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Article in *Journal of Contemporary Psychotherapy* · June 2010

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Meaning-Centered Couples Therapy: Logotherapy and Intimate Relationships

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Published online: 30 December 2009
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Abstract Viktor Frankl's logotherapy posits that human life has purpose and that human beings are motivated to discover meaning in their lives. This paper's objective is to present a case for incorporating meaning into couples therapy as a way of enhancing a clinician's existing approach. Logotherapy is a potentially useful modality, regardless of the clinician's theoretical orientation, given its collaborative nature and focus on the significance of meaning and values to the human condition. A logotherapeutic approach to couples therapy (i.e., meaning-centered couples therapy) would involve values clarification (individually and collectively) and emphasis on a love that is based on acceptance and self-transcendent growth. Logotherapy techniques are discussed, a composite illustration is presented, and recommendations for research are offered.

Keywords Couples therapy · Intimate relationships · Meaning · Purpose · Logotherapy

Introduction

Viktor Frankl's logotherapy is a values-based, meaning-centered philosophy and psychotherapy, with applications across a broad range of physical and emotional difficulties (Melton and Schulenberg 2008; Nassif et al. in press; Schulenberg et al. 2008). Logotherapy has been described by Frankl in numerous English-language texts (Frankl 1985, 1986, 1988, 1997, 2004, 2006). Logotherapy's theoretical foundation is well-established by Frankl and many others. Although more research is needed regarding logotherapy's efficacy, Frankl was open and encouraging of scientific inquiry, and a response to his call for scientific investigation is ongoing (see Schulenberg et al. 2008 for a review).

As outlined in these texts and review articles (e.g., Hutzell 1990a; Melton and Schulenberg 2008; Nassif et al. in press; Schulenberg et al. 2008), logotherapy emphasizes that human life has purpose (the *Meaning of Life* tenet), that humans are uniquely motivated to search for meaning and to make sense of their lives (the *Will to Meaning* tenet), and that human beings have the ability to make choices and to take responsibility for their choices (the *Freedom of Will* tenet). Logotherapy is an empowering approach that encourages decisions that are adaptive and proactive, prompting individuals to examine their choices in relation to their values. Simply put, logotherapy focuses on value-behavior congruence. Are people living their lives and making decisions consistently with their values? Logotherapy posits that if people are making decisions and living their lives in accordance with their values, then they are likely to perceive their lives as being meaningful. If people make decisions without attending to their values, then they are likely to be living lives characterized by emptiness and meaninglessness. Left unchecked, the

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feelings of emptiness and meaninglessness are often filled with social norm violations, distress symptoms, and/or addictive behaviors. Logotherapists help people recognize and prioritize their values. Thus, the issue is not just whether people are living their lives in relation to their values, but whether they are living their lives in relation to their most important values. Emphasis is placed on values identification, clarification, and prioritization, such that individuals have a greater understanding of their own unique, personally meaningful values hierarchy.

In logotherapy, distinction is made between various types of values through which meaning may be discovered. These values are referred to as *Experiential Values*, *Creative Values*, and *Attitudinal Values*. *Experiential Values* are derived from significant experiences with the environment, a loving intimate relationship being one example. Alternatively, while *Experiential Values* are taken in from the environment, *Creative Values* are given to the environment, such as work or creative pursuits. Lastly, with respect to *Attitudinal Values*, choices exist, even in light of unchangeable circumstances and in situations where intense suffering must be endured. In such happenstances, individuals may still choose how they respond attitudinally, even if the situation itself cannot be changed.

