapists initiate social education respectfully yet matter-of-factly. When clients enter therapy, they can be invited into a process of dialogue and inquiry. Social justice therapists intentionally ask questions and sequence events so that clients make a connection between their concerns and the distribution of power and privilege in their relationships.

A first session may be structured by asking questions that raise arenas of power and privilege for discussion and analysis. For example:

- How much money do you earn?
- How are resources allocated?
- Who makes decisions?
- Who accommodates?
- How are household and family-care responsibilities distributed?
- Are you employed?
- Do you work out of the home?
- If so, what is your line of employment?
- How is your workplace organized?
- What is the diversity of your workplace?
- How are management decisions made?

The specifics of these arrangements help clients begin to move beyond what is likely a denial of disparities of power and privilege in their relationships and lives. In-session exercises, education, and homework assignments are other structural means for eliciting power issues and raising partners' consciousness of such issues in their relationships.

The organization of the session should provide power-issues literacy training for clients by raising specific, concrete questions that probe power inequities. It can

also be done by working with genograms, whereby therapists help partners examine the transmission of power issues down through generations and in a social and political context. Hardy and Laszloffy's (1995) cultural genogram and Halevy's (1998) "genogram with an attitude" provide good examples of this process. This information allows therapists to connect issues for which the clients came to therapy with power and privilege at the outset and establishes the tone for the therapy.

Homework tasks provide other tools to help couples reconsider their current arrangements and to get role inequities on the table. Partners can be asked to consider, and then list, what each one actually does regarding household and care-giving chores in a given day.

We often ask people to bring in a list of what their partners do in a day. When clients argue about whether or not the male partner in a heterosexual relationship is really helping out, we might say, "Pick one day, say Tuesday, and before you go to bed, write down what you did that day that relates to the children or household. Do not compare notes; just write it down." Partners then bring the lists to the next therapy session for examination and the inequities immediately become apparent in the lists each brings.

Sex, Money, and Laundry, a survey (see Table 2.1A on page 36) developed by Marianne Ault-Riche (1994), provides a structured way to achieve the same understanding. The survey divides responsibilities into daily, weekly, biweekly, monthly, bimonthly, seasonal, and annual tasks. Homework or in-session assignments focus on rebalancing inequities discovered through clients' responses to the survey.

Clients might also be asked to read Arlie Hochschild's (1990) *The Second Shift* and reflect on the three gender ideologies—traditional, transitional, and egalitarian—outlined in the book. Reading about other couples who suffer inequity in their relationships can make it easier for the couple seeking therapy to see themselves in the book's examples.

In conjunction with reading *The Second Shift*, a therapist might ask partners to think about whether they are a traditional, a transitional, or an egalitarian couple and in what ways. Then, they can start working on where they would like to be and how they might begin to get there. The exercise is quite effective because when the couple comes back, the wife usually has a very long list of the things she takes care of in the home, while the husband has just a few items on his list. At that point, the couple can begin to ask themselves, "Is this what we want?"

Finally, therapists can help family members examine the positive and negative consequences of current arrangements as a way of keeping them engaged in conversations about power and privilege. Each might be asked to examine the pluses and minuses of topics for conversation: What is acceptable, and what is not? How long is too long for such discussions?

The consequences of each of the following arrangements warrant examination:

- One partner consistently acquiescing to the other's desires
- Taking the other partner's name
- The effect of one partner bearing the primary financial, household, or family care responsibilities

It is more powerful if partners themselves, rather than the therapist, reveal the consequences of current arrangements.

Each of these examples makes it easier for clients to examine issues of power and privilege. Once these issues are on the table for discussion and inquiry, the client and therapist can examine their impact on the client's primary relationships and relationships with others.

In the cultural context model, social education toward critical consciousness is built into the structure of the therapy. After an initial intake session, all clients enter a same-gender social education orientation group. This component of therapy critically locates clients within their social, cultural, and political lives. Clients learn a new language for communicating about the complex ways in which people experience their communities of family, work, religion, and recreation. All clients complete a basic genogram. They use the language from the power and control wheels (see Figures 2.1, 2.2, 2.3) to launch conversations regarding various film vignettes as well as stories of other participants. In Chapter 1, we introduced the critical consciousness wheel, the heterosexual wheel, and the hierarchy of power,

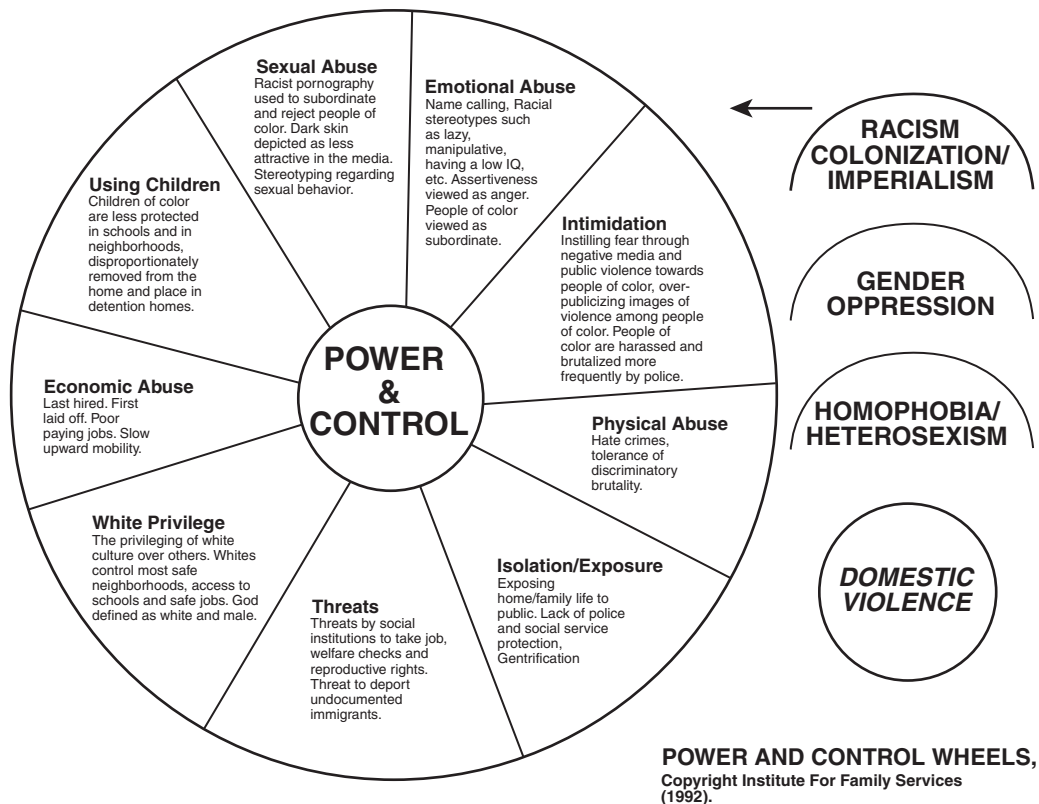


FIGURE 2.1 White Privilege/Public Context: The Misuse and Abuse of Power toward People of Color

