

CHAPTER 2

FRAMEWORK FOR FAMILY COMMUNICATION

TRUE/FALSE

- F_____ 1. Families with extremely high cohesion are referred to as non-conflictual.
- T_____ 2. Family meanings develop over time and have a common symbolic basis.
- T_____ 3. Families are defined through their interactions more than through their structure.
- T_____ 4. Transactional communication means persons have a mutual impact upon each other.
- F_____ 5. Healthy families maintain extremely strong external boundaries.
- T_____ 6. Each family member creates a context for the other.
- T_____ 7. Families tend to shift on the cohesion/adaptability axis as children age.
- T_____ 8. Dialectical tension between family members could indicate the degree of closeness or intimacy they can handle.
- T_____ 9. Most individuals develop communication skills within the family context.
- F_____ 10. The dialectical approach focuses on cooperating that exists between and among family members.
- T_____ 11. In African-American and Hispanic families, collectivistic values impact gendered family roles.
- F_____ 12. A family theme is a mental picture of what is expected in the behavior of family members. For example, Mother is a "proud hen."
- T_____ 13. "Men should buy the family cars and work full time" is an example of a biosocial belief.
- T_____ 14. On the family cohesion/adaptability axes, most well-functioning families are located inside the extreme ends, except when under great amounts of pressure or facing severe crises.
- F_____ 15. From the *transactional* perspective, specific acts of the family members are the focal point of family interactions, not behavioral patterns within the relationships.
- F_____ 16. As people become closer and more familiar with one another, their communication becomes more static and does not change very much on a day-to-day basis.

- T_____ 17. Worldviews reflect fundamental beliefs about issues that each person brings to an interpersonal encounter.
- F_____ 18. It is reasonable to assume that when two people witness or experience the same event, they will perceive and assign meaning to the event in the same way based upon a shared reality.

MULTIPLE CHOICE

1. Which one of the following statements about family communication is not correct?
 - A. From a systems perspective, it is not productive to analyze each family member separately.
 - B. A systems perspective and a transactional approach to understanding family communication oppose each other.
 - C. Families with strong external boundaries tend to value privacy.
 - D. As two or more family members interact, they create a context for one another and relate to one another in that context.
2. Using the circumplex model, families can be plotted along both the adaptability and cohesion axis. Which statement is correct?
 - A. Young couples function best in the center of the two dimensions of cohesion and adaptability.
 - B. Adolescents function best when they have average cohesion and adaptability, midway between rigidity and chaos.
 - C. Older couples like it best when adaptability is high and cohesion is low.
 - D. Ethnic families do not fit this model because they adapt and bond by different processes.
3. Which is not a point on the adaptability axis?
 - A. Disengaged
 - B. Rigid
 - C. Structured
 - D. Chaotic
4. Which of the following is not a supporting or secondary family function?
 - A. Developing agreement about family images
 - B. Developing modes of interaction into family themes
 - C. Finding ways to deal with biosocial issues, such as gender, age, and power
 - D. Finding means to provide financial and emotional support to all members
5. Bill and Donna met in school and plan to marry. Both families are opposed to the marriage because of very different cultural backgrounds, and each has asked them to reconsider the decision. At this point, Bill's family has said they will disown him if he marries Donna, while her family has said they will not attend the ceremony and it will be very difficult to accept.
Which is the case:

Adaptability

- (A) Rigid <---(B)------(C)------(D)---> (E) Chaotic
- A. Bill's family is at point A, while Donna's is at point B.
B. Bill's family is at point B, while Donna's is at point C.
C. Bill's family is at point A, while Donna's is at point D.
D. Bill's family is at point C, while Donna's is at point B.
6. Which one of the following is not one of the three essential dimensions in Olson et al.'s circumplex model?
A. Distance regulation
B. Adaptability
C. Communication
D. Cohesion
7. In relationships within a family, there are stresses between what one member desires and what another member opposes. These competing and opposite possibilities that exist in families can be called:
A. Transactional processes
B. Interfactual maneuvers
C. Metacommunication strategies
D. Dialectical tensions
8. The way in which a family changes its relationship rules, power structure, and role expectancies in response to either normal developmental changes or crises relates to its:
A. Adaptability
B. Cohesion
C. Organizational structure
D. Family members education and income
9. A family image of a "rock" is congruent with what theme?
A. You can sleep when you die.
B. We do not raise homing pigeons.
C. Only your heart's best will do.
D. You can always depend on your family.
10. Read the following young woman's description of living in an enmeshed relationship:
My mother acts like we are sisters and wants to be a part of my personal life. She encourages me to invite friends over and then stays and talks with us for hours. She gets angry if I don't tell her every detail of a date. She insisted I attend college near home and now she is in the middle of my engagement plans. I don't know what she'll do when I get married.
- Which of these strategies is least likely to give her a more appropriate relational distance?
A. Suggest she and her mother see a therapist
B. Deliberately and consistently remind her mother of how different and distinct they are
C. Discuss rules for visiting after the wedding
D. Cut her mother off and focus on her relationship with her fiancé

