TECHNOLOGY, THERAPISTS, & ETHICS

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Research grant-funded by the Alaska Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AkMFT).
Presented in part at the AkAMFT 2011 Annual Conference.
Learning Objectives

Participants will…

1. Recognize when technology issues emerge in treatment
2. Learn the ethical considerations for technology usage in an MFTs practice
3. Learn the Couple and Family Technology framework
LEARNING OBJECTIVE #1

Participants will recognize when technology issues emerge in treatment
“We seem to be in the midst of an Internet Revolution and entering an era of enhanced digital connectivity. The pace of social change resulting from the diffusion of this technology, both in the U.S. and globally is, by many accounts, dramatic. In less than ten years, the Internet has become indispensible to many people in their daily lives”.
Prevalence of Technology in Daily Life

• Of the nearly 7 billion people in the world, just over 2 billion people are online (Internet Usage Stats, 2011), a 484% increase over the last decade.

• In late 2011, the Global Language Monitor reported that “Web 2.0” was officially accepted as the 1 millionth English word (Global Language Monitor, 2011), following the addition of “sexting”, “noob”, “cloud computing”, and “defriend.”
The Rise of the Machines: Personal Computing

- The projected 170 million personal computers to be purchased in 2010 was only half of the actual total purchased – an estimated 340 to 350 million worldwide (Robertson, 2011).
- Approximately 58% of married couples with children (U.S.) live in households with two or more computers.
- 70% of the population surveyed had computers with Internet access at their home (U.S. Census, 2009) compared to 18% in 1997.
The Rise of the Machines: Cell Phones

- Just over 80% of American adults have a cell phone (Smith, 2011) and 95% of people in Korea own a cell phone (Kim, Kim, & Kim, 2011).
- Half of children own a personal cell phone in both the U.S. and Japan (Ito, Okabe, & Matsuda, 2005; Kennedy et al., 2008).
- 25% of homes have no landline and rely on a cell phone (Blumberg & Luke, 2010).
- People may prefer mobile communication as the method by which they connect with their friends and acquaintances (Hampton, Sessions, Her, & Rainie, 2009).
The Rise of the Applications: Online Video Games

- 72% of American homes have a resident who plays computer or video games (Entertainment Software Association, 2011)

- In 2010, gaming revenues were over $25 billion and that number is expected to increase (NPD Group, 2011).

- While a predominant belief that the typical gamer is in their adolescence or early adulthood, the prevalence of gaming in the adult population is the most striking
The Rise of the Applications: Social Networking

- Facebook boasts over 700,000,000 users, coming second in terms of Internet traffic only to Google (Alexa, 2011).
- Some indicate that access to social networking sites occurs approximately one in every four minutes (Nielsen, 2010).
Implications of Increased Usage in Relationships

Couples and families may operate the same as we did in previous generations, the ways we accomplish the tasks are different.

Would it kill you to update your Twitter status if you’re going to stay out so late?
Physical Implications of Increased Technology Usage

• Researchers observed a number of physiological reactions when texting, including tension in one’s shoulders, tightening of the neck, and shallow breathing (Lin & Peper, 2009).

• This study’s findings corroborated those in previous research citing the development of physical issues among users of technology.

• Hubert et al (2004) found that a rather large sample of college students experienced neck, shoulder and other pain in the upper body.
Psychological Implications of Increased Technology Usage

• Hubert et al (2004) found that students who indicated that they had limited functionality or a negative impact of pain in their upper extremity scored lower (worse) on a 5-item Mental Health Inventory than students who did not. Some individuals also indicated that they feel more stress upon receiving a text message (Len & Peper, 2009)
Emerging Issues

- Online gaming
- Sex addiction vs. internet addiction vs. problematic internet behavior
- Cybersex and online infidelity
- Gender and power
- Shared time together
- Accountability
- Suspicion and jealousy
Shared Time Together

• Partners who spend time together participating in shared activities report higher levels of relational satisfaction and more stability as compared to time where couples engage in individual pursuits (Hill, 1988; Holman & Jaquart, 1988; Johnson, Zabriskie, & Hill, 2006).

• When couples participate in individual activities, wives in heterosexual relationships are more likely than husbands to report relationship dissatisfaction specifically in those cases where the extracurricular activity is disliked by the wife (Crawford, Houts, Houston, & George, 2002).