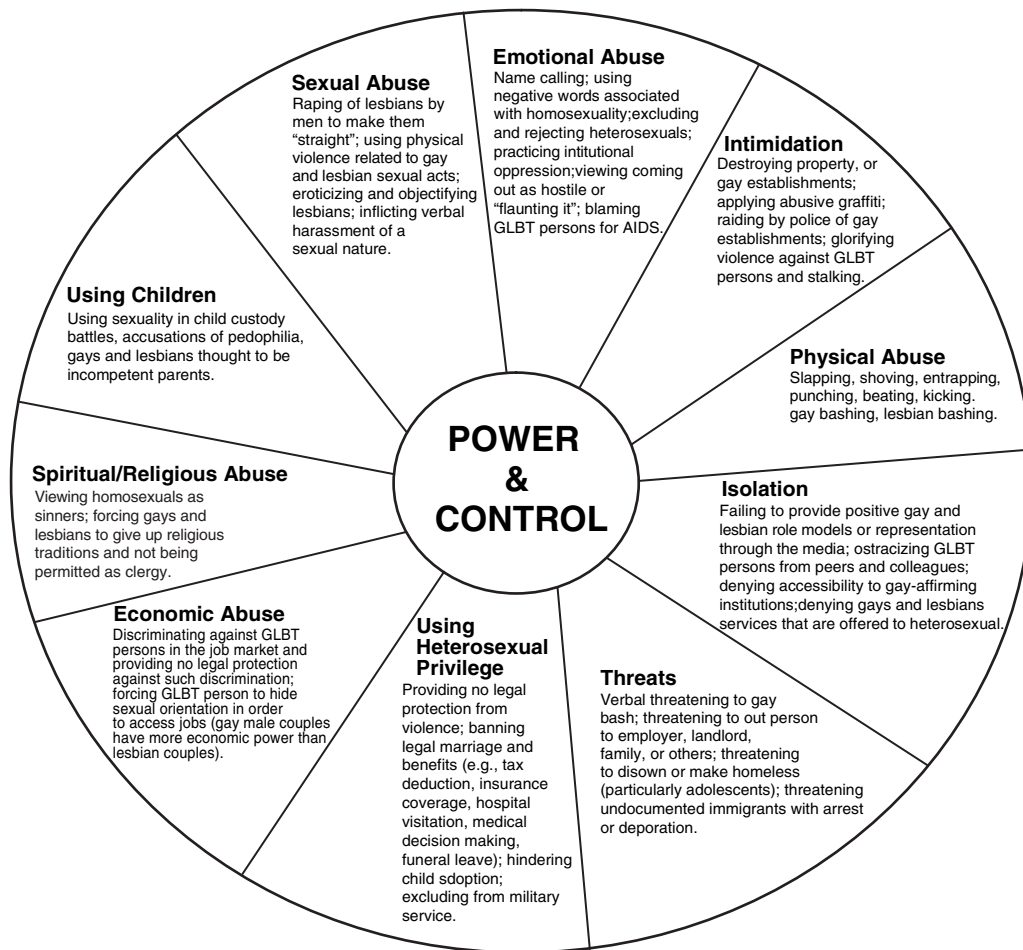


FIGURE 2.2 Public Context: The Misuse and Abuse of Power in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered Relationships

privilege, and oppression. Here we have the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered (GLBT) wheels within multiple contexts.

Films and other multimedia aids, music videos, music CDs, poetry, and readings all help clients distinguish the impact of such issues as race, culture, and sexual orientation on themselves, their family, and community. The tools are intended to detoxify personal issues while simultaneously inviting conversation about the broader Issues of gender-role socialization and the implications for GLBT people. From the outset, film and multimedia restructures therapeutic intervention, taking it from the personal to the political, from the intrapsychic to the social, and from the interior to the exterior. This process is crucial because it provides a foundation from which future therapeutic interventions will be made.

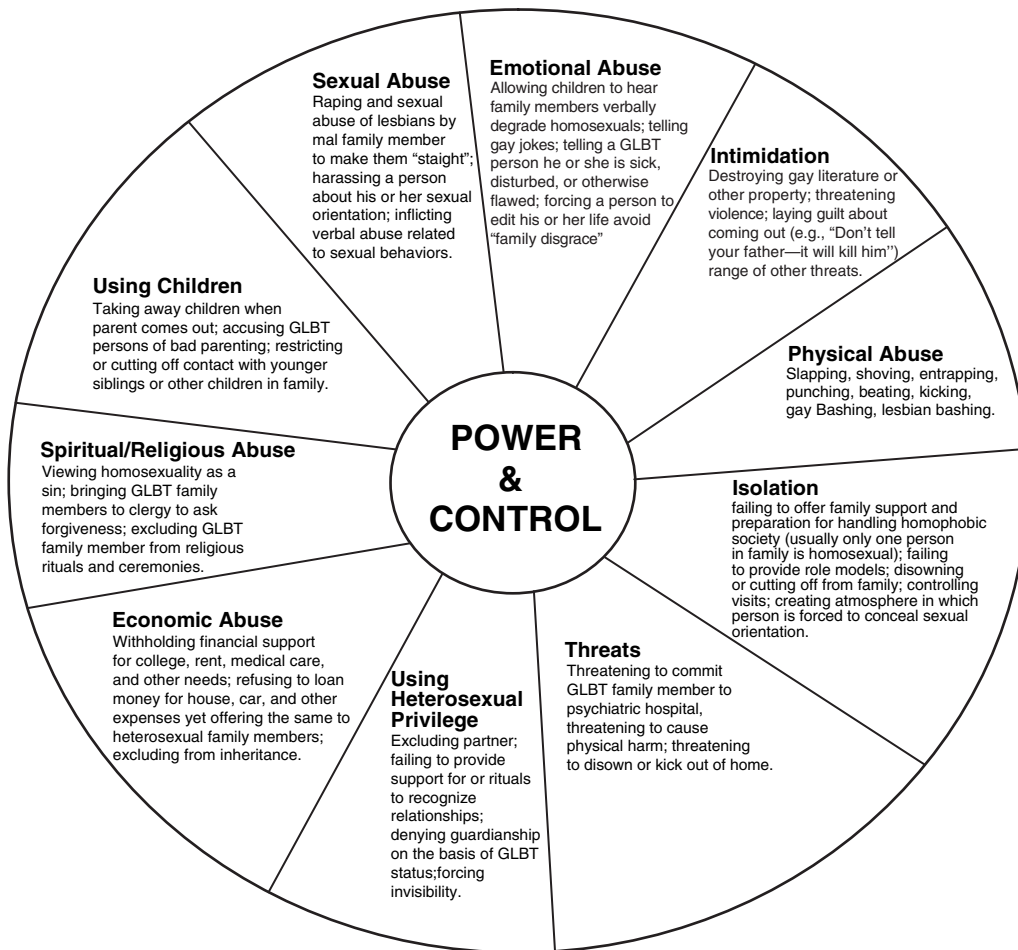


FIGURE 2.3 Family Context: The Misuse and Abuse of Power in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered Relationships

For example, with GLTB clients, we may use the movie *Torch Song Trilogy*, a story about a Jewish gay man whose lover is killed by a gay-bashing gang. The movie shows the relationship between the man and his mother as well as the relationship between the gay couple and society. We would use the language in the various wheels to launch conversations about intimate, family, and community experiences for GLBT persons. The various permutations of homophobia, loss, religion, culture, and heterosexism provide the landscape for dialogue and inquiry leading to critical consciousness.

The social education aspect of therapy begins in the first session with new clients and continues for a period of 6 to 8 weeks of weekly sessions, which last from 60 to 90 minutes. At the end of the eighth week, clients are absorbed into a larger circle community with films used intermittently. Clients' personal problems are thereby maintained in a holding pattern while participants examine historical

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CASE 2.2

EXAMINING CLASS, RACE, AND DOMESTIC ABUSE IN FILM

Four women in a meeting were in the process of raising critical consciousness. Elaine, one of the therapists, showed two film clips, one from *Sleeping With the Enemy* and the other from *Straight Out of Brooklyn*. Before showing the films, Elaine explained to the women what they were about to see. She also asked them to view the tapes not from a personal stance, but from an objective viewpoint and to look for the dynamics happening between the characters.