11. The finding that both mothers and fathers regard sexual infidelity as more distressing when committed by a daughter-in-law than by a son-in-law is an example of which of the following concepts?
A. Gendered familial expectations
B. Gendered biases
C. Gendered family themes
D. Gendered family rules
12. Multigenerational systems:
A. Are developmental in nature
B. Have hierarchical boundaries
C. Develop functional and dysfunctional patterns based upon the legacy of previous generations and here-and-now happenings
D. All of the above
13. Genograms can be useful for studying family communication patterns because
A. They identify hierarchies in families
B. They identify social, biological and psychological issues and relationships among multiple generations
C. They identify communication boundaries among family subunits
D. They identify changes in relational development among family members over time
14. Research demonstrates that families often have *bidirectional interpersonal patterns*. This means:
A. Parents are not always in control of their children
B. Children tend to have a love-hate relationship with their parents
C. Parents and children influence each others' behaviors
D. Children struggle with different dialectical tensions with their parents as they get older
15. A newer and blossoming area of research regarding underlying issues contributing to family communication patterns and problems pertains to:
A. Biological and genetic foundations of family patterns
B. Cross-gendered family interactions
C. The effects of bilingual and multilingual child-rearing
D. The impact of technology on family dynamics
16. Michael and Molly have been dating for a few years and are thinking about getting engaged. They love each other, but Molly is very concerned that they struggle too much with some communication issues. Michael is from a big, loud Italian family and tends to be very communicatively open and occasionally confrontational with Molly. Molly is from a small Norwegian family, and feels really uncomfortable with conflict. She's not sure if she can spend her life in a family of people who are as loud and conflictual as Michael's. Michael, in turn, complains that she and her family are too passive aggressive and wishes they could be more "open" and "express themselves."

Michael and Molly's communication problem can best be described by which of the following terms?

- A. Dialectical tensions
- B. Biosocial conflicts
- C. Family theme differences
- D. Ethnic family issues

17. What is the purpose of creating *shared meanings* in relationships?

- A. Shared meanings are useful only when people who speak different languages interact
- B. Shared meanings help people coordinate perceptions of their own individual realities
- C. Shared meanings allow parents to teach children how to approach the world
- D. Shared meanings bridge the generation gaps between older and younger family members

18. Metacommunication occurs when:

- A. People communicate about communication
- B. People misunderstand one another
- C. People communicate across cultures
- D. People communicate about trivial matters

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. Using your own life, or the life of someone you know well, describe how a family theme has played out in a significant way in that family. Include some discussion of how members' communication patterns have been influenced by that theme.

2. Imagine a stressor such as divorce, serious illness, or death impacting a family. Detail how the same stressor could send a family to two different extremes on the cohesion/adaptability axis. (i.e. to a point of being rigid and disengaged or to a point of being enmeshed and chaotic).

3. Research indicates that family communication patterns tend to be passed down from generation to generation (i.e., people tend to communicate similarly to their parents and grandparents). Discuss two distinct reasons that may explain why this trend occurs, using specific examples from your own family or another family you know well to support your claims.

