

WHAT'S UP WITH MY FAMILY?

As we discussed earlier in the semester, families-of-origin are _____. We have developed a significant sense of who we are--our _____--from our family-of-origin.

We also learn a great deal about what to _____ from and how to _____ relationships from our families-of origin.

_____ theory posits that children develop bonds--either secure or insecure--with family members. _____ attachment in childhood often leads to adults who are _____ about new relationships, uncomfortable with _____, and worried about _____ relationships. In contrast, children who grow up in _____ family relationships tend to be more relationally _____ adults who develop _____ intimacy with others and maintain _____ relationships with others.

The Palo Alto group--Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson, view families through the lens of what is known as _____ theory, or more popularly, _____ theory.

Simply defined, a communication system is "a group of _____ and _____ parts that _____ as a _____."

Every system is comprised of 3 kinds of things:

1. _____ or parts,
2. _____, or interactions, and
3. a _____ or purpose.

Because the elements, or parts, of the system are interconnected, they _____ one another. In other words, we _____ understand any part of a system in _____ of the other interrelated parts. If you change any part of the system, the whole system is affected. As such, "the _____ is greater than the sum of its _____."

Applied to families, this means that in order to understand an individual within a family, we must consider how that individual relates with each member of the family (aka, _____) as well as the family's _____ (or _____), such as the extended family, the family's neighborhood/community, and the larger society.

•One of the key research questions addressed by the Palo Alto group was this:

"Why do _____ of relating and behaving seem to be so hard to change within families?"

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The Palo Alto group answered that question _____ by focussing on _____ but rather by focussing on _____ of _____ between family members...thus the name of the theory.

EXAMPLE:

The classic illustration is a _____ suspended from the ceiling. Each of the objects are _____ to the other objects by strings tied in such a way as to keep the whole system in _____ (its function or purpose). Tug on any string, and the effect will be felt throughout the whole mobile.

A family unit is like that mobile. The strings in this analogy represent 3 key things: _____ (aka _____), _____ and _____ that function to hold a family together, that tend to maintain some type of _____ or _____ (whether healthy or dysfunctional). Let's look at each of these "strings" in turn.

1. RELATIONSHIPS, (aka the _____ or _____):

In a sense, the basic unit of family systems is not the _____, but the _____, or relationship between any two individuals. We have a _____ interact with each member of our family.

EXAMPLES:

Systems theorists would say that if you want to best understand interpersonal dynamics within your family, you can't see behaviors as belonging to an isolated individual, but rather, as behaviors emanating from "_____ - _____ - _____ - another."

**Which family interacts were the easiest for you growing up? How about now? Which interacts were the hardest? How about now? Why do you think?



2. RULES:

Family members learn sets of _____ that accomplish key functions within the family system.

EXAMPLES:

- We learn what _____ we can (family activities) and cannot (family finances, family conflict) talk about outside the family.
- We learn which _____ are OK to express and which ones aren't.
- We learn the extent to which we can _____ upon other family members and/or must fend for ourselves.
- We learn how to _____/have conflict (or not) within our family.
- We learn how to manage our _____ and artifacts, like to what extent we must keep our room clean or pick up our clothes or to always put the toilet seat down after use (or not), etc.
- We learn which rule-violations will be _____ (being late for dinner) and which will incur serious _____ from parents (lying about where you were).

As stated above, these rules serve key _____ for the members following them (like keeping the family together or maintaining a level of predictability/known what to expect within the family), even if they create other consequential problems.

EXAMPLES:

1. A spouse of a substance-abuser may cover up for their partner's abuse-related problems in order to:

- feel needed or
 - maintain the image of "everything's fine here" to neighbors and friends or extended family or
 - avoid conflict (including violent episodes) in the home or
 - keep the family from "falling apart,"
- ...even though doing so may help perpetuate the substance abuse problem.

2. Many children of substance abusers, as a result of having to _____ (a key function) within a family with a substance abuser, have learned what are commonly referred to as THE _____--

"Don't _____, (apathy...result of prolonged frustration..."whatever")

Don't _____, (key people have NOT been trustworthy)

Don't _____," (keep family business in the family; don't impose or expose.)

