

Workshop #4
THURSDAY, JUNE 11, 2009 – Session 1 (9:00-10:30)

**SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN THERAPEUTIC
DISCOURSE WITH SEXUAL OFFENDERS**

Presenter

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Workshop Description

Sociolinguists investigate the ways people achieve effective communication through verbal interpersonal interchanges. This work became the medium for the investigation of psychotherapeutic processes as dyadic interactions similar to other formal verbal interchanges. In other ways, the interactions of therapy are highly unusual kinds of interpersonal communication. This workshop will begin by introducing the concepts of ordinary dyadic interactions, and proceed to the identification of some of the unique features of psychotherapeutic “talk.” The verbal interchange is the unit allowing for the investigation of strategies of persuasion, argument, cooperation, and resistance.

The exploration of accountability as the accessible display of underlying thoughts and beliefs is a familiar concept to psychotherapists. Practitioners who treat sexual offenders are especially concerned with questions of social accountability and responsibility, both in terms of how offenders conceptualized accountability at the time of their offense, as well as how they might change their beliefs as a result of treatment.

The relationship between the concepts of “the good life” (Ward et al) as an achievable goal for clients and their social interactions in therapy will be explored. Finally, the potential for using the treatment group, or program, as a mechanism for the realization of different options encourages us to model positive and attainable innovation for clients. When we draw upon our own strengths, and productively challenge the use of those clients who can be safely helpful, we allow for the emergence of even more with our clients.

Learning Objectives

1. To introduce several key concepts of sociolinguistics/discourse analysis and their adaptation to the investigation of psychotherapeutic interactions
2. To identify some of the ways these concepts can be applied in treatment with sexual offenders.
3. To explore the relevance of these concepts as they apply to the “good lives” model of offender treatment.
4. To identify untapped or underutilized potential resources among staff and clients for problem resolution.