After viewing the tape, the women wanted to talk about how the movies resembled their lives. Most therapists, at this point, might allow the women to tell their personal narratives. However, by using the power and

control wheels, Elaine was able to guide them from focusing on their personal narratives. She asked them to think about the movie clips and then discuss where on the wheel they saw the characters in the movie.

The women engaged in this discussion and dissected the power and control issues portrayed in the film. Then Elaine asked, "What options did each woman have?"

Reflecting on this question enabled the women to begin to understand the differences in options for poor women of color and for white women of privilege. Further dialogue and inquiry braids the women's personal stories into transformative narratives.

and cultural prescriptions for choices they are making in their lives. In addition, participants examine how choices others make impact them as well.

Case 2.2 an example of a family therapy trainee's response after witnessing clients' social education process. In this case, the women's social education circle viewed film clips from two movies that highlight issues of domestic abuse, but from radically different social class and racial backgrounds.

As Case 2.2 shows, social education alters the perspective with which clients enter therapy. Clients rarely mention the dynamics of white privilege, diversity, and power because such issues are not considered polite conversation within our society.

Examining these matters is, however, essential to developing critical consciousness and changing family dynamics. For example, a conversation with a middle-aged, socially conservative Cuban woman struggling with her Americanized teenage daughter might be augmented by viewing film clips from *Real Women Have Curves*. The film can stimulate conversations on a range of topics, including the depiction of Latinas in film, the relationship between mothers and daughters, and the meaning of desire and being desired for women who are moderate to heavy in stature, dark-haired, and dark-skinned, as opposed to thin, fair-haired, and fair-skinned women.

A film clip from *Real Women Have Curves* could be juxtaposed with one from *Pretty Woman* or *Legally Blonde* as a way of probing the forces that create cultural standards of beauty, value, and correct behavior. Or, it could be shown with a clip from *Boyz n the Hood* in which the young man, Tré, is dealing with competing life experiences: his expectations of going to college and his intimate relationships with gang members. How does he reconcile these "middle-class" dreams with the daily urban nightmare that his friends must confront?

Films can be used to explore issues such as domestic violence, colonization, and family structure (*Sleeping with the Enemy*, *Straight Out of Brooklyn*, *The Great Santini*, *Once Were Warriors*); gendered expressions of loss, grief, and family life (*Steel Magnolias*); familial and societal oppression of GLBTs (*Torch Song Trilogy*); and the impact of colonization (*Dirty Pretty Things*), immigration (*A Day without a Mexican*), and intersecting social positions (*Quinceañera*).

Film vignettes can then be paired with other social educational tools such as critical consciousness and power and control wheels. All offer clients and therapists a way to locate the social and political aspects of personal experience, and are helpful to clients with limited literacy.

After viewing the relevant power and control wheel, clients can be instructed to identify how they have used or experienced power and control in their relationships. When therapists incorporate social education into the therapeutic process, they and their clients see that clinical practice is context bound, inseparable from societal dynamics of dominance and subordination.

THE ROLE OF COURAGE

And there comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular, but one must take it because one's conscience tells one that it is right.

*Cowardice asks the question, "Is it safe?"
Expediency asks the question, "Is it politic?"
Vanity asks the question, "Is it popular?"
But, conscience asks the question, "Is it right?"*

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

In order to promote the development of critical consciousness among our clients, we must work continuously to develop our own. Therapists must be ever mindful of the world around us and must gain knowledge of that world from many different sources, especially sources whose perspectives run counter to that of the mainstream. And therapists must be courageous. We must help our clients critically explore cultural practices and prejudices operating within all the institutions that govern our lives, including institutions of faith.

Therapists must initiate and encourage discussion and information sharing that challenge oppressive belief systems. For example, current rhetoric by fundamentalist Christians seeks to deny gay and lesbian partners the rights guaranteed heterosexual partners, such as the right to marry. Oppressive dogma is often couched in religious ideologies that proclaim heterosexuality to be "natural" and all other sexual orientations "unnatural."

Homophobia within communities of faith demonizes gay and lesbian relationships as a threat to family life, despite all the evidence to the contrary. Many

nations have granted legal recognition to gay and lesbian partners, and heterosexuality in those countries has not declined in membership; family life continues to flourish. Indeed, many argue that family-centered community norms gain strength through the legal inclusion of family-minded gay and lesbians.

A growing body of research affirms that children fare as well in gay and lesbian parent families as they do in heterosexual parent families. Studies also indicate that lesbian and gay couples tend to be more egalitarian than heterosexual couples (Green, Bettinger, & Zacks, 1996). It is important for clients of all sexual orientations to be made aware of these findings.

We invite therapists to challenge ideologies that privilege some people—heterosexuals, men, whites, able-bodied, or other so-called “majorities”—over others, and we feel that not doing so is unethical. Therapeutic efforts to build critical consciousness run counter to today’s mainstream quest for individualism.

Clients can begin to identify patterns of power, privilege, and oppression through discussion with others who are critically conscious. It also helps them locate where, how, and when these patterns are formed, and what purposes they serve.

We believe these goals can best be accomplished in a collective process in which a community of others remains committed to personal, familial, and community change. The ability to critically question perceived reality develops through a learning process with others and through the transformation of one’s beliefs and experiences with others. In dialogue and inquiry, people—clients and therapists alike—deconstruct current dynamics of their world, learn to see how domination and oppression operate, and develop the tools for positive change. We would like to conclude this chapter with a guide to the use of popular films.

Film Guides to Social Education: Using Popular Films

Following are several examples of films that therapists can use to augment social education with clients. Film clips are selected in order to facilitate dialogue and inquiry of the social location and intersectionality of each person’s identity. We structure the sessions to spark conversations and heighten clients’ consciousness around the following issues:

1. Loss
 - Gender role responses to loss, including death and illness
 - The mediating effects of religion, culture, race, sexual orientation, and immigration status on the experience of loss
2. Gender roles and equity
 - Emotionality, connectedness, isolation, and intimidation
 - Parenting
 - Sexuality
 - Physical affection and physical abuse
 - Exploration of men’s movements (e.g., Promise Keepers, men’s liberation, masculinities, men’s rights, racialized masculinity, gay liberation)
3. Heterosexual privilege and homophobia

4. Economics
5. Immigration and transmigration
6. Colonization and Racism
7. Civil rights movements (from the early men's civil rights movement to the rights of women.)

Clients are shown edited film clips that highlight specific areas to be addressed in social education. We try to keep clips to 20 to 40 minutes so that there is plenty of time for reflection and discussion. Although in the cultural context model social education occurs in a group format, we encourage therapists to routinely experiment with incorporating educational materials into their particular therapeutic format. Clients find the films engaging and useful for punctuating or offering other views regarding issues with which they are struggling.

Films are used in the following manner during sessions.

1. The essence of the movie, and then the specific clip, are described. Therapists should explain the film's relevance to clients' concerns as well as the salient themes emphasized in the clip.
2. Therapists instruct the viewers to assess the film in relation to a corresponding assessment tool, which is created to accompany the film clips (example tools are provided in Tables 2.1A–H, 2.2, and 2.3). While it is helpful to elicit whether or

TABLE 2.1A Sex, Money, and Laundry

| WEEKLY DOMESTIC TASKS (ONCE OR TWICE PER WEEK) | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • take out and bury compost (daily in summer), wash pail • wipe off washing machine and dryer • wash/dry slipcovers, bathrugs, linens • wash/hang kitchen rugs and dust rags • wash/dry dog bed (winter) • drop off/pick up dry cleaning • do hand laundry • polish kids' shoes • grocery shopping (store 1 for staples; store 2 for specialty items) • mend • water plants • trip to hardware store • clean around dish drainer and compost • soak stove tops in bleach • replenish diaper bag • rake yard | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mow lawn • juggle budget • sweep front porch • pick up trash in front yard • thoroughly clean wood stove • run hot water in kitchen sink drain • pay bills/file receipts • clean out van • clean out car • maintain garden (hoe, water, tie up plants) • iron • empty wastebaskets • dust • vacuum • clean bathrooms • scrub kitchen floors • polish wood furniture |

From *Sex, Money, and Laundry: Sharing Responsibilities in Intimate Relationships* by Marianne Ault-Riché in *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy* (1994) Volume 6, Issue pp. 69–87. Copyright © 1994 Reprinted by permission of the Haworth Press.