NOTES



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EXAMPLE

**What rules did you learn from your family that may have served you at one point in your life but now hinder you from becoming a whole person?

3. ROLES:

Not only do we learn rules to follow in our family systems, but we learn specific _____ to play in _____ to our family members.

EXAMPLES:



**What roles did you see members of your family play as you were growing up? What roles did you play? How might that still influence the way you approach interpersonal relationships now?

COMMUNICATION PATTERNS WITHIN FAMILIES

Another way of thinking about how families manage relationships, rules and roles, is by considering how families communicate along two key dimensions:

1. _____ ORIENTATION--The degree of _____ a family has in _____ a range of topics.

Families _____ in conversation orientation interact _____, _____, and _____. Members are _____ to discuss a variety of issues and to voice their opinions.

In contrast, families _____ in conversation orientation view many topics as _____, while others can only be broached in a _____ manner. Members are _____ likely to engage in discussion or voice their opinions.

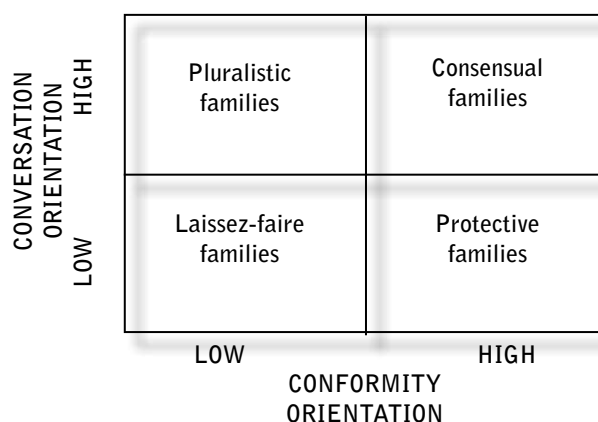
2. _____ ORIENTATION

The degree to which a family enforces _____ of attitudes, values, and beliefs.

_____ -conformity families manage communication in order to seek _____ and agreement, _____ conflict, foster _____, and gain _____. They are often _____, with a clear sense that some members have more authority than others.

_____ -conformity families communication is characterized by _____, equality and _____. They tend toward _____ harmony and _____ conflict interaction, as the freedom, interests and growth of each individual member are _____ important than a sense of agreement or uniformity in the family as a whole.

•Overlaying these two dimensions, we get a picture of 4 kinds of families:



1. A family high in both conversation orientation and conformity orientation is _____. Communication reflects the _____ between the pressure to _____ and preserve the _____ of authority and an interest in _____ communication and _____. While family members would feel free to make their _____ about a particular issue, ultimately, the decision would _____ with those in authority (e.g., mother and/or father.)

2. Families high in conversation orientation and low in conformity orientation are _____. Communication in these families is _____ and _____, with all family members' contributions evaluated on their own _____. Because there is open discussion about decisions, it is hoped individual family members will be _____ by the overall conversation when making their _____ individual decisions.



3. Families low in conversation orientation and high in conformity orientation are _____. Communication in these families emphasizes _____ to authority and the _____ to share thoughts and feelings. The parents would most likely make the decision, and their word would be _____.

4. Families low in both conversation orientation and conformity orientation are _____ - _____. Laissez-faire roughly translates from French as "_____." Communication in these families reflects family members' _____ of involvement with each other, and decision making is _____. Each family member is likely to make decisions fairly _____, without much input from other family members.

NOTE: A growing body of research suggests that some communication patterns are more productive and satisfying than others.

EXAMPLES:

1. Young adults from consensual and pluralistic families are _____ confident listeners and _____ intellectually flexible than those from protective and laissez-faire backgrounds. (Ledbetter & Schrod, '08)

2. Offspring from pluralistic families are _____ verbally aggressive than those from any other type. (Schrod & Carr, '12)

3. By contrast, a protective approach by parents leads to _____ secrecy by children and _____ satisfaction for all members of a family. (Ledbetter & Vik, '12)

**Which of these four kinds of families--as it relates to communication patterns and decision-making--seems most like your family-of-origin growing up? How do you think this has influenced you in terms of your own communication and decision-making patterns?