While logotherapy is generally considered to be existential-humanistic in nature, it has similarities with many paradigms. It is a forerunner of the cognitive therapies and fits well with cognitive-behavioral interventions, and is related to the contemporary positive psychology movement (Fabry et al. 2007; McMullin 2000; Nassif et al. in press; Schulenberg et al. 2008; Wong 1997). Frankl viewed logotherapy's emphasis on values and meaning as an important addition to other therapies, and thus it is considered a collaborative approach with the potential of enhancing techniques being employed by therapists, regardless of theoretical orientation (Fabry 1981; Frankl 1985, 1986, 1988, 2006). In a recent article, Schulenberg et al. (2008) discussed logotherapy's relationship to, and compatibility with, other forms of therapy, noting its prospective utility to an increasing array of problems, such as psychosis and other specific mental health diagnoses, clinical/disaster psychology, and issues in diversity. The current paper seeks to expand on this work, offering a foundation as to how clinicians may incorporate logotherapy into couples therapy (i.e., meaning-centered couples therapy).

Meaning-Centered Couples Therapy

In logotherapy, love is an essential aspect of the meaning of life. The significance of love is evident throughout much of Frankl's written work, and is also characteristic of his personal life (Fabry 1994; Klingberg 2001; Schulenberg

and Henrion 2005; Spore 2008). Love may be viewed as an experiential value. It is one means of becoming "Somebody", a person with an "identity, a meaning for existence, a place in life, a worthwhile cause" (Crumbaugh 1973, p. ix; Crumbaugh and Henrion 2004). The experience of love means that someone has selected you from all the people in the world, as if to say, "You, and no one else" (Fabry 1994, p. 45). Love is "logotherapy in full action", where individuals accept their partners as they are, yet also observe potentials that have yet to be realized, helping them to experience growth via the actualization of such potentials (Fabry 1994, p. 45).

Love is one avenue toward living a meaningful life, and thus it follows that logotherapy has application to couples therapy as a method of augmenting intimate relationships (Crumbaugh and Henrion 2004; Fabry 1988, 1994; Frankl 1997, 2006; Schulenberg et al. 2008). In the logotherapy literature four sources of meaning are regarded as central to maximizing the potential success of an intimate relationship: (1) each partner discovers their own personal meaning, (2) each person self-transcends toward a meaningful intimacy (an unselfish love where the partner is experienced and appreciated as unique), (3) each partner assists the other in moving toward meaning potentials, and (4) each partner retains their own goals in addition to the goals of a healthy partnership (Crumbaugh and Henrion 2004; Spore 2008).

Along these lines, in his premarital counseling model, Spore (2008) encourages couples to attend to five different areas: (1) the development of a meaningful counseling relationship, (2) the discovery of values/meaning for each individual, and for the couple as a whole, (3) the discovery of values/meaning relevant to each individual's family of origin, (4) the development of interactions and communications characterized by meaning, and (5) the seeking of meaningful intimacy. Thus, when the goals of therapists involve enhancing the communications and interactions of each partner, helping them to individually and collectively identify, clarify, and prioritize values, and to derive a greater sense of meaning in their lives (individually and as a couple), then logotherapy should be considered as a therapeutic approach. Moreover, having a greater understanding of how the relationship is meaningful may galvanize each partner toward a deeper interpersonal respect for each other and their relationship, as well as stimulate each person toward working that much harder to overcome encountered adversities. Logotherapy is likely to be most useful when each individual has the interest and the willingness to invest significant time and energy into the relationship.

A thesis of the current article is that value-behavior congruence and meaning are of central importance to the enrichment of intimate relationships, and it is heartening that the significance of the meaning construct to couples

therapy has been noticed outside of the logotherapy literature (e.g., Bevvino and Sharkin 2003; Doherty 2001; Epstein and Baucom 2002; Gottman 1999, 2002). Given that values and meaning are receiving increasing recognition in this area, how then does a therapist go about helping each partner, and the couple as a unit, to identify and prioritize values and to enhance the perceived meaning in their relationship?