TABLE 2.1B

| MONTHLY DOMESTIC TASKS | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feed store for dog/cat food • read/call in gas/electric meter readings • plan cards and gifts for birthdays • buy/wrap/send gifts for birthdays • clean refrigerator • take pictures • drop off film • pick up film • put photos in album | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • get reprints • send reprints to relatives/friends • get car washed • pay mortgage • refigure budget • cut kids' hair • take stuff to recycling center • pick up bottled water |

TABLE 2.1C

| QUARTERLY DOMESTIC TASKS | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • buy toiletries • buy cleaning supplies • attend school functions: orientation/cof- fees/teacher meetings • defrost refrigerator • sort plastic containers • recirculate kids' wardrobes • recirculate kids' toys | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clean oven • vegetation killer on brick sidewalk • hoe brick sidewalk • change oil and filters (van) • change oil and filter (car) • bathe/dip/dogs/cats • buy kids' shoes • disinfect litter box |

TABLE 2.1D

| BIANNUAL DOMESTIC TASKS | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • put up/take down plastic sheeting on sun porch windows • put up/take down plastic sheeting on second-floor kitchen windows • put up/take down plastic on air conditioner on first floor • put up/take down tuff-R on attic windows • put up/take out air conditioner on second floor • fix up second-floor bedroom/kitchen • defrost chest freezer in basement • organize attic • clean basement • buy clean hay • clean and spray doghouse • wash curtains | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bring down/take up/clean 4 fans, 3 electric heaters • bring down/take up winter coats, etc. • arrange wood delivery • stack wood • rototill garden • plan, shop, and cook for adults' birthdays • plan, send invitations, shop and cook for kids' birthdays • spray for bugs • take van for tune-up • take car for tune-up • take stuff to Goodwill • locate/schedule children's activities—music lessons, sports, etc. |

TABLE 2.1E

| ANNUAL DOMESTIC TASKS | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • update Christmas card list, write and photocopy holiday letter • address and mail cards (50 French; 150 English) • file information for updating next year's list • Christmas gifts—plan, shop, wrap, mail/deliver • Christmas events—plan shop, prepare, etc • clean shed • clean closets and cabinets • arrange for carpet cleaning • arrange sand/gravel delivery and shovel • bleed radiators • plant garden • plan, shop, and sew for Halloween | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • plan, shop, and sew for July 4th parade • plan, shop, cook, clean up (Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas) • clean gutters • clean stovepipe • clean inside kitchen cabinets • gather tax information • prepare taxes • plan vacation • attend to camping gear, car, packing, reservations • can tomato sauce for home use • can fruit jams for gifts • bake/freeze Christmas breads • clean windows |

TABLE 2.1F

| AS-NEEDED DOMESTIC TASKS | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gas/oil/tires—van/car • house maintenance • clean toilets, sinks, tub • change light bulbs • fill ice trays • deposit/cash checks • buy milk and bread • initiate discussion regarding relationship • plan and prepare dishes for potlucks • dinner guests (plan, shop, prepare, cook, clean up) • house guests (plan, shop, prepare, cook, clean up) • major projects (e.g., build deck, fence) • install major appliances (e.g., computer, car stereo) • minor home repairs (e.g., change washers, rewire electric cords) • buy, write, and send cards on time (for about 20 friends/relatives for birthdays, major holidays, major events) • arrange for sitters • transport sitters • arrange for substitute daycare when needed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • take off work when child or daycare provider is sick • take kids for checkups, immunizations, other shots, sick care • take kids to dentist, pediatrician, orthodontist, optometrist • take animals to vet for shots, heartworms, stool checks, sick care • call about errors in billings • stay home for meter checks, appliance repairs, etc. • see that appliances, house, vehicles get attention/repair • arrange for bids for repair work • take in/pick up/negotiate about small appliance repairs • keep in touch with friends • attend school meetings/parent-teacher conferences • shop for kids' friends birthdays and wrap, gifts • accompany kids to parties • initiate contact with other parents regarding kids • supervising kids/contact with relatives—calls, thank yous |

TABLE 2.1G

| MISCELLANEOUS TASKS | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • paint porch/first-floor exterior trim • remove and spray paint screen door • plant grass in bare spots • remove old hay from doghouse • pick up 4 hay bales and flea powder • sort audiotapes • prepare sun porch for painting • stain mahogany table/reassemble • remove mildew from second-floor kitchen • put up contact paper • take G's tape player for repair • get oil filter changed (van) • de-rust old bed frames in basement • clean basement • caulk kitchen sink • make bed sack for G's bed • make duvet cover for G's bed • clean attic; sort holiday stuff • 5 thank yous, 2 birthday cards, 4 letters • kill vegetation/hoe brick sidewalks • research St. Nicholas • clean gutter/repair with wood putty • clean/reassemble 4 box fans • strip paint from door hardware • finish beanbag chair • write, photocopy, and address 50 Christmas letters to France in time to send surface mail • plan Thanksgiving guests/menu • take tuner/amplifier for repair • arrange for furnace people to come • touch-up paint on second-floor kitchen • 150 domestic Christmas letters • get pet food at feed store • bake/freeze Christmas breads • take cans, glass, plastic to recycling center • cook green tomatoes after frost | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dismantle garden • make G's Halloween costume • mail baby clothes to France • take unwanted items to Goodwill • order firewood • prepare 8 lectures • prepare 3 conference presentations • don't think about unfinished book manuscript • paint second and third-floor exterior trim • secure hall closet hook • rewire/hang 2 chandeliers • remove/replace doghouse • replace taped window pane • find/install TV cable barrel • complete wood trim in G's room • make hat rack for G • install electric outlet in front hall • reassemble baby crib • diagnose problem with bike • replace battery in keyboard • rehang pictures/living room • clean basement • replace toilet chain/handle • cut foam for G's bed • repair leaky roof • thank you note to grandfather • get oil filter changed (car) • clean/sharpen lawnmower • stack firewood • replace knob on dimmer switch • replace brake light (van) • polish hardware and put on door • prepare seminar presentation • study for exams • write dissertation proposal |

not any of the themes in the films are similar to clients' own families or social experiences, we encourage therapists to postpone highlighting the correlations. This is a critical first step in consciousness raising. Leaving client's personal stories aside temporarily helps them to examine power issues on a broader scale first, which circumvents their defensiveness.