• In most cases, participation in online activities occurs at one computer or device, most likely because these machines are too small to afford space for multiple users.
Accountability

• First, each member of the couple is accountable for his/her own behavior related to using electronically-based communication to interact with other outside of their relationship.

• Second, accountability also applies to people’s online behavior regarding interactions with their own partner.
According to Lea and Spears (1998, p. 694)....

“The notion that [computer-mediated communication] gives people a strategic freedom to express themselves because they are unaccountable has been identified as the cause of an ostensible increase in antinormative behavior in [computer-mediated communication] compared to face-to-face conditions.”(p. 694).
Suspicion and Jealousy

• Men’s use of social networking sites seems to generally be more task-oriented as opposed to developing interpersonal relationships (see, for example, Guadalgo & Cialdini, 2002; Williams, Consolvo, Caplan, & Yee, 2009)

• Men also use social networking more frequently than women to develop potential dating relationships (Mazman & Usluel, 2011; Muscanell & Guadango, 2012; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008)
Three Characteristics of SNS Contributing to Jealousy

1. Activity on the site may be viewed by a number of “friends” means that personal interactions in which one participates with individuals other than one’s partner can be viewed by many, which may be threatening to someone prone to jealousy (Utz & Beukeboom, 2011).

2. The increased amount of information a user shares is disseminated to a large number of people, rendered the romantic partner as one of many instead of someone specific. (Utz & Beukeboom, 2011)

3. The monitoring of a partner can occur with greater frequency through a social networking site in socially-acceptable ways (Tokunaga, 2011; Utz & Beukeboom, 2011).
Current Scholarly Attention to Technology in Relationships

- Family scholars and practitioners have not addressed these strategies consistently in their conceptualization of relationships or treatment of couples and families.
- Any attention given in articles or at workshops about technology’s impact on relationships is surprisingly scarce (Blumer, Hertlein, Smith, & Allen, in press)
Attention to cyber practice management issues

• Attention in psychology and psychiatry to telemental health & use of communicative technologies to deliver healthcare services, in family therapy practice limited scholarly attention (Blumer, Hertlein, Smith, & Allen, in press; Ritterband & Tate, 2009).

• Most research focuses on use of telemental health in cases where treatment is conducted solely online with individual parties (Jerome & Zaylor, 2000).
Focus of literature

- Efficacy of clinical interventions provided over web-based services as compared to face-to-face services (Reese & Stone, 2005; Ruskin et al, 2004)
- Perceptions of telemental health (Simms, Gibson, & O’Donnell, 2011),
- Impact of telemental health to the therapeutic alliance (Reese & Stone, 2005; Schopp, Johnstone, & Merrell, 2000).
Methods - Recruitment

• Internet communication
  • Facebook® pages of various professional organizations including the Alaska Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AkAMFT), National Council on Family Relations, and the International Family Therapy Association.
  • Study posted on research-focused listservs of these organizations
  • Emails to program directors to distribute to faculty and students
• Contact at the divisional and state-level
  • Emailed advertisement to contact person at divisional MFT associations for all 50 states in the U.S. requesting that they forward the advertisement to their membership.
  • Selected several states through which we also contacted licensing boards to obtain addresses of their licensed practitioners.
• Regional and national conferences
Procedures

• Once we obtained list of participants, we distributed advertisements for study which directed participants to complete survey on survey software site (Questionpro.com®).

• For participants who completed hard copy of survey at the approved venues or returned surveys via U.S. postal service, research assistant entered data into online survey by hand.
**Instrument**

- Limited our survey to assess only the frequency with which practitioners used web-based technologies.
- Survey was divided into four sections
  - Information about the participant’s practice
  - Use of cyber-technology in clinical practice, use of technology in supervision
  - Education and training, and demographic information.
- Survey contained mixture of multiple choice items, 6-point Likert scale items, and open-ended questions.
FINDINGS...
Demographics

- 227 LMFTs, AAMFT clinical, student & approved supervisor member participants.
- Majority identified as female (n = 181, 79.7%) with remainder (n = 45, 19.9%) identifying as male.
- Majority identified as Caucasian (n = 179, 79%) with remainder identifying as mixed (n = 25, 11.1%), Hispanic/Latin (n = 12, 5.28 %), Black (n = 5, 2.27%), American Indian/Alaskan Native (n = 2, 0.88%), and Asian (n = 4, 1.7%).
- 48.5% (n = 110) practiced in urban setting, 39.2% (n = 89) suburban, & 12.3% (n = 28) practiced in rural setting.
- 42% (n = 95) practiced privately and the split between part (n = 112, 49.3%) and full-time (n = 111, 48.9%) work was almost equal worked part time.
### Cyber Usage in Practice

What is the approximate frequency of your communication with clients via cyber-based technologies?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of time communicating</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>% of sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>50.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (ranged between 1-15%, with most reporting 5-10%)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>227</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
You’ve Got Mail!