Logotherapy Techniques with Applicability to Couples Therapy

Logotherapy is replete with techniques and exercises that therapists may find useful with respect to treating a wide array of mental health difficulties, such as Paradoxical Intention, Socratic Dialogue, and Attitude Modification (Nassif et al. in press; Schulenberg et al. 2008). With respect to couples therapy, strategies that may be applied include Dereflexion, the Values Awareness Technique, the Movie Exercises, the Mountain Range Exercise, and the Value Auction.

Dereflexion

Cognitive-behavioral couples therapy often involves examining and correcting cognitions, including automatic thoughts and distortions (Rathus and Sanderson 1999). In logotherapy, there is similar focus on modifying maladaptive cognitions, from thoughts or attitudes that are negative, limiting, and destructive to those that are empowering, positive, and proactive (Lukas 1980; Nassif et al. in press; Schulenberg et al. 2008). Dereflexion is one means of facilitating attitude modification, and is similar to the cognitive restructuring and perceptual shifting techniques often employed by cognitive-behavioral therapists (McMullin 2000).

As a technique, Dereflexion has been described in numerous sources (Frankl 1952, 1975, 1985, 1988, 2004; Hutzell 1990a; Nassif et al. in press; Schulenberg et al. 2008). The basic idea is that when a problem or symptom exists, a person may focus on it to the extent that anticipatory anxiety is created, which is counter-productive and in turn results in the worsening of the original problem or symptom (Frankl 2006; Hutzell 1990a; Sahakian and Sahakian 1972). In Dereflexion, the client's focus is shifted from the problem or symptom toward areas of life-meaning, with the intended outcome being a lessening of the anticipatory anxiety that supported the continued existence of the original symptom/problem (Frankl 2006; Hutzell 1990a; Sahakian and Sahakian 1972).

Dereflexion was originally developed to address sexual dysfunction in male–female partnerships. The most

prevalent example in the logotherapy literature would be where a male partner is experiencing performance-related problems, which can become a focus of frustration for either or both partners. The more focus that is placed on the problem, the more anxiety that is introduced, further complicating attempts at sexual intimacy. When such a problem occurs, a logotherapist employing Dereflexion may seek to shift the male's attention away from his own physiological success toward pleasuring his partner, with the idea that focusing on one's partner will lessen the intensive focus on the performance-related anxiety (Frankl 1952, 1975, 1997; Sahakian and Sahakian 1972). This approach is consistent with the logotherapy view of love, where sex is viewed as a loving, self-transcendent act between partners, as opposed to an act where the focus is one's own pleasure.

While Dereflexion was originally a logotherapy technique applied in the treatment of sexual dysfunction, its use has been expanded to include an array of couples issues (e.g., Lantz 1993). Dereflexion may be of help in situations where the couple is focused too intently on problems to the detriment of the relationship. For example, reciprocity is often a very important concept in a relationship, where the expectation is that each partner will contribute equally. If one of the partners were to experience hardship through the loss of employment, or through symptoms of mental illness, his or her ability to contribute to the relationship may be substantially altered. While some focus on such problems is necessary to develop a proactive plan, focusing too intently on the problem can cause difficulties in the relationship. Dereflexion would shift the couple's focus to a more adaptive stance (i.e., what can the person do to contribute to the couple as a whole given their situation, and what can be done to help facilitate the person's adaptive functioning). In such a fashion, for a partner who loses his or her source of income, he or she may be able to continue contributing to the relationship via spending more time supporting his or her partner, maintaining the home, or offering assistance via other means. In Dereflexion, the key is always shifting the focus toward what is meaningful or valuable that can be done, and what contributions one does offer, as opposed to areas where people struggle. Dereflexion helps couples to keep moving forward, especially when problems/symptoms threaten their ability to advance on their chosen life path. For a specific exercise in Dereflexion, the interested reader is referred to Crumbaugh and Henrion (2004) and Lukas (1991).