TABLE 2.1H

| ASSESSING THE ODDS OF YOUR ACHIEVING SHARED LAUNDRY CONSCIOUSNESS (SLC) | | |
|--|-----|----------|
| | ADD | SUBTRACT |
| 1. If your husband is a woman, | 200 | |
| 2. If you are very rich or very poor, | 15 | |
| 3. If you earn more than he, | 100 | |
| 4. If he comes from an ethnic group in which men do heavy work and/or childcare, | 5 | |
| If not, | | 5 |
| 5. If your husband was an adolescent during the Depression, If during the 60s or 70s, | 5 | 5 |
| 6. If his mother was a feminist, If not, | 25 | 50 |
| 7. If <i>he</i> is an <i>overfunctioner</i> in his family of origin, | 5 | |
| 8. If <i>you</i> are an <i>underfunctioner</i> in your family of origin, | 200 | |
| 9. If his sibling position is the oldest, | 5 | |
| 10. If your sibling position is oldest, | | 25 |
| 11. If he has a high energy level, If he has a low energy level, | 5 | 50 |
| 12. If you are depressed, If he is depressed, | | 25 |
| 13. If he has the DSM-III-R diagnosis of passive-aggressive personality disorder, | | 50 |
| 14. If you have the DSM-III-R diagnosis of histrionic personality disorder, | | 15 |
| 15. If on an <i>Odd Couple</i> spectrum, he is Felix (orderly), If he is Oscar (a slob), | 10 | 10 |
| 16. If you've already divorced a man and had therapy to find/develop yourself, | 10 | |
| 17. If he had <i>no</i> sisters and has lived at least five years collectively with others (e.g., commune, navy, monastery) | | 10 |

If you score between 0 and 100, with hard work forever, you have a slight chance of achieving SLC. If you score between 100 and 200, with five years of unceasing hard work, you have a real chance of achieving SLC. If you score over 200, laundry consciousness may be equally shared, but is the laundry getting done?

3. Clients may resist seeing the relationship between the theme of the film clips and their presenting problem. ("This film has nothing to do with me or my problem" is a common response). However, they should be instructed to view the process as receiving pieces of a puzzle relevant to their issues and to reflect between sessions on why the therapist might have selected particular film clips for them. For clients in the cultural context model who receive 6 to 8 sessions of social education, the film clips are sequenced to build critical consciousness. The relationship between the film and clients' life stories becomes evident over time.

TABLE 2.2 Traditional and Expanded Norms of the Male Role

| TRADITIONAL NORMS OF MALE ROLE | EXPANDED NORMS OF THE MALE ROLE |
|---|--|
| 1. Avoiding femininity and behaviors traditionally associated with women's role (housework, childcare, gender-nonconforming activities and occupations) | 1. Expanded emotionality: the willingness to express the full range of emotions, including exuberance, joy, love, wonder and awe at things beautiful, fear, sadness, remorse, disappointment, and all the rest |
| 2. Restrictive emotionality, suppression of feelings (except for anger), emotional distance, avoidance of affect in self and others | 2. Embracing femininity: valuing qualities and activities traditionally considered feminine (household and childcare tasks, cooking, creating art, dancing, composing poetry, human service occupations) |
| 3. Seeking social status and self-esteem via achievement, competition, primacy of work/provider role, earning power | 3. Balancing work and family life: seeking pride through contributing both within the world of work and as an active participant in family life |
| 4. Self-reliance, avoidance of dependency on others | 4. Embracing relatedness over individualism: valuing interdependence with all other human beings and with the rest of the natural world |
| 5. Aggression (sometimes alternating with avoidance/denial) as a means of conflict resolution | 5. Valuing collaboration: using consensus building as a primary means for conflict resolution |
| 6. Toughness and leadership in the face of adversity | 6. Maintaining flexibility: when faced with adversity, demonstrating respect for the opinions of others alongside assertiveness regarding one's own ideas, emotional availability, and emotional vulnerability |
| 7. Striving for hierarchical dominance in relationships, patriarchal control over others in the family | 7. Valuing shared power of relatedness: striving to create equal partnerships with adults and relationships with children that engender feelings of being loved and respected while also providing appropriate limits and structure |
| 8. Nonrelational attitudes toward sexuality (objectification of women) | 8. Relational attitude toward sexuality: participation that affords each partner safety, dignity, and pleasure; respect for others |
| 9. Homophobia (fear/anger at gay men and lesbians, avoidance of emotional closeness and affection with other males) | 9. Overcoming heterosexism/homophobia: valuing difference by creating nurturing relationships with gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, and heterosexuals and by borrowing expanded forms of participation in the following dimensions of relationships: nonthreatening behavior; mutual respect; trust and support; honesty and accountability; responsible parenting; household responsibilities; economic partnership; negotiation and fairness in resolving conflicts |

Source: Green, R.-J. (1998). Traditional norms of masculinity. In R. Almeida (Ed.), *Transformations of gender and race*. New York: Haworth Press; Font, R., Dolan-Del Vecchio, K., & Almeida, R. (1998). In R. Almeida (Ed.), *Transformations of gender and race*. New York: Haworth Press; Magraw, S. (1993). *Feminism and family therapy: An oral history* PhD thesis. State University of New York-Binghamton.

TABLE 2.3 Traditional Norms of the Female Role

-
1. Seeking stereotyped feminine looks: thin, buxom, youthful, like a Barbie doll.
 2. Behaving in traditional female roles, such as by choosing to be a nurse, because being a doctor is generally perceived as a male role.
 3. Expressing emotions, except anger.
 4. Adopting the caretaker role and accepting dependency.
 5. Seeking social status and self-esteem vicariously through husband.
 6. Seeking co-dependency and hiding independence, competence, and competitiveness.
 7. Seeking to be insignificant and invisible.
 8. Displaying passivity and martyrdom.
 9. Being overly talkative and intensely emotional.
 10. Accommodating others in the face of adversity.
 11. Experiencing supermom, superwoman syndrome.
 12. Accepting of a one-down position.
 13. Lacking boundaries between home and work.
 14. Accepting sexuality as defined through male attitudes. (Despite 20 to 30 years of the feminist movement, women's roles are still primarily defined by men. The stereotypes are still built into our thinking. Women don't have as many places as men have to go to define themselves as sexual beings. It's all-male defined.)
 15. Being accused of betrayal for seeking closeness with or confiding in a woman.
 16. Internalizing rigid heterosexuality and homophobia, which leads to devaluing lesbians or men who show feminine tendencies.
-

Films That May Raise Critical Consciousness

SLEEPING WITH THE ENEMY AND STRAIGHT OUT OF BROOKLYN

These films should be shown together.

Themes include gender, violence, race, class, and intergenerational legacies.

1. *Describe the movies:* *Sleeping with the Enemy* is a movie about a white, heterosexual couple, Laura and Martin. Martin is extremely abusive to Laura. The couple is of a high socioeconomic class, lives in a beautiful beach house, and has no children. Despite living at the beach, Laura is terrified of the water and cannot swim. Becoming increasingly eager to leave the abusive relationship, Laura secretly learns to swim, stages her own drowning in front of Martin, and swims to safety. She is then able to move away and begin a new life for herself while Martin believes she is dead. Later in the movie, he finds out that Laura is still alive and stalks her until he viciously attacks her. She kills him in self-defense.

Straight Out of Brooklyn is a movie about an African American couple, Ray and Frankie, living in the inner city with their two teenage children, Dennis and Carolyn. Ray is abusive to his wife, and their children witness much of this violence. Although both partners work outside of the home, the family is poor. The

movie shows the many pressures on them as individuals and as a family. Frankie, in an attempt to emotionally support her husband, is protective of him despite his violence toward her. She tries to explain his behavior to her children and people outside of the family.

2. *Describe the clip:* The clip we use from *Sleeping with the Enemy* begins with Martin coming home in a jealous rage because Laura spoke to a man, a physician, who lives nearby. He proceeds to brutalize her physically, then quickly apologizes and attempts to soothe her. He then tells her that he has made arrangements with the doctor for the three of them to go sailing that evening. Knowing that his wife is terrified of the water, Martin tries to quell her fears by saying that he will stay right by her side and that she has nothing to be afraid of. Although it is not shown on this clip, it is during that boat ride that Laura stages her own drowning and temporarily frees herself from Martin's abuse.