Describe your use of EMAIL SPECIFICALLY in relation to maintaining your connection and communicating with clients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>44.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>227</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why Email Usage?

• One of the oldest forms of cyber communication.
• PEW Internet & American Life Project report 92% of adults use email on a daily basis (Purcell, 2011).
• Number of online adults who are email users in 2002 was 8 out of 10 and is now 9 out of 10 (Purcell, 2011).
• Amount of users has stayed relatively consistent, daily or habitual use has increased from 49% in 2002 to 60% in 2010.
• What do these email usage rates in general and in a clinical context mean for cyber clinical communications with clients of the future?
Describe your use of video calling SPECIFICALLY in relation to maintaining your connection and communicating with clients.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>83.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>227</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Describe your use of Internet chat rooms SPECIFICALLY in relation to maintaining your connection and communicating with clients.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>98.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 227
Describe your use of discussion boards SPECIFICALLY in relation to maintaining your connection and communicating with clients.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>97.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>227</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Describe your use of websites SPECIFICALLY in relation to maintaining your connection and communicating with clients.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>81.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>227</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Describe your use of social networking sites SPECIFICALLY in relation to maintaining your connection and communicating with clients.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>93.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>227</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Currently FTs are very uncomfortable with cyber therapy as the sole form of treatment (Hertlein & Blumer, in preparation).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How comfortable with cyber therapy being the sole form of treatment in....</th>
<th>Most frequently reported in category by percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual cases</td>
<td>Very Uncomfortable 66.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple cases</td>
<td>Very Uncomfortable 75.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family cases</td>
<td>Very Uncomfortable 79.35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Current Comfort of Cyber Therapy as adjunct across Client Types

- Majority of FTs range from only slightly uncomfortable to completely comfortable, however, with cyber therapy as an adjunct to face-to-face treatment (Hertlein & Blumer, in preparation).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How comfortable with cyber therapy being an adjunct form of treatment in….</th>
<th>Combined percentages ranging from slightly uncomfortable to completely comfortable.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual cases</td>
<td>81.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple cases</td>
<td>76.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family cases</td>
<td>75.47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To what extent are there any potential ethical issues related to cyber-based treatment are addressed in your informed consent?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>33.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Little</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Lot</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High degree</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>227</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Cyber Usage with Professionals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Usage Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video Calling</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chat Rooms</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Boards</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Websites</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Networking</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Where have you learned about cyber clinical issues?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting of Learning</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Coursework</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>16.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarly Literature</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>17.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing Education</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>16.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical Practice</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>11.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (e.g., personal, friends, peers, etc.)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical Supervision</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I did not learn about these</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>24.20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Learning about Cyber Clinical Issues

• Even if clinicians want to learn about cyber clinical issues in FT, little information exists.
  • Despite growth in usage, the degree of attention that cyber issues have received by members of FT field has remained limited (Blumer, Hertlein, Smith, & Allen, in review; Hertlein & Webster, 2008; Ritterband & Tate, 2009).
Learning about Cyber Clinical Issues

• Between 1996-2010, only 79 of 13,274 articles across 17 journals (0.6%) focused on cyber issues or used cyber and/or Internet considerations as a research variable (Blumer et al., in press).

• American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT) conference guides from 2005-2010 revealed only 15 presentations of 1,205 (.012%) workshops, open forums, plenaries, poster presentation, and/or caucuses addressed cyber issues.
Reading about Cyber Clinical Issues

• The majority of the literature is in the area of clinical practice.
• Chi square indicated there were significant difference among the groups in terms of frequency of articles in a given category, $\chi^2 = 51.72$, $df = 6$, $p < .001$ (Smith et al., 2011).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th># OF ARTICLES</th>
<th>% OF CYBER ARTICLES</th>
<th>% OF TOTAL ARTICLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clinical Practice</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>0.0021%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cybersex &amp; Couples</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>0.0014%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education &amp; Training</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>0.0013%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Support &amp; Resources</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0.0005%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teenager &amp; Child Use</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0.0003%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative &amp; Business</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0.0002%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyber Addiction</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0.0001%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LEARNING OBJECTIVE #2

Learn the ethical considerations for technology usage in an MFTs practice.
Telemental health is effective for...