CHAPTER 3

FAMILY THEORIES

TRUE/FALSE

- F_____ 1. To fully understand a family system, the focus is placed on individual family members first.
- T_____ 2. A larger ecosystem for a family includes legal, political, banking, and educational systems.
- T_____ 3. According to systems theory, a change in one individual, or part of the family system, affects every part of the system.
- T_____ 4. Gender issues regarding equality affect the balance in family systems.
- F_____ 5. Divorce ends a family system for parents and children.
- T_____ 6. Through interacting together regularly, family members build a boundary between insiders and outsiders.
- F_____ 7. Subsystems within families have the same rules as the larger family system.
- T_____ 8. An open system permits adaptation to a larger ecosystem.
- T_____ 9. Family members act upon the social reality they construct together.
- F_____ 10. Maintenance feedback supports change.
- F_____ 11. In a family system, children function independently of how the parental marital dyad operates.
- T_____ 12. According to narrative theory, telling stories is a central component in human life.
- T_____ 13. According to family systems theory, in order to understand an individual, you need to see him or her interact within primary family relationships.
- F_____ 14. Neutralizing dialectical tensions implies letting one person have his or her way.
- T_____ 15. Social construction focuses on how meanings are created and negotiated by family members based upon situational contexts.
- F_____ 16. From a family systems perspective, the whole is equal to the sum of its parts.
- T_____ 17. The function of maintaining stability in a system is called calibration.

- F ____ 18. One of the reasons why systems theory is useful is because it can help you identify the cause of certain behaviors by watching the patterns that have developed over time within a family.

MULTIPLE CHOICE

1. Which of the following statements explains the complex hierarchy that exists in the structure of any family system?
 - A. Complexity depends upon the subsystem that exists within its boundaries.
 - B. Each family member has his or her own psychobiological makeup, which is tied to, yet separate from, the family unit.
 - C. Each family forms small groups or alliances within the larger unit.
 - D. All of the above
2. Angela and Alberto constantly spend evenings and weekends together with their children. Their children go to school but are not encouraged to join school or community activities. They may not have friends in to play or to stay overnight. This family would be described as:
 - A. An open system
 - B. A disengaged system
 - C. A closed system
 - D. A random system
3. Which of the following is not a part of correct thinking from a systems perspective?
 - A. A member needs a human group for identity and satisfaction.
 - B. Systems theory permits a clear, logical way to go from the simple to the complex in a straightforward manner and explain family behavior.
 - C. Causes and effects are interchangeable.
 - D. Simple explanations and solutions seldom answer questions about why and how several distinct personalities live together as a family.
4. Without rules, family systems would more likely be:
 - A. Boring and uneventful
 - B. Flexible
 - C. Simpler and more open
 - D. Chaotic
5. Al grew up in a family in which members did not talk about affection for each other. When he married Fatimah, she said, "Goodbye, I love you," every time she left him or her in-laws. After a few years, Al and his family began to do the same. This is an example of:
 - A. Maintenance feedback
 - B. Regulating feedback
 - C. System feedback
 - D. Change-promoting feedback
6. Which of the following statements is correct?

- A. From a family systems perspective the image is one of the family members in the foreground and the relationships between the members in the background
 - B. From a family systems perspective, the dialectical struggles between family members keep a family system at some level of imbalance or flux
 - C. From a family systems perspective, each family member operates according to what works best for him or her
 - D. From a family systems perspective, the family is close and connected with each and every action governed by rules and patterns
7. What is the function in a family system called that regulates stability and/or change?
- A. Morphostasis
 - B. Patterns/self-regulation
 - C. Interactive complexity/punctuation
 - D. Calibration
8. Which statement about family subsystems is true?
- A. Each subsystem has to be considered in order to understand how the family functions as a whole
 - B. A larger number of subsystems make it easier for a family to cope because the subsystems are small and have less power
 - C. Interdependence is easier to achieve with multiple subsystems
 - D. Wholeness more readily develops when subsystems operate independently
9. Analyze the following problem and identify possible outcomes for the family system:
When the Wilson family adopted a four-year-old boy, Alexander, from Russia, his needs were very great for the first eight months. His adoptive parents spent almost all of their waking hours helping him adjust to the environment, teaching him English and managing some of his health problems.
- What is least likely to have been the effect on Alicia Wilson, his eight-year-old sister?
- A. Alicia acted out at school
 - B. Alicia exhibited no change
 - C. Alicia became a perfect child
 - D. Alicia became very clingy and anxious
10. Jenn was brought up in a lower middle class household and becomes highly anxious when her partner buys expensive computer equipment or audio components. This difference is best understood through the following concept:
- A. Systems theory
 - B. Symbolic interaction
 - C. Dialectical tensions
 - D. Boundary management
11. The Taylors rely on one another and share skills to accomplish family tasks. This system characteristic is called:
- A. Interdependence