The Values Awareness Technique

The Values Awareness Technique was developed by Hutzell (1990b), and further outlined in a workbook by Hutzell and Jerkins (1995). It is a tool to help people achieve a greater

sense of awareness with respect to their personally meaningful values hierarchy. The workbook contains a series of exercises to assist participants in examining their values from different perspectives. For instance, what values are important, but have been neglected? An example given is answering the question as to what one wants to do with one's life (e.g., become a scientist). Next, individuals use their creative capacity to consider possible reasons why they answered the question the way that they did (e.g., takes knowledge, employs a systematic means of answering questions) and the values that underlie these reasons (e.g., education, scientific method/research). The workbook contains sections designed to assist individuals to expand their awareness of the range of values that people may have, the expression of values in terms of what is given to their environment (e.g., via jobs and hobbies), the experiencing of values taken in from their environment (e.g., favorite experiences), and life-beliefs (e.g., important people and organizations and reasons why they are valued). The workbook culminates in the development of a personally meaningful values hierarchy as well as developing goals that are consistent with one's hierarchy (e.g., 5-year goals, 1-year goals, 6-month goals, 1-month goals, 1-week goals, 1-day goals).

The workbook is important because it aids in the crystallization of abstract concepts (meaning/values) and facilitates the development of purposeful goals that are consistent with one's values hierarchy. As noted earlier in this article, when one participates in activities/goals that are considered to be important, one is likely to perceive life as being meaningful. In terms of couples therapy, working through such activities can give couples insight into the values that they respect individually, and what they find meaningful within the context of their relationship.

The Movie Exercises

In the logotherapy literature the two Movie Exercises were designed as a creative means to enhance perception of personal life-meaning (Schulenberg 2003b; Schulenberg et al. 2008; Welter 1995). In the first movie exercise, an individual develops a movie of his or her life. The focus is on the past up to the current moment (past to present). In the second movie exercise, there is a shift in focus from the current moment to the future (present to future). Individuals participating have opportunities to develop core aspects of the films. For instance, participants choose the characters and who will play them, and they choose movie titles, the content/genre, and the budget. The activities afford individuals opportunities to explore their personally meaningful values hierarchies (Schulenberg et al. 2008).

The Movie Exercises are potentially popular techniques with clinical utility given the relevance of movies to the

human condition (Niemiec and Schulenberg 2008; Niemiec and Wedding 2008; Schulenberg 2003b). With respect to couples therapy, the techniques may be altered depending on the needs of the couple and the perspective of the therapist. For example, by having couples complete the first exercise independently, focusing on the past up to the current moment, individuals may not only learn more about themselves, but the personally meaningful values hierarchies of their partners as well. In the second exercise, couples could be prompted to complete exercises from the present to the future, either individually or together. Individual exercises would create opportunities to better understand how each partner's values and goals are similar and in what ways they are different. Does each partner share a comparable vision for their future? Alternatively, by completing the second exercise together, couples would have the opportunity to work together in a creative capacity with regard to their direction in life. Ideally, such an activity would encourage communication and a collaborative effort.

The Mountain Range Exercise

Ernzen (1990) developed the Mountain Range Exercise based on an idea noted by Frankl in *The Doctor and the Soul* (1986). In this creative activity, the participant is prompted to draw a mountain range. Different kinds of paper (regular, construction) and writing tools (regular or colored pencils or pens) may be employed. Once the mountain range is drawn the participant then considers various people who have positively affected the course of his or her life, placing the most meaningful influences on the peaks. Influences may include friends, family members, or even people the person may not know directly, such as authors, actors, or musicians. Participants are encouraged to consider what values they share with individuals placed on their peaks, and are also asked to consider other individuals in their lives and whose mountain ranges they would like to become a part of. The goal is to facilitate values clarification, as well as the identification of positives in their lives, such as meaningful influences and relationships (Ernzen 1990; Schulenberg et al. 2008).

