

The 9th Asian Regional Conference of CICIAMS

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The De-centered Subject

A Meditation on
Marital Sexual Experiences
of
Husbands of Women Treated for Breast Cancer

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- Introduction
- The Surgical Scar
- Diminished Desire
- The Cross-over
from Self to Other

Introduction

- Marital sexual life
- Qualitative research: 13 couples
- Illness as a 'We' experience
- Focus: 4 cases

Cross-Over from Self to Other

From Self-Expressivity to Responsivity to
Other

Male Centered Sex

- Sex is genital intercourse
- At man's initiative
- For man's pleasure

Sex is genital intercourse

	<i>Wife's response</i>	<i>Husband's manifest response</i>	<i>Husband's implicit response</i>
D	“She said, ‘get up and have a glass of water.’”	Withdrew; Drink a glass of water, Watch TV, and calm himself down.	Sex is genital intercourse. No genital intercourse, no sex

At man's initiative

- 7 out of 13 men had never or almost never been rejected by their wives.
- Wife's responsibility to please husband

For man's pleasure

- “When I’m done, it is over.” (L3: 228-240)
- “In fact, I can’t tell. I believe she also enjoys.” (P)
- “I know she felt painful, my problem is) I have to keep going once it’s started. I can’t wait.” (H2: 388)

*Does
mastectomy
and breast
cancer
treatment
mean the end
of eroticism
and sex for
the husband?*



Nancy Field: Portrait of a New Life

The Surgical Scar

- Mr. F, 53, secondary education, office receptionist.
- Greatest pressure: work.
- Dream: retirement.
- Wife, 51, primary education.
Mastectomized 2000; hormone therapy, 8 years as office assistant.

Mr. F

	1	2	3
<i>Sexual Experience</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● “Disfigured, certainly disfigured. What can you do?”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● “When making love, I don’t want to see it.... It is a long scar,...”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● “At this thought (of cancer in her other breast), I would be struck with fear.”
<i>Parallel Responsive Development</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● “Without her, I would not be able to live”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● “There are lots of things I would like to do (after retiring) ... there seemed nothing special that I would do with her”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● “I must die first. I can’t live without her.”
<i>Wife</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● “He experiences lots of pressure from work, and sex is his only release.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● “I used to adore him”● “Now, I’m somewhat● disappointed, yes,”	



Self-
Expressive

Other-Responsive

Mr. F

Self-
Expressive

Other-Responsive



Mr. G

- 51, primary 6, policeman, Christian. Four daughters (18-27).
- Mrs. G, 42, housewife, primary education, Christian. Both breasts mastectomized; hormone therapy; no chemotherapy and no radiotherapy.

Mr. G

	1	2	3
<i>Sexual Experience</i>	“If you see her in the nude, you will ask why.”	“I knew it was fake (Prosthesis), so my feeling is not good.”	“...where the wound heals, where the two pieces of flesh converge ... I feel it is very interesting”
<i>Parallel Responsive Development</i>	Not seeing: Taking birthmark on the face as dirt.	Seeing beauty in the person.	Teaching Taiqi to a group of elderly.
<i>Wife</i>	“After all these years, I can’t accept being divorced. ...That is why I must have an active sex life.”	Taking a stand against his solo China trips.	



A breast cancer survivor. 2002.

Can there be a new
Spring?

Mr. F

Self-
Expressive

Other-Responsive

Mr. G

Diminished Desire

- Mr. J, 50, office assistant, secondary education, no religion, married 25 years, three children (17-24).
- Mrs. J, 46, primary 6, Buddhist. Lumpectomy 1999, chemotherapy, radiotherapy, and hormone therapy. Babysitter before breast cancer, then volunteer.

Mr. J

	1	2	3
<i>Sexual Experience</i>	“When she reacts as if she was suffering, I would give up.”	“When she refused, I knew it was a matter of lack of desire. I just accepted....”	“The problem is to see if she’d say yes more frequently.”
<i>Parallel Responsive Development</i>	“It is I who try to meet her expectations, more than she trying to meet mine.”	Three times his wife said she was not, and she wanted to be a good wife, he did not respond.	“I also feel the need (for her attention). But I never let her know”
<i>Wife</i>	“When I was angry with him, he didn’t even know what I was angry about.”	“All along he has been very accommodating to me. But... I don’t know how to accommodate him.”	