The clip we use from *Straight Out of Brooklyn* begins with Ray's physical abuse toward Frankie. During the scene, he yells about all of the pressures he faces. The son, Dennis, comes out of his bedroom, and Ray begins to emotionally abuse him. Frankie sends her son back to the bedroom, and the physical abuse continues. The next scene shows the daughter, Carolyn, questioning the abuse and why her mother tolerates it. Frankie defends and protects Ray and describes the reasons that he acts the way he does. In the last scene, Frankie is meeting with her employment counselor at the Department of Labor. The counselor reports that Frankie's employer is concerned because she comes to work with bruises on her face and tells her she must terminate her employment "until she gets help for her problem." Frankie attempts to explain that losing her job will not help her with her problem.

3. *Instructions:* Ask viewers to examine the power and control wheels Private Context: The Misuse and Abuse of Power within Heterosexual Relationships and White Privilege/Public Context: The Misuse and Abuse of Power toward People of Color (Figure 1.1 and Figure 2.1). Ask them to track any of the dynamics on the wheels that they observed in the film clips.

4. *Questions for reflection, dialogue, and inquiry:* What choices did the two women in the videos have? What are the social class differences between the two women? Do African American women have the same choices as white women? How might the actions of the police differ in response to a call on the white husband as opposed to a call on the black husband? What do you think happened after the black woman was fired from her job? In what ways is the African American husband abused by society? In *Sleeping with the Enemy*, what would have happened if one of Martin's friends had walked in? What would have happened if this friend told people in the office what he had witnessed? Would it have changed Martin's behavior? How might his wealth and power influence the way others respond to the violence? How do you think Laura would have felt if other people were told about the abuse and yet did not help her? Do you think it could make

her feel that she is the problem, and if she just changes, then everything will be okay? From the beginning of the relationship, do you think she was second-guessing herself because of her husband's status, influence, and power? A question for men: If your wife were here, what would she say about you that others would find hard to believe?

STEEL MAGNOLIAS

Themes include gender roles around parenting, illness, and loss, different emotional, and care-giving roles and friendship.

1. *Describe the movie:* *Steel Magnolias* is a story about a family whose adult daughter, Shelby, dies from chronic kidney disease. The movie illustrates the complex choices that women make around chronic illness, relationships, childbirth, and losses.

2. *Describe the clip:* Our first clip shows the daughter, Shelby, telling her mother, M'Lynn, that she is pregnant. She has previously been medically advised against pregnancy because of her weak kidneys. Our next clip shows M'Lynn's friends, a community of women, responding to Shelby's illness in the beauty shop. A third clip is of a scene in the hospital: Shelby's husband, Jackson, and father, Drum, are in the process of disconnecting Shelby's life support, urging M'Lynn to leave Shelby's bedside and get some rest. The last scene occurs at the funeral and displays the gender rituals surrounding the loss.

3. *Instructions:* Clients are asked to list their experiences of loss. They are encouraged to consider losses by way of death, illness, job loss, moving, immigration, and so on. The Traditional Male Norms handout (see Table 2.2) is examined to help explain the behavior of the men in the film clip. Clients are encouraged to consider how the film is similar to or different from their own families' responses to loss.

4. *Questions for reflection, dialogue, and inquiry:* What are the messages to women and men regarding the need to fulfill oneself through childbearing and childrearing? Can you be an authentic woman and choose to not have children? Or to not bear the pregnancy (e.g., to adopt)? What were the pressures on the daughter that resulted in her "choice" to become pregnant? Do you see it as a freely chosen "choice"? How did the men and women approach care-giving differently in the film? How did you see women helping each other? How did the women deal with their sadness? What did M'Lynn do when Shelby was in the hospital? What was Drum doing in contrast to M'Lynn? What could he have done differently to support his wife and daughter? How did the women take care of each other emotionally? How did the behavior of the men and women differ when they were presented with a problem? (The women shared their feelings of grief; the men were solution oriented.) What do you think about M'Lynn's statement, "Being present when she came into the world and staying with her when she passed on were the most beautiful moments in my life"? What do you think the men were talking

about after the funeral? Why would the men most likely not have been talking about the person who died? In what ways would it help men to be able to better express their emotions? What does it mean for a boy or man to cry?

Questions for men: What were you taught as boys about crying? What are the risks to men in showing their vulnerabilities? What names are men and boys called when they are visibly vulnerable? What does it teach little boys when they are called “sissy” or “fag” when they show emotions? (That unemotional men are better—more manly—than women and queers and that they therefore should keep feelings of pain, love, and tenderness to themselves.) What have you taught or would you teach your children (sons) about crying, showing emotion, and being vulnerable? How do these gender rules regarding emotion affect intimacy within a heterosexual couple? A gay or lesbian couple?

KHUSH

Themes include: loss and race, loss and sexual orientation, loss and immigration, the gay liberation movement, and sexuality.

1. *Describe the documentary.* *Khush* is a documentary of discussions with Asian Indian gays and lesbians from the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and India. It depicts racism and cultural traditions as they impact the “coming out” process for gays and lesbians.

2. *Describe the clip:* The clip we use shows a variety of men and women. The first woman speaks specifically of the overt racism she suffered when her family moved to Canada. She explains that since she was “trying to be as white as possible” to avoid racist attacks, she felt that coming out as a lesbian was something she could not do because it would endanger her further. Other individuals talk about the cultural pressure to marry and the idea that their families view queerness as a “white person’s disease.”

3. *Instructions:* Viewers are asked to examine power and control wheels including White Privilege/Public Context: The Misuse and Abuse of Power toward People of Color; Public Context: The Misuse and Abuse of Power in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered Relationships; and Family Context: The Misuse and Abuse of Power in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered Relationships to analyze the interconnectedness of these oppressions (Figures 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3).

4. *Questions for reflection, dialogue, and inquiry:* What were some of the stories of racism told in the film (e.g., violence, eroticization, second-class citizens)? What did the woman mean by “playing it as white as possible”? Why was it important for her to do this? How do you imagine the families of the people in the film taught them to protect themselves from racism? Why do families not teach the same protective strategies regarding homophobia and heterosexism to their children? How does racism influence an Asian Indian family to be less accepting of gays and lesbians and of other families of color? Why might an Asian Indian gay or lesbian be more concerned about a family cut-off than a white American gay or lesbian? What do

you think the woman who talked about joining the white feminist movement, and feeling excluded meant? For those of you who are white, what can you do so that your presence does not silence those of color? For those of you who are heterosexual, what can you do so that your presence does not silence those who are lesbian and gay?

CORRINA, CORRINA

Themes include approaches to loss and grieving that vary according to gender, race, ethnicity, and spiritual tradition. This movie also highlights the impact of race and racism on cross-gender relationships.

1. *Describe the movie:* This is a story of a young woman, Molly, who loses her mother through a sudden death. Her father, Manny, looks for a surrogate mother to help his daughter deal with the loss of her mother and to take care of her. This is a Jewish family turned atheist. The “help” that Manny hires is an African American woman, Corrina. The movie dramatizes the different emotional connections between the female caretaker, Corrina, and Manny, the father, toward Molly. Another theme is depicted in the tension around the spiritual meaning of death and loss.

2. *Describe the clip:* The particular highlights here are the father’s role around the loss of his wife and the caretaking of his daughter. We see the hired caretaker, Corrina, embrace and hold Molly’s sadness and rage.

3. *Instructions:* Have the viewers identify on the Traditional Male Norms hand-out (Table 2.2) aspects of male socialization that would make it difficult for this father to express his experience of loss over his wife.