With respect to use in couples therapy, there is potential utility whether the exercise is completed individually or collaboratively. For instance, completing each exercise individually, people not only learn about themselves, they learn about their partner's personally meaningful values and experiences as well. The exercise could also be modified so that the couple could work collaboratively, placing individuals or couples on their peaks that have positively influenced their relationship. Such an activity would kindle a sense of the couple's values and an appreciation of their experiences and how they, as a couple, have been inspired by others.

The Value Auction

Such introspection and collaboration may also be stimulated by the Value Auction, which was described by Fabry (1988). The Value Auction is an interesting values clarification exercise that may be especially useful in group therapy with couples. Respondents begin with \$10,000 to spend among 22 values. Examples of values include a good marriage, the experience of love, recognition, power, a long and happy life, financial security, etc. Participants “compete” by placing “bids” on various values, beginning with \$100. Bids may only be raised \$100 at a time (with a ceiling of \$4000 for any particular value). The entire sum is to be distributed among the values as the participants see fit. The activity promotes the deep contemplation of an array of values, with participants having to choose those that are most important to them. Once the activity is completed, people may be asked questions to kindle further self exploration (e.g., whether participants are content with what they bought, why they wanted what was bought, what they learned or what was surprising, whether what they purchased was consistent with their direction in life, etc.).

Additional Logotherapy Techniques

The aforementioned techniques are but a few of the many that have been developed as a means of identifying and clarifying values and developing personally meaningful values hierarchies. While these techniques were often designed with the individual in mind, they may be tailored for use in couples therapy to aid partners in discovering greater meaning in their relationship. One additional example is the Self-Appraisal Exercise (Fabry 1988), where individuals are prompted to answer such questions as “Who am I?”, “What are my potentials?”, “Who do I want to be?”, and “Who does my family want me to be?”. The exercise also includes questions to encourage the identification of adversity and the overcoming of obstacles. Similar to the techniques and exercises discussed above, partners may learn about themselves and each other, as well as discover methods of assisting partners in addressing obstacles to their goals. The exercise could be readily adapted as a combined activity, where the couple is prompted to consider who they are and their potentials as a couple, as well as what obstacles they face and the resources available to overcome encountered obstacles.

Other logotherapy techniques and exercises are described in *The Power of Meaningful Intimacy* by Crumbaugh and Henion (2004), and in a review by Mendez (2004). Examples include Logodrama, Life-Review and Life Preview, Guided Autobiography, Guided Discovery of Meaning Potentials, the Logoanchor Technique, the Appealing

Technique, the Method of Common Denominators, and Self-transcendent Questions for Couples.

Meaning-Centered Couples Therapy: Logotherapy as Case in Point

The authors have thus far presented the argument that meaning and values are important constructs to consider within the context of the relationship. In addition, specific techniques to facilitate values clarification and the discovery of meaning have been presented. Next, a case in point, a composite of work with several couples, is presented to demonstrate how logotherapy may be applied, as well as demonstrate its collaborative capacity with other methods. The names and specific situations are not those of any real clients. The case in point will be followed by directions for research in meaning-centered couples therapy.

Kara and John attended a relationship development class. In the class they did a meaning-based exercise in which each of them developed a list of activities they enjoyed doing, and then rated each list for how meaningful it was (e.g., eating ice cream might rate as pleasurable, but not meaningful). They then rated each item as to how much the activity brought them together as a couple or distanced them. They found that they had few shared meaningful activities, other than parenting. Often the couple was in conflict over parenting styles (e.g., discipline, bed times, what the children should be offered as rewards, etc.).