- Panic disorder (Carlbring, et al, 2005)
- Depression (Mackinnon, Griffiths, & Christensen, 2008; Wiersma et al, 2011)
- Obsessive compulsive disorder (Wooton, Titov, Dear, Spence, & Kemp, 2011)
- Eating disorders (Robinson, & Serfaty, 2001), and anxiety (Spek, Cuijpers, Nyklicek, Riper, Keyzer, & Pop, 2007).
- Problematic alcohol use (Blankers, Koeter, & Schippers, 2011)
- Erectile dysfunction (Andersson et al, 2011)
On the other hand…

- Less about the telemental health.
- More about the ways in which MFTs are managing the burgeoning presence of the Internet in their practices.
Common Cyber Issues in Practice Management

- Emailing clients
- Being followed by clients on Twitter or following client
- Cell phone usage with clients
  - Phone calls, texting, etc.
- Clients gaining access to therapist’s social networking sites
  - Facebook, blogs, etc.
Electronic Communication Policies

• Outlines basic information related to online behavior
• Helps clients better understand the risks they are taking
• How many of you have one?
Common Cyber Issues in Practice Management (continued…)

- Challenges related to billing (Shapiro & Schulman, 1996)
- Inter-state services
- Assurances of confidentiality
- Management of countertransference/transference
- Reporting abuse, and handling dangerous situations like harm to others and suicidality (Derrig-Palumbo & Eversole, 2011)
- Limitations related to competency issues and lack of education (Maheu & Gordon, 2000)
- Lack of clear ethical guidelines for the practice of cyber FT (Blumer et al., in press)
Billing Management

- Management of Billing (Sharpiro & Schulman, 1996):
  - Must discuss fees and fee schedules prior to treatment for clarity.
  - Do best to ensure security through use of encryption techniques and enhanced network protection to improve privacy of billing information.
  - Be clear services provided in cyber world are not identical to those offline.
Inter-state Services

• Therapy occurs where therapist practices
• See clients who only live in the state of licensure
• Insurance companies cover liability for national online therapy

(Derrig-Palumbo & Eversole, 2011)
Assurances of Confidentiality

• Secure-Internet
• Written consent needed
• Encrypted messaging
• Password protection
• Firewalls
• Proprietary software
• No storage of information through third party
• Disposal of records
• HIPPA compliance
• Informed consent

(Derrig-Palumbo & Eversole, 2011)
Management of Transference & Countertransference

• Similar with any other clinical situation or context, except that online relationships are characterized by more emotional connection because the information is based on text.

• Participation in online activities can enhance intimacy and feelings of closeness (McKenna, Green, & Gleason, 2002), partly because computer users are less inhibited in communications than in face-to-face communications (Cooper & Sportolari, 1997).

• Particularly true for people who communicate through video-based programs such as Skype (Henderson & Gilding, 2004; Joinson, 2001; Valkenburg & Peter, 2009).
Management of Transference & Countertransference

• Intimacy development heightened when self-disclosure is emotionally-laden rather than fact-based (Bargh et al, 2002; Derlega, Winstead, & Greene, 2008; Schnarch, 1997).

• Increased intimacy that comes from online communications can also result in more frequent & varied forms of interactions (Bargh & McKenna, 2004; DiMaggio, Hargitti, Neuman, & Robinson, 2001), as well as higher levels of self-description and communication (Cooper & Sportolari, 1997; Henline & Harris, 2006).
Management of Transference & Countertransference

• Be diligent of the following:
  • professional cyber setting established and maintained (both online and offline)
  • boundaries have to be established and managed
  • debriefing and supervision with experienced and/or knowledgeable peers/supervisors
  • conduct an assessment of appropriateness of client for online therapy
  • attention to self-awareness, self-disclosure, and self-of-the-therapist
  • check-in with client on transference concerns

(Derrig-Palumbo & Eversole, 2011)
Mandatory Reporting of Harm to Others

- Screen for issues; make referrals appropriately at onset of therapy.
- Duty to warn (Tarasoff) and duty to carry out responsible steps to prevent a threatened suicide (Bellah v. Greenson).
- Direct link to emergency services in client’s area code.
- Have physical address and phone number of client and emergency contact information before start of therapy.
- Have a list of community resources available and ready.
- Contingency plan if technology fails (use of safety software).

