

A Systemic Approach to Relational Health between Couples from an Asian Context

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Abstract

This presentation will examine interviews of how Singapore couples with young children facilitate relationship equality or drifted back to traditional gender patterns. We approach this study from a social constructionist perspective in which relationship patterns are seen as ongoing processes, constructed and reconstructed through daily interactions. Although marital interaction is highly influenced by the options available in a given social context, partners have the room to create and modify previous gender patterns. The transition to parenthood is an important period for observing the outworking of gender equality since the addition of children requires the couple to make significant adaptations. However, the relationship between gender processes and shared parenting is complex and influenced by ideological, structural, and pragmatic concerns. As they transit to parenthood, they experience tensions in valuing of careers, sharing of parenthood and centrality of the dyad. Only 3 couples are able to successfully sustain all three. Most dual-career couples, who share parenting responsibilities, revolve their lives around children. Couples prioritizing the dyadic system as well, appear to maintain more equalizing of power. However findings suggests that husbands' attentiveness to wives who scale-back or drop-out of work. Learning outcomes for this presentation will include the following: understanding changes in marital power with the addition of children; learning a theoretical lens to apply to couples shifting to egalitarian patterns; discovering strategies collectivist parents use to reshape relationship power and how contemporary couples sustain from hierarchical to egalitarian dominance patterns. Clinical implications will be discussed.

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Biography:

Karen Quek, PhD. is the program director for Marital & Family Therapy and Mental Health Counseling programs at Bethel University, San Diego, CA. Karen is a licensed mental health professional. She has extensive teaching, clinical, and supervisory experiences in the States and other parts of the world, including China, Singapore, and the Philippines. Her innovative research reflects her expertise and interests in multicultural clinical work, cross-cultural family dynamics, and gender equality, and has resulted in numerous publications and research presentations, including her 2017 co-authored book, *Transition and Change in Collectivist Family Life: Strategies for Clinical Practice with Asian Americans*.