4. *Questions for reflection, dialogue, and inquiry:* Did Manny use any symbols or metaphors to help Molly mourn the loss of her mother? How did he address his sadness and loss? What are your ideas about the differences between religion and spirituality? Do you think it is important that children have a sense of religion or spirituality? What are your views about a white man hiring a black woman to care for his daughter? Did you see any differences in the ways in which the father and the caretaker related to the emotional needs of the child? To their own emotional or spiritual needs?

JOY LUCK CLUB

Themes include loss and race; loss and immigration; and deconstructing gender and culture, class, and masculinities.

1. *Describe the movie:* It is about two generations of four families in China and their immigration to the United States. The women are caught in the trauma of war and patriarchy. The life of one of the protagonists, Ying-Ying is reflected in her story of love for her husband, Li Xiao, who leaves her for another woman. The husband, Lin Xiao, is violent towards Ying-Yang in front of his new lover,

and after that, she murders their infant son. While this is a universal story, it is particularly symbolic for Asian cultures, where sons are valued over daughters. It is also a good film to deconstruct the myth that women “batter” as often as their male partners. A close analysis of context of power and control versus interpersonal violence is an important beginning. Ying-Ying then moves to the United States, remarries, and has a daughter, Lena. The daughter’s story then unfolds.

2. *Describe the clip:* The clip opens with a scene from China in which a young man, Li Xiao, is pursuing and marrying a young girl, Ying-Ying. It then shows that he engages in extramarital affairs and other forms of abuse. Ying-Ying’s response to his abusiveness is also shown. The next scene includes the same woman, Ying-Ying, in the United States when she is older and has a daughter, Lena. This scene shows Ying-Ying’s continued depression and the effects this has on her relationship with Lena. The next scene shows Lena when she is grown and is involved in a serious relationship with a man named Harold. While this relationship is not physically abusive, other forms of control are used by the male partner. In the last scene, Ying-Ying is pictured having a discussion with her now-grown daughter about relationships and marriage.

3. *Instructions:* Instruct the viewers to look at Private Context: The Misuse and Abuse of Power within Heterosexual Relationships as well as White Privilege/Public Context: The Misuse and Abuse of Power toward People of Color (Figure 1.1 and Figure 2.1) and track where the various characters fall along the dimensions of power and control.

4. *Questions for reflection, dialogue, and inquiry:* Think about the couple in China. What did you see that fit into the categories on the wheel? Explore each category. What choices did women have at that time in China? What was the role of the concubines? Could Ying-Ying have sought police protection? Or military protection? What are your thoughts about her reasons for drowning her son? Besides revenge, or protecting her son from this lifestyle, what might be some other reasons for this desperate act? Think about the second-generation couple in the United States. What did you see that fit into the categories on the wheel? How do you see immigration, race, and gender play out? Do you think that Harold knew he was patronizing Lena? What other choices could he have made that she would perceive as fair? What could he have done to help her feel less controlled by him? If the men in either generation were to talk their wives to their male friends, would the friends be more or less likely to challenge the man and be supportive of the wife? How do privacy and cultural standards maintain the status quo in these relationships? At the end of the clip, Ying-Ying asks her daughter, “Do you know what you want?” She advises Lena to take a stand. Do you think this would cost her her marriage? What would the cost to Harold be if she took a stand and offered him an invitation to see what a real relationship is all about? Do you think he would leave the marriage? (He is economically independent and does not see or feel an emotional tie). In what ways was Lena blocked from having a 50–50 relationship?

TORCH SONG TRILOGY

Torch Song Trilogy is a story about loss, sexual orientation, heterosexual privilege, and homophobia in a Jewish family.

1. *Describe the movie themes:* *Torch Song Trilogy* is a story about a Jewish gay man whose lover is murdered in a gay-bashing incident. The movie reflects the intersecting relationships between Arnold; his mother; his lover, Alan; and society. Key issues include death, loss, family tradition, and the familial and cultural oppression of gay lifestyles.

2. *Describe the clip:* This clip begins with Arnold and Alan celebrating their move into their New York City apartment. The younger partner, Alan, decides to pick up some groceries from the neighborhood store. On his way, he witnesses a gang of men beating up a gay youth. He intervenes but is unfortunately killed in the attempt. He is taken away in an ambulance while his lover, Arnold, looks on but is unable to accompany him. The next scene shows Arnold and his mother in the cemetery. She is praying and offering her respects (kadish) to her deceased husband; Arnold joins her to pay his respects to Alan. The mother becomes enraged that her son would share this sacred space of her husband with his lover. She berates him while he expresses his tragedy over the loss of his lover.

3. *Instructions:* Instruct viewers to look at the Public Context of Abuse toward Lesbians and Gays and the Family Context of Abuse towards Lesbians and Gays, (Figures 2.2 and 2.3). Encourage them to discuss the emotional connection between Alan and Arnold, paralleling it with intimate relationships in their own lives.

4. *Questions for reflection, dialogue, and inquiry:* How do you imagine the couple was feeling about moving in together? What might their fears or concerns be about? How do you explain Alan intervening in the gay bashing incident? When he attempted to ask a passerby to call the police, what was the response he received? What happened when Arnold approached the ambulance? In what ways did homophobia impact his ability to be present during his lover's death? How would this ambulance scene be different had this been a heterosexual couple? What would it be like for you to be forced to leave your partner alone, dying in an ambulance? What further oppressions did Arnold's mother inflict on him and his lover? Was this heterosexual privilege or simply her process of bereavement over the death of her husband? How does her lack of compassion towards her son's loss complicate his process of grieving?

The Little Mermaid and *Beauty and the Beast* (to be shown together) Themes include gender and role analysis around love and family connections. Notably, this is a children's film.

THE LITTLE MERMAID

1. *Describe the movie:* *The Little Mermaid* is a love story about Ariel, a mermaid, and Prince Eric, a human. The dilemma is that they cannot be together because Ariel cannot live on land and Prince Eric cannot live under the sea. Most

of the film revolves around Ariel figuring out how she can win Prince Eric's love.

2. *Describe the clip:* The first clip shows Ursula, the sea witch, making a deal with Ariel to allow her to live on land and get Prince Eric to fall in love with her. There is great emphasis on body image, the value of a woman's voice, and the meaning of heterosexual partnering in relation to friends and family. The clip juxtaposes the two women, Ursula and Ariel, with images of evil and innocence, darkness and light, and norms of domination and subordination.

3. *Instructions:* Instruct the viewers to look at the Private Context: The Use and Misuse of Power within Heterosexual Relationships (Figure 1.1), and identify the subtle ways in which women are seduced into accepting dominant descriptions of intimacy and love.

4. *Questions for reflection, dialogue, and inquiry:* What did Ariel have to do in order to be with Prince Eric? (i.e., give up her voice, give up her family and community to have the man of her dreams.) How does this parallel female socialization? How much time did she have to convince Prince Eric to give her "the kiss of true love"? What message does this give women about the urgency of finding a man? What did Prince Eric have to give up to be with Ariel? What does this teach little boys? The evil person in the film was Ursula the sea witch—another woman. She was also the strong woman. What do you think of the depiction of evil women like Ursula—dark skinned, overweight, deep voice, domineering? What message does this give to children? How is Ariel's body image represented? How does this influence little girls' body image? What does this teach both boys and girls of color?

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

1. *Describe the movie:* This is a Disney film about Belle, the inventor's daughter, who is portrayed as a nontraditional woman. She is more interested in her books and in learning than she is pursuing Gaston—the town's eligible bachelor. The other women in the town disapprove of her position and think she is "crazy" for not marrying Gaston. Belle contends that a person's character is much more important than his or her outside beauty.