(Derrig-Palumbo & Eversole, 2011)
Training and Education

• Need to engage in more training and supervision to help with issues of lack of competency, education and confidence.

• Training needed to find out what e-therapy is, looks like, and how it is to be conducted.

• According to Blumer and Hertlein (in progress), FTs believe that cyber practices should be taught to a high to very high degree in:
  • graduate training (58.79%)
  • supervision (50.65%)
What are some of the ethical issues around the use of cyber technologies in clinical practice?

- In our study, FTs responded with the following common themes in descending order:
  - confidentiality
  - privacy & security
  - practice setting (crossing state lines)
  - joining, alliance
  - boundaries
  - safety (self harm, abuse)
  - technology failures
Relevant Principles from AAMFT Code of Ethics (2012)

- 1.2 Informed Consent
- 1.3 Multiple Relationships
- 1.4 Sexual Intimacy with current clients
- 1.5 Sexual Intimacy with former clients
- 1.10 Referrals
- 1.12 Written Consent to Record
- 1.13 Relationships with third parties
- 1.14 Electronic Therapy
- 2.1 Disclosing Limits of Confidentiality
- 2.2 Written Authorization to Release Client Information
- 2.4 Protection of Records
- 2.5 Preparation for Practice Changes
- 2.7 Protection of Electronic Information
- 3.1 Maintenance of competency
- 3.7 Development of New Skills
- 8.2 Promotional Materials
- 8.4 Professional Identification
Subprinciples 8.2 and 8.4

- **8.2 Promotional Materials.**
  Marriage and family therapists ensure that advertisements and publications in any media (such as directories, announcements, business cards, newspapers, radio, television, Internet, and facsimiles) convey information that is necessary for the public to make an appropriate selection of professional services and consistent with applicable law.

- **8.4 Professional Identification.**
  Marriage and family therapists do not use any professional identification (such as business card, office sign, letterhead, Internet, or telephone or association directory listing) if it includes a statement or claim that is false, fraudulent, misleading, or deceptive.
Subprinciple 1.14

- **Subprinciple 1.14 Electronic Therapy.**

Prior to commencing therapy services through electronic means (including but not limited to phone and Internet), marriage and family therapists ensure that they are compliant with all relevant laws for the delivery of such services. Additionally, marriage and family therapists must: (a) determine that electronic therapy is appropriate for clients, taking into account the clients’ intellectual, emotional, and physical needs; (b) inform clients of the potential risks and benefits associated with electronic therapy; (c) ensure the security of their communication medium; and (d) only commence electronic therapy after appropriate education, training, or supervised experience using the relevant technology.
Subprinciple 2.7 Protection of Electronic Information.

When using electronic methods for communication, billing, recordkeeping, or other elements of client care, marriage and family therapists ensure that their electronic data storage and communications are privacy protected consistent with all applicable law.
Definitions of WebCounseling

- From NBCC, “The Practice of Internet Counseling”:
  - Webcounseling is defined as “the practice of professional counseling and information delivery that occurs when client(s) and counselor are in separate or remote locations and utilize electronic means to communicate over the Internet“.
  - “Technology-assisted distance counseling for individuals, couples, and groups involves the use of the telephone or the computer to enable counselors and clients to communicate at a distance when circumstances make this approach necessary or convenient.” (pp. 2)
  - “
Definition of Webcounseling (cont...)

- Telecounseling involves synchronous distance interaction among counselors and clients using one-to-one or conferencing features of the telephone to communicate.” (pp. 3)
- “Internet counseling involves asynchronous and synchronous distance interaction among counselors and clients using e-mail, chat, and videoconferencing features of the Internet to communicate.”
- E-mail-based individual Internet counseling involves asynchronous distance”.
Definitions of WebCounseling

• Chat-based individual Internet counseling involves synchronous distance interaction between counselor and client using what is read via text to communicate.

• Chat-based couple Internet counseling involves synchronous distance interaction among a counselor or counselors and a couple using what is read via text to communicate.