Following the class, they decided they needed more assistance and came in for couples therapy. Kara (34) and her husband, John (36), addressed concerns involving family of origin, differing parenting styles for their 6- and 2-year-old children, and “drifting apart”. Kara was an assistant professor in chemical engineering. The family had lived in Houston for 4 years, they had moved there for Kara’s first job following graduate school. John had a bachelor’s degree in environmental engineering and had agreed to move to be with Kara. John experienced a difficult time finding a job he liked when he moved to town. He held three jobs in the first 2 years, but within the last year he had started working for a small firm where he was well liked and had already received two promotions (though the promotions did not include large raises). Kara makes slightly more money than John. Kara was considering taking a faculty position with promotion at a rural school in Nebraska. The job was a good fit personally, and professionally. However, the move would mean that John would need to find a new job, and it would be very difficult to find a job he was interested in and qualified for. John and Kara reported they had dated in college and had been “madly in love” before they had children. Since then

childrearing and careers had been their focus. Kara was seen for four individual therapy sessions and John seen for two individual therapy sessions. The couple was seen together for nine sessions. In the beginning both members of the couple lamented how the other had changed—Kara feeling that John had become more distant and less interested in her life. John felt overwhelmed trying to balance being a father, maintaining a career, and giving Kara emotional support. In the couple's sessions they were taught a dialogue technique that calls for one partner to take the role of the listener (listening for content and affect, and then validating the partner's emotions), and the other partner takes the role of the speaker, clearly communicating his or her experience of an event (see Hendrix 1988). While this is a standard tool of couples therapy, as used by a logotherapist it was also employed to assess the level of motivation (self-oriented or transcendent) of each partner. At first John was competent at "mirroring" the words that Kara said, but he appeared to be motivated to accurately mirror her words only so that the roles would be reversed quickly and he would be listened to! Over time John was coached to listen as though he was first falling in love. He was asked to describe times he felt he would do anything for Kara—and asked to remain in that psychological space while listening to her. When he was able to do this—he was able to show much more compassion, and Kara felt heard at deeper levels. This is an example of using Dereflection and transcendence in conjunction with a listening exercise.

The couple was also given an assignment of writing what they thought the other's perspective was about the prospect of moving to a new town. This allowed a Dereflection (of self) by reflecting on the other. This was difficult at first, but later both partners were able to do this readily, and enjoyed sharing what they thought the other's perspective was. At first Kara felt John was selfish for not wanting to move and support her career, but later came to understand John's need for stability in his job (transcendence of self for partner). John felt misunderstood and like a victim in that he had moved before for her career, and encountered difficulty finding a job he liked. John was able to validate Kara's desire to improve her career and offered to change job fields to move to support her (transcendence of self for partner). Ultimately, both parties decided that it was best to stay in Houston, as the children's grandparents were nearby and staying would provide their children more stability (transcendence of self for the family's best interest).

Within the context of therapy a metaphor of the couple's life together was also developed. The metaphor was of a journey. The couple started their individual journeys in different lands and spoke different languages (very different families). They came together in a paradise (college, the first few years of their relationship). They are now

traveling through a desert with more burdens (children, work, and their own conflicts). They have a destination, not of a new paradise, but of a comfortable life together, the new life will be a launching pad—a place that each of their careers will grow, and a place where they will be able to launch their children into happy, healthy lives. Metaphors are commonly employed in logotherapy (Schulenberg et al. 2008), although they are not unique to logotherapy. This metaphor served as a way to unify their past stories with their evolving stories in a way that transcended each individual's life. The metaphor was a reminder of the meaning of their relationship.

Since couples therapy officially ended 6 months ago, Kara has come in for three individual sessions to discuss family of origin concerns. The couple scheduled one appointment, but then cancelled, as they had resolved the issue of concern.