Self-
Expressive

Other-Responsive

Mr. J

Mr. K

- 49, Form 3, Catholic, married 20 years, 15 year-old daughter. Not long before wife's surgery, business badly hit by economic recession. Closed company, sold car and apartment unit.
- Mrs. K, 46, no religion, Form 3. Mastectomy 2002; chemotherapy and hormone therapy.

Mr. K

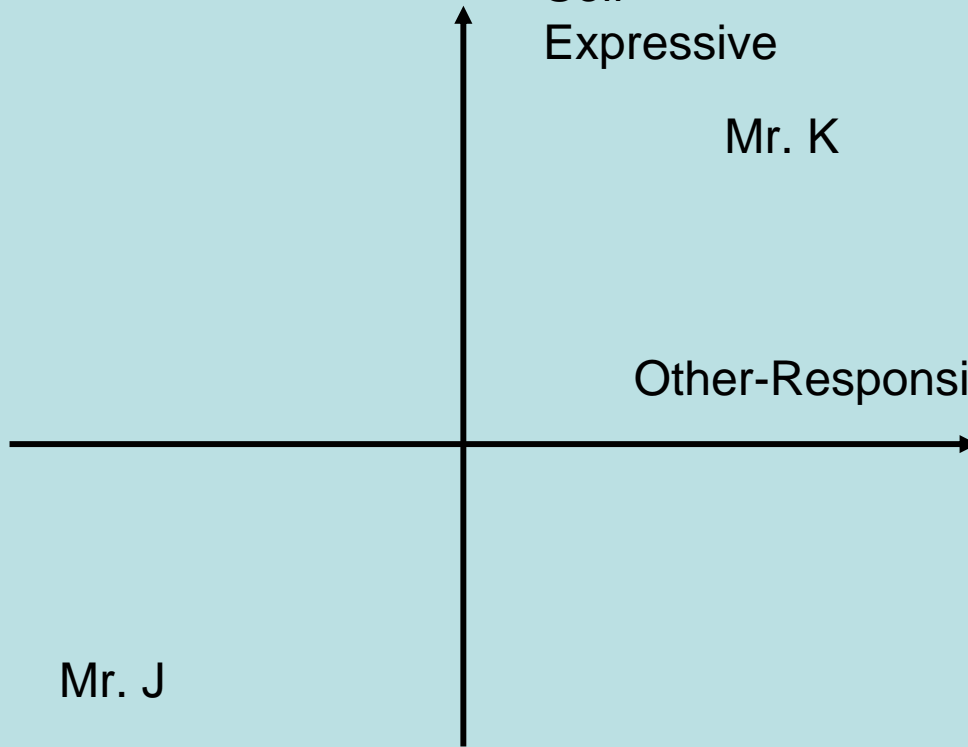
	1	2	3
<i>Sexual Experience</i>	“When she does not respond. I go back to sleep.”	“I will not initiate sex any more.”	“I’ll check (if she is interested in physical contact) with my body.”
<i>Parallel Responsive Development</i>	New Way of Being husband and father	Maintain his personal sports activities during weekdays.	Sunday ‘Reunion’
<i>The Wife</i>	“I stared at you because I wanted to let you know I was not happy with you.”	“I asked him to hug me, and invited him to share one blanket with me.”	