• Chat-based group Internet counseling involves synchronous distance interaction among counselors and clients using what is read via text to communicate.

• Video-based individual Internet counseling involves synchronous distance interaction between counselor and client using what is seen and heard via video to communicate.

• Section 12. Technology Applications:
  • a. benefits and limitations
  • b. technology-assisted services
  • c. inappropriate services
  • d. access
  • e. laws and statues
  • f. assistance
  • g. technology and informed consent
  • h. sites on the World Wide Web
Other Considerations

- Consult state laws and statutes regarding cyber therapy or telemental health practices.
- Consult relevant professional organizations
- Identify and follow an ethical decision making model.
LEARNING OBJECTIVE #3
Learn the Couple and Family Technology framework
What is the Field of Couple and Family Technology?

- Refers to a broad area of investigation which seeks to understand the effect of technology on relationships of individuals, couples and family.
- Attends to both the challenges that interfere with couple and family processes and builds on the advantages that technology introduces into relationships.
Field of CFT includes…

• A valuation of the benefits and drawbacks of one’s technology use for individuals, couples and families within their lives and relationships
• Research into the topics related to technology that are the most relevant for couples and families
• Development and implementation of testing of assessment tools for identifying the presence of problematic Internet or technology usage
• Development and application of treatment models, frameworks, and strategies sensitive to individuals, couples, and families with a digital presence
• Incorporation of technology-based strategies to augment therapeutic goals and practices
Theoretical Origins of CFT

- Communication theories
  - Media richness theory (Daft & Lengel, 1984)
  - Hyperpersonal CMC (Rabby & Walther, 2002)
- Social Theories
  - Social Penetration (Altman & Taylor, 1973)
  - Social Presence (Short, Christie, & Williams, 1993)
- Developmental Theories
  - Developmental model (Watt & White, 1999)
  - Domestication theory (Silverstone, Hirsch, & Morley, 1992)
Hertlein’s Multitheoretical Model for Conceptualizing Couple-Family-Technology Interface

(a.k.a. the Couple and Family Technology Framework)
Ecological Influences
Seven As: Accessibility, Affordability, Anonymity, Acceptability, Approximation, Ambiguity, Accommodation

Structural Implications
- Rules
- Boundaries
- Roles

Process Implications
- Relationship initiation & formation
- Relationship maintenance
- Relationship dissolution

Commitment
Intimacy

The CFT Framework
(Hertlein, 2012, *Family Relations*)
Applying the Model

1. The specific aspects of technology (ecological elements) affect both the structure and process of relationships.

2. Shifts in the structure of relationships can dictate changes in the processes of relationships and vice versa.
   a) Anonymity (an ecological factor) in computer-mediated communication can serve to reinforce boundaries in social groups (a structural factor) (Postmes, Spears, & Lea, 1998).
   b) Rules around cell phone usage may result in changes to the way that adolescents interact with friends and family (structure to process changes).
Ecological Element 1: Acceptability
Ecological Element 2: Accessibility

Find Relatives $100+ up

Prevent Relatives From Finding You $1000+ up
Ecological Element 3: Affordability
Ecological Element 4: Anonymity
Ecological Element 5: Approximation
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner A</th>
<th>Partner B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discrepancy Between real and ideal self</strong></td>
<td><strong>Discrepancy between real and ideal self</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant challenges to emotional intimacy and relating EBC might be more confusing to the couple because the way they relate online is variant from offline relating in many circumstances</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner B may experience difficulty trusting Partner A’s behavior, depending on the level of discrepancy May prefer to either communicate online or offline, depending upon which form of communication is the most desirable.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Similarity Between real and ideal self</strong></td>
<td><strong>Similarity between real and ideal self</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner A may experience difficulty trusting Partner B’s behavior, depending on the level of discrepancy May prefer to either communicate online or offline, depending upon which form of communication is the most describable.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple will experience satisfying relationship both on and offline Intimacy levels will grow more quickly and deeply than in the other couple forms because EBC is used as an adjustment to the relationship and a way to continue to experience one another.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ecological Element 7: Ambiguity

“How do you like the new ipad, dad?”