- B. Equifinality
 - C. Wholeness
 - D. Mutual influence and punctuation
12. Which is not a characteristic of communication in a family relationship?
- A. Each family member creates a context for other members.
 - B. Each family member simultaneously creates and interprets messages for others.
 - C. Each family member operates primarily independently and autonomously of others to create meanings.
 - D. Each family member affects and is affected by all other family members.
13. When you punctuate a sequence of behavior to give it meaning, you are saying,
- A. "Things started here."
 - B. "We need to continue this conversation."
 - C. "We need to find the guilty person."
 - D. "This has to stop."
14. The Rodriguez family is well known for its spirit of generosity. Members can be counted to give aid. This system characteristic is called:
- A. Themes
 - B. Equifinality
 - C. Wholeness
 - D. Mutual Influence
15. Dialectical tensions are:
- A. Dysfunctional
 - B. Ongoing
 - C. Developmental
 - D. Healthy
16. Which of the following is not true from a social constructionism perspective?
- A. People make sense of the world by developing their own model of how the world works
 - B. Conversation serves to maintain reality
 - C. Events and object in the social world are made rather than found
 - D. Relationships are created before communication patterns can be officially established
17. From the perspective of narrative theory, which of the following is most important to keep in mind when researching family storytelling?
- A. The interpretations that people construct from their experiences
 - B. The objective truth at the heart of the story
 - C. The common threads told by each member of the family, wherein lie the most important facets of the story
 - D. There will always be components of a story that contradict each other
18. While visiting home for Thanksgiving break, Lindsay decides to take the family dog, Parker, for a good long walk in the woods near her house while her parents are at work. The weather is

colder than she expected and all she has is a thin fleece, so she borrows her dad's winter coat for extra warmth, and as she puts it on, a pack of cigarettes falls out of the pocket. Lindsay is shocked, because her father quit smoking 20 years ago, along with everyone else in their family, when her grandfather died of lung cancer from smoking.

Which of the following terms best describes what Lindsay is experiencing right now?

- A. Boundary turbulence
- B. Dialectical tension
- C. Privacy dilemma
- D. Rule coordination

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. Using a real or media family, identify one young person who is portrayed as a problem child and try to explain this person's behavior from a family systems perspective. How have the family dynamics contributed to the role this young person plays in the system?
2. What does the following statement mean? "In order to form a joint worldview, partners must negotiate a set of common meanings through interaction and mutual accommodation." Use some concrete examples to demonstrate your understanding of the statement.
3. Recount a time in your life when you've experienced or witnessed boundary turbulence or a privacy dilemma in your family. First, discuss the boundary rule formation before the turbulence occurred. What do you think let the turbulence to occur? How were boundaries re-coordinated afterwards (if at all)? Knowing what you now know about communication privacy management, do you think the turbulence was handled effectively? Why or why not? Explain your reasoning.

CHAPTER 4

COMMUNICATION PATTERNS AND THE CREATION OF FAMILY IDENTITY

TRUE/FALSE

- T_____ 1. Through communication, family members construct their identities and manage their daily lives.
- F_____ 2. Meaning primarily comes out of the interactions a family member has intrapersonally with his or her inner self.
- T_____ 3. Rules are maintained or changed via feedback processes.
- F_____ 4. A relational culture refers to the degree to which family members identify with their cultural heritage.
- F_____ 5. The more similar the background of the members of a couple, the more negotiation is needed to arrive at a mutually agreed upon worldview.
- T_____ 6. The family-of-origin is generally thought to be the earliest and most powerful influence on one's personality.
- T_____ 7. Nonverbal behaviors may distinguish between a distressed and a non-distressed couple.
- F_____ 8. Coordinated meanings between partners develop early and quickly within the relationship.
- F_____ 9. The all-channel network maintains the parents at the center of the network.
- T_____ 10. Relational rules are created within each relationship, are unique to that relationship, and become patterned within the relationship.
- F_____ 11. Typically children create marriages that differ from their parents' and avoid old family patterns.
- F_____ 12. Family rules tend to reflect the current culture and social environment of the family rather than the family's ethnic background.
- T_____ 13. Metarules are the rules that regulate family rules.
- F_____ 14. Secrets in families are usually destructive to family functioning because they undermine open communication patterns and promote unhealthy alliances among members.

- F_____ 15. Early supportive parenting has little effect on children adopting positive parenting strategies as adults
- T_____ 16. Connected couples tell stories as if the partners jointly own them.
- F_____ 17. Functional relationships involve people who don't have to work very hard to coordinate their meanings and partners have very few misunderstandings.
- F_____ 18. Verbal messages are more important for constructing family meanings and identities than nonverbal messages.