2. *Describe the clip:* The first clip is about a marriage proposal. Gaston pursues Belle in the town and then follows her into her home. When he gets to her home, he becomes increasingly abusive. Belle attempts to escape his abuse and rejects his proposal for marriage. Viewers are directed to pay attention to what the townspeople say about Belle in the song they sing and to how they relate to Gaston.

3. *Instructions:* Use the Power and Control Wheel for Heterosexual Relationships (Figure 1.1) to classify the many forms of abuse that Gaston displays toward others. Use the Male and Female Norms (Table 2.2 and Table 2.3) to identify those that are played out by the other characters.

4. *Questions for reflection, dialogue, and inquiry:* Ask clients to point out the categories of control that apply to Gaston. Even though Belle ultimately chooses not to

be with Gaston, what messages do you think Gaston's behavior sends to little girls? To little boys? How did the community view Belle? If Belle had a way of being independent, how do you think she would be received by society? Would it be difficult for her to maintain that independence? Why or why not? In what ways does Gaston's behavior define him as masculine or hyper-masculine? How does the community view Gaston?

What do little boys learn about courtship, love, and power?

ORDINARY PEOPLE

Themes include gender constructions of loss around death and illness.

1. *Describe the movie:* *Ordinary People* is a film about how one family deals with loss and how gender gets constructed and organized around a crisis. The family loses their son, Jarrett, in a boating accident. The other son, Conrad, is left with survivor guilt, attempts to kill himself, and is hospitalized. The mother, Beth, favored Jarrett, and following his death, the conflict between she and Conrad escalates. The father, Calvin, attempts to heal the family with the help of a male psychiatrist, Dr. Tyrone Berger.

2. *Describe the clips:* The first clip opens after Jarrett's death and Conrad's recent hospitalization. The family is in the kitchen, and Beth is making breakfast for Conrad. Calvin asks his wife if she followed up with a phone call to service repairman. Consider the expectations that are placed on Beth compared to the expectations that are placed on Calvin. Later in the clip, Beth and Conrad are embroiled in an argument about his choice to quit the swim team. Calvin supports his son. In another clip, Calvin is in a therapy session with Dr. Berger, who attempts to triangulate Beth around emotional responsibility. Following the therapy session, Calvin returns home and questions his wife about her behavior on the day of Jarrett's funeral.

3. *Instructions:* Instruct the viewers to define the gendered patterns of loss and mourning (for him and for her) using the Private Context: The Misuse and Abuse of Power within Heterosexual Relationships (Figure 1.1).

4. *Questions for reflection, dialogue, and inquiry:* If you have a chalkboard, draw a line down the center and write "expectations of mother" at the top of one column and "expectations of father" at the top of the other. Ask the clients what expectations they saw of each (Note to therapist: Usually the list for the mother is much longer, i.e., expecting her to be nurturing toward her son; visiting him in the hospital; not taking a trip to Europe; making her son a second breakfast; taking care of her husband emotionally at their son's funeral, and not worrying about whether or not her husband's clothes matched; charming the service repairman; knowing everything that her children are doing; not "needing" therapy for her family; etc.). Elicit empathy for Beth. Ask, "Even though Beth appeared cold and abrupt at times, how is this connected to the above expectations and her recent loss?" In what ways do women in general deal with a similar crisis? (i.e., making sure that

things are running smoothly in the family, trying to protect the family image, buffering the pain). How did Beth's concern over Calvin's clothes at the funeral make sense in light of female socialization? After returning from the therapist's office, Calvin accuses Beth of being insensitive on the day of the funeral by worrying about his clothes. He says, "I was crazy that day." In what ways was Beth permitted or not permitted to be crazy on the day of Jarrett's funeral? How could Dr. Berger have helped Calvin take care of Beth while attending to his own loss instead of encouraging him to go home and confront his wife?

BOYZ N THE HOOD

Themes include loss, race, gender, and violence surrounding the lives of urban youth.

1. *Describe the movie:* This film is about African American young boys and girls who survive gang violence. The boy, Tré, a middle-class son of divorced parents, connects to childhood friends who are now gang members. His girlfriend, Brandi, is determined not to become sexually active until she marries after college. On the night that Tré's friends are killed in a shoot-out, he himself is faced with near-death, first by the gangs, and then by a black police officer. He arrives at Brandi's house and breaks down with rage and fear. Under these circumstances, she is overcome with compassion for him and feels compelled to nurture him, ultimately deciding to engage sexually.

2. *Describe the clip:* The first clip highlights the struggle of African American youths to survive the trials of gang violence. Their parents' middle-class status offers little buffering against the insidious violence within community life. The next part of the clip is the struggle of Tré and Brandi negotiating an intimate relationship within the context of urban warfare. The next scene is the gang shoot-out where Tré barely escapes the cross-bullets only to have his life threatened by a black police officer. He appears at Brandi's house and falls apart. She has sex with him, breaking her promises to herself.

3. *Instructions:* Instruct the viewers to view the wheels depicting White Privilege/Public Context: The Misuse and Abuse of Power towards People of Color and the Private Domain of Abuse within Heterosexual Couples (Figure 1.1 and Figure 2.1). Compare and contrast the distinctions between the societal and personal experiences for this couple.

4. *Questions for reflections, dialogue, and inquiry:* How do the struggles over sexuality among black adolescents play out differently from their white counterparts? Could Tré's father have played a different role? What about his mother? How does mourning, loss, and violence get entrapped within expectations in intimate relationships? How does being faced with the death of Tré's close friends, and simultaneously wanting to have him respect her dreams, compromise Brandi's position? What could have happened had Tré brought his sadness and fear to his male

friends? What happens when men depend solely on their female partners for emotional support?

THE GREAT SANTINI

Themes include violence, homophobia, definitions within the military and across racial lines, and the rupturing of friendships within white supremacy.

1. *Describe the movie:* This is a film that exemplifies the rigidity of masculinity in the lives of military families. The film portrays the paradox of a successful Colonel, Bill Meecham, who attempts to organize his family like a platoon through hierarchy and violence. Depicted are the gender and race polarities of a white family's experience in the KKK South and the military.

2. *Describe the clip:* The first clip elicits traditional patterns of gender within family life. Awaiting the arrival of her husband Bill, Lillian demands that the children stand to attention. The next highlight is the fathers' challenge of his son, Ben, at basketball and the ensuing abusiveness towards Lillian and Ben when Ben wins. The clip ends with Ben's loss of a dear friend, Toomer, and Toomer's tragic death. The trauma of personal losses colored by the power of race and military are emphasized.

3. *Instructions:* Review Private Context: The Misuse and Abuse of Power within Heterosexual Relationships and White Privilege/Public Context: The Misuse and Abuse of Power toward People of Color (Figure 1.1 and Figure 2.1). Instruct the viewers to first label how the institution of the military creates rigid roles for men and traditional values for women. Have them think of the ways the Great Santini abuses his wife and children.

4. *Questions for reflection, dialogue, and inquiry:*

1. What forms of abuse were displayed in the clip? What are the specific examples?
2. What role did Lillian serve in the family? In what ways was she protective of them?
3. Was Lillian protective of Bill's image in regards to the children and society?
4. How does the military impact family life?
5. What were some of the messages Ben received about how to be a man?
6. What messages did Ben receive about people different from himself? How did his father's definitions of manhood, including the value placed on his son's relationship with a Black man, eviscerate his potential for wellbeing?
7. What are some of the behaviors that were exhibited by the children that suggest their father's emotional unavailability?
8. What "insults" did Bill use toward Ben following the basketball game?
9. How were these insults hurtful toward the daughters?
10. What did the oldest daughter do to get her father's attention? How did she question her status in the family?

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