http://www.wimp.com/dadipad/
Two Types of Ambiguity

• Relational
• Technological
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ecological Element</th>
<th>Benefits to Relationship</th>
<th>Challenges to Relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acceptability</td>
<td>• Acceptable way to meet and maintain a relationship</td>
<td>The acceptable nature of communicating with others online introduces more risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonymity</td>
<td>• Test the waters prior to becoming vulnerable in the early stages of relationship development  &lt;br&gt; • Can monitor and edit own reactions prior to reacting in ways that might be hurtful</td>
<td>• Greater potential to hide behind the computer and edit one’s authentic self &lt;br&gt; • May lengthen the time that it takes to feel vulnerable with partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility</td>
<td>• Routine access to partner &lt;br&gt; • More opportunities to develop greater levels of intimacy</td>
<td>Increased ability and potentially interest to monitor partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordability</td>
<td>• Long distance relationships can thrive</td>
<td>May be easier to develop relationships with others that are virtually undetectable to the primary partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecological Element</td>
<td>Benefits to Relationship</td>
<td>Challenges to Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximation</td>
<td>• Real time information about emotions, thoughts etc.</td>
<td>• Other elements or people can be attractive to someone because of their realism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• May be able to provide some element of sexual gratification remotely that cannot be experienced any other way,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>• Provides a space for people to experience their real self when they feel otherwise constrained in their day to day lives</td>
<td>• Discrepancies in real versus ought self between partner can create a mismatch in expression, experience of closeness, and ability to be vulnerable with one another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambiguity</td>
<td>• Provides an opportunity for couples to periodically revisit their relationship contract, thus increasing intimacy</td>
<td>• Creates complications with regard to the interpretation of the relationship contract and expectations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Structural-Functionalist Perspective

- The structural-functionalist perspective is a framework that describes the social organization under investigation (in this case, the family or couple) as it is situated within its environment.
- In other words, the structure of the couple and/or family influences its functions, and its functions feed back into either maintaining or changing the structure.
General Role Implications

- Roles, or how we expect people to behave in given situations, also have to be renegotiated in the context of technology and new media.
- Internet and new media help couples to achieve more equitable role balance and within-couple role congruence in their lives.
- In other ways, the computer and new media have a confusing and detrimental effect on roles.
Specific Role Implications

• In some ways, parents’ roles have diminished because children and adolescents are more adept at using communicative technologies than adults (Aarsand, 2007).
• Another functional change may be evident in how diffuse boundaries affect interactions between parents.
Rules

• Couples who do not revisit interpersonal rules as they integrate technology into their household may perceive their partner as functioning in detrimental ways (Daneback, Cooper, & Månsson, 2005)

• Although many participants indicated that the rules for communicating via cell phone were not necessary within their relationships, other participants reported conflict regarding cell phone usage in their relationships
**Boundaries**

- Boundaries about sharing information with outsiders that were well-established in the relationship previously may change with multiple channels to share information (Ward, 2006).
- Internet users reported feeling “smothered” by their partners (Henline & Harris, 2006).
- Other research has focused on how the blurred boundaries between work and home interfere with couple and family functioning (Campbell & Ling, 2009).
Two Types of Boundaries with Regard to Technology

- **Self-boundaries**
  - Those surrounding the individual affected by self-disclosures (Altman, 1975, as cited by Joiner, Reips, Buchanan, & Schofield, 2010).

- **Dyadic boundaries**
  - how information is received by someone outside of the system
“New media also influences boundaries through introducing parties, both known and unknown, into couple and family relationships.” (Hertlein, in press, pg. 379)
Relationship Initiation and Formation

• A majority of couples are meeting online (Dutton, Helsper, Whitty, Buckwalter, & Lee, 2008).
• Lack of “gating features” (McKenna, 2008)
• Internet users may believe they have higher degree of control over their interactions online than those not in computer-mediated relationships (McKenna, 2008)
Relationship Maintenance: Timing and Tempo

• Influences daily rhythms and routines (Dimmick, Feaster, & Hoplamazian, 2011).

• Couples also more heavily rely on cell phones (as opposed to other forms of technology) to talk to their partner during a day (70% of people report doing this, if both partners have cell phones) (Kennedy et al, 2008).

• There are more frequent and often shorter communications (primarily through email) occurring any time of day (Wilding, 2006).
Communication and Connection

- Research also shows that many people who use email and spend time on the computer do not experience a loss of time with family and friends; rather, they may spend even more time with family and friends, despite initially experiencing depression and loneliness at the outset of the computer entering their lives (Bargh & McKenna, 2004; Kraut, Keisler, Boneva, Cummings, Helgelson et al, 2002).