MULTIPLE CHOICE

1. This term describes the flow of messages from one family member to one or more other members or significant others outside the family. Feedback operates to regulate the direction of messages up, down, or across which of the following?
A. Network
B. System
C. Extended family
D. Pattern
2. American families have been called _____ because of the wide range of communication media they used to stay connected:
A. Wired families
B. Digital families
C. Cyber families
D. Networked families
3. The family or families in which a person was raised is called:
A. Natural family
B. Family-of-origin
C. Nuclear family
D. First family
4. Each couple that lives together for a period of time develops its own set of relationship agreements. What are these called?
A. Networks
B. Patterns
C. Themes
D. Rules
5. Family communication over time takes on definite patterns, depending upon how the family organizes its activities. As working parents, Brian and Peggy call their housekeeper to relay separate messages to their son when he comes home from school. Which answer best describes this message sending?

- A. Chain network
 - B. All-channel network
 - C. Wheel network
 - D. Y-network
6. When families form a “conspiracy of silence” around a major topic that people cannot bear to talk about, the following frequently is the result:
- A. Generations may distance from each other.
 - B. The anxieties disappear when the generation with the secret dies.
 - C. Family members search out to give support.
 - D. Members will continuously try to break through the boundary.
7. Why is ethnicity discussed as an influence in family communication?
- A. We see and relate to the world partly through cultural lenses.
 - B. Ethnicity does not disappear after the first generation.
 - C. Ethnicity is a deep-rooted part of identity.
 - D. All of the above
8. Constitutive rules do not:
- A. Define what counts as communication
 - B. Construct meanings among family members
 - C. Indicate how and when to speak
 - D. Provide family members with common understandings
9. Family rules are heavily influenced by:
- A. Genetic heritage
 - B. Ethnic backgrounds
 - C. Socioeconomic class
 - D. None of the above
10. Which network provides the maximum use of feedback?
- A. Y-network
 - B. Chain network
 - C. All-channel network
 - D. Wheel network
11. Which statement is true?
- A. Family relationships can be shaped by what members share or keep secret from one another.
 - B. Most family secrets are rather transparent to outsiders.
 - C. All secrets are negative and keeping them to protect a family member from being hurt is unrealistic.
 - D. Gossip about family secrets does little harm over the course of time.

12. There are different kinds of secrets. For example, Jane and her brothers were told of their parents' previous marriages, but they know not to tell this to their friends. Which kind of secret does this exemplify?
- A. Whole family secret
 - B. Individual secret
 - C. Safe harbor secret
 - D. Sweet secret
13. According to Imber-Black, the following example represents what type of secret? "Mom has been involved in an affair with our neighbor, Jake, and my sister and I know Dad doesn't suspect."
- A. Essential secret
 - B. Sweet secret
 - C. Toxic secret
 - D. Dangerous secret
14. Gottman's marital research identifies a particularly corrosive nonverbal message used in couple conflict:
- A. Looking away while partner is speaking
 - B. Making contemptuous facial expressions
 - C. Drumming fingers on a surface
 - D. Humming while partner is speaking
15. According to Vangelisti, secrets serve definite functions in families. Which one of the following is not one?
- A. Privacy
 - B. Bonding
 - C. Adaptability
 - D. Evaluation
16. Which of the following is not true about family stories?
- A. Stories are figuratively under our family skins.
 - B. Stories reflect a family's collective experience.
 - C. Stories tend to maintain their meanings from the first telling.
 - D. Stories can determine norms in a family culture.
17. Which of the following is not a function of family stories?
- A. Enhance family memories
 - B. Create changes in family behaviors
 - C. Create belonging and establish a family identity
 - D. Provide stability by connecting generations
18. According to Dickson's research on couple storytelling, couples who engage in validating and individual storytelling are called:
- A. Separates
 - B. Functional Separates

- C. Connected
- D. Traditionals

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. Take a position on the following statement and defend it. "The family-of-origin provides a blueprint for the ways its members form future families."
2. Describe the impact of an important secret on the development of patterns of closeness or distance within a real or fictional family. Use specific examples.
3. There are six questions that outline the lessons that family stories may teach. Choose one of those questions and describe a family story in your family that answers the question. How has this story impacted your life and/or shaped your identity as a