Self-
Expressive

Mr. K

Other-Responsive

Mr. J



Self-
Expressive

Mr. F

Mr. K

Other-Responsive

Mr. J

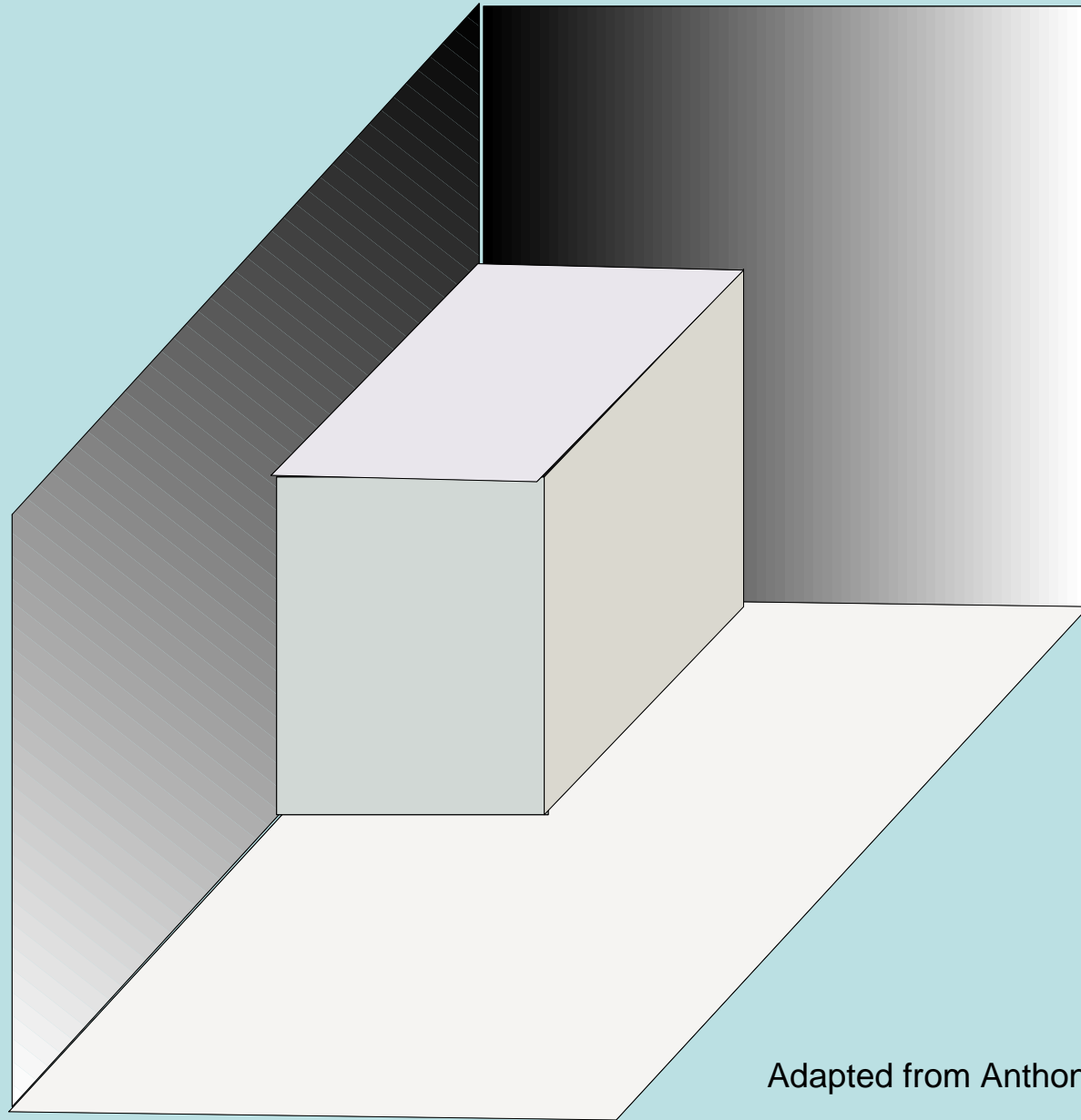
Mr. G



- Death is no-response.

- Levinas

Self-Expression
and
Responsivity to the Other
is
the route to intimacy
and
personal completion.



Adapted from Anthony J. Steinbock (1987)

The Cross-Over

- Coherent Deformation
- Break and Interplay

Break to continue

- Break to continue
- Not a complete break

Making the Shift

Meditations

- *The other as dimension;*
- *Re-turning*
- *The woman re-turns*
- *Break to continue*

The other as dimension

- The hidden dimension
- Revealed in transition

Returning and Re-turning

- Mr. F: Fear of *return* of the past.
- Mr. J: Hope to *return* to the past.
- Mr. G: *Re-turning* the past, using resources of the present.
- Mr. K: *Re-turning* the present, using resources from the past.

Re-turning the past

Use the richness of the present to

- Re-evaluate the past
- See the past with fresh eyes:
- Enable transformation in the present
re-turn to the other (Mr. G)

Re-turning the present

Use the depth of the past,

‘the freshness of our first perception’

- To open up a present
- To free emotions from a prior paralysis
- To re-turn to the other (Mr. K)

The woman re-turns

- Interacts: responds, initiates, enjoys
- More than a treatment side effect
- Making implicit requests

Thank you!