- Two studies contradict this finding:
  - Nie, Hillygus, and Erbrin (2002)
  - Czechowsky (2008)
Intimacy

• Participation in online activities can enhance intimacy and feelings of closeness between partners (McKenna, Green, & Gleason, 2002)
• May be the result of more frequent interactions, multiple methods of interaction (Bargh & McKenna, 2004; DiMaggio, Hargitti, Neuman, & Robinson, 2001), and higher levels of self-description and communication (Cooper & Sportolari, 1997; Henline & Harris, 2006).
Self-Disclosure and Intimacy Development

• The development of intimacy in computer-mediated relationships depends on the extent to which the partners rely on self-disclosure.

• In relationships mediated by the Internet and new media, self-disclosure may also occur as a means to an end; that is, to determine whether the person on the other end of the keyboard is trustworthy, one engages in a systemic process of self-disclosure.

• Computer users tend to engage in more self-disclosing behaviors than those in face-to-face relationships (Joinson, 2001; Parks & Floyd, 1996).
Two Types of Disclosures

• Non-directed
  • Reveals information of a personal nature, but not to any one person specifically.

• Directed
  • Reveals information of a personal nature directed to a specific individual
Relationship Maintenance: Extended Family

- Communication technologies have become inexpensive, user-friendly, and provide a number of ways to communicate with family members at a greater geographical distance (Bacigalupe & Lambe, 2011; Wilding, 2006).

- The recent advancements in cellular technology helped remote communities sustain familial and community networks (Horst & Miller, 2006) and can bring families together in treatment (Bacigalupe & Lambe, 2011).
Relationship Maintenance: Commitment

• People in computer-mediated relationships reported less commitment than those in face-to-face relationships (Ma, 1996).

• People in online relationships experienced greater levels of commitment, citing increased amount of personal self-disclosure as the reason (Yum & Hara, 2006).

• Email communication fosters greater levels of commitment and trust between siblings (Eppler & Walker, 2004).
Relationship Dissolution

- Relationship dissolution can occur in a variety of ways—death, divorce, or physical and/or psychological separation.
- Technology influences relationships and can play a part in their endings.
  - Facebook statuses
  - The way relationship dissolution is negotiated
Integration

• First, the specific aspects of technology affect both the structure and process of relationships.

• Secondly, shifts in the structure of relationships can dictate changes in the processes of relationships and vice versa.
  – Anonymity (an ecological factor) in computer-mediated communication can serve to reinforce boundaries in social groups (a structural factor) (Postmes, Spears, & Lea, 1998).
  – Rules around cell phone usage may result in changes to the way that adolescents interact with friends and family (structure to process changes).
Activity

• Each of you has a case study in front of you.
• Get in a group, read the vignette, read the case study, and respond to the questions on your handout.
• Then we will come back to the large group and discuss both conceptualization and your treatment ideas.
Activity Summary

- Most, if not all, of the 7 As are operating in this case
- They directly drive the impact to the structure and process of the relationship
- For example, the accessibility directly affects the boundaries in the relationship.
- Did your interventions include the use of new media? Why or why not?
Advantages of CFT Treatment Framework

1. Rather than being a specific theory, it instead serves as an overarching framework through which to view cases involving the Internet in some capacity.
2. Sensitive to issues of diversity and idiosyncratic characteristics of a couple’s relationship
3. Can be tailored to specific presenting problems
Managing Ecological Elements

• Discuss how these elements add to or detract from a couple’s experience with one another.

• Certain questions include:
  • What is the cost of the online behavior to the offline relationship?
  • Why would one adopt different qualities on the computer that are inconsistent with offline life?
  • How acceptable are the behaviors?
  • How does the technology mimic offline experiences?
  • Work to understand each person’s different definitions of Internet behavior; work toward improving a common language around the definitional issues.
Managing Structural Issues

- Discussion of roles
- Discussion of boundaries
Managing Process Issues

• How can couples use the Internet to augment and support their relationship?
• Increased emails over distance
• Recognize the role of spontaneity in relationships
Questions?
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Where can you see me next?

- *Men’s Health Magazine* – story on technology in a couple’s relationship by Paul Kita – April 2014 issue
- You can see me next at the Council on Contemporary Families conference in Miami, April 24-45, 2014.