Directions for Research

The significance of meaning to intimate relationships has a lengthy history in the logotherapy literature, and continues to be a topic of interest. In this paper, we have attempted to present a rationale for couples therapists to include logotherapy in their work as a means of helping partners to clarify values and derive a greater sense of meaning in their intimate relationships. Our arguments are largely theoretical and anecdotal, further supported by available research of the meaning construct's significance (e.g., Bevvino and Sharkin 2003; Lantz and First 1987). Clearly, more research is warranted to strengthen the knowledge base and to guide clinical practice. With respect to research in this area, there are many avenues that are worthy of scientific scrutiny that may better inform the interventions of couples therapists. First and foremost would be the systematic examination of the interrelationships between values-behavior congruence, meaning, love, and relationship satisfaction. There are a number of scales available to assess these constructs, although it is beyond the scope of this article to review them here. The logotherapy literature would suggest that values-behavior congruence would be associated with a greater perceived sense of meaning, and that both values-behavior congruence and meaning would be associated with a deeper sense of love and relationship satisfaction. Furthermore, systematic studies should seek to examine these variables, as well as others, and how they change as a result of meaning-centered couples therapy. Additional variables that may be studied in relation to logotherapy include communication, perceived closeness, reciprocity, partner roles, and conflict management.

Researchers should also focus on values-behavior congruence and meaning as a context for the relationship over

time. For instance, to what extent does premarital meaning-centered counseling stave off future difficulties and enhance marital satisfaction? Would such an intervention enhance a couple's resilience to overcome obstacles and to stimulate individual growth and growth as a couple, and eventually result in increased mutual respect, communication, and a lessening of the divorce rate? Additionally, to what extent would meaning-centered counseling be of benefit once problems are encountered? In what situations is meaning-centered counseling most effective? Finally, to what extent would meaning-centered couples therapy assist couples as they experience developmental changes within their relationship, such as stressors when the relationship begins, stressors when children arrive, and stressors when children leave the home, to name a few (e.g., Guttman 2008; Schulenberg 2003a).

Research should also be conducted to examine logotherapy's utility in helping couples deal with traumatic experiences, such as when one partner may be experiencing symptoms of serious mental illness (e.g., major depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder). Logotherapy is relevant, given its empowering approach, to what one can do as opposed to what one cannot do, and its emphasis on being proactive and deriving meaning regardless of the circumstances one faces. Additional traumas to examine include, but are not limited to, divorce or the ending of the relationship, as well as the death or severe physical illness of one's partner or a son or daughter.

Finally, logotherapy's applications should be investigated as relates to couples and diversity. In terms of diversity we are primarily speaking of religious identification, multicultural/cross-cultural issues, and couples where either or both partners identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. These variables are important to examine for a variety of reasons. With respect to religious identification, there are large numbers of couples that identify as being religious, and there are large numbers of couples that identify as being interreligious (Duba and Watts 2009). In such cases it may be especially important for couples to identify, clarify, and prioritize their values, as different religions may emphasize some values more than others. Differences in the emphasis of values may be related to tension within the relationship. Logotherapy may be of assistance given its focus on values, and there is logotherapy literature pertaining to religion that couples therapists may find to be of use in their work (e.g., Graber 2003; Leslie 1965; Welter 1987).

With respect to multiculturalism and couples, issues of values identification and clarification may again be important. For example, cultural norms often dictate traditional versus nontraditional relationship roles and this should be addressed so that the therapist and the

individuals approach these issues from a common stance. Logotherapy is a particularly well-suited and sensitive approach in that it guides couples in their search for what makes a personally satisfying relationship. Further, it can assist individuals in determining the extent to which they want to embrace their culture as it defines them as a couple. Research may focus on an empirical examination of how the meaning construct is defined and manifested in different cultures (Savolaine and Granello 2002; Schulenberg et al. 2008) as well as how this applies to couples.

Regarding couples where one or both partners identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT), it is important to recognize the unique problems these couples encounter in addition to the universal problems that most couples face (Connolly 2004). For example, LGBT couples may encounter discrimination, oppression, and lack of acceptance from their families of origin. Through its facilitation of identity development, logotherapy provides a means by which clients can explore personal issues with diversity (Schulenberg et al. 2008). Clients may learn to view episodes of discrimination as opportunities to respond in meaningful and dignified ways. Likewise, couples may forge a strengthened bond as a result of confronting an injustice together. Therefore, research in this area may focus on examining sexual orientation and gender identity development as it relates to personal and shared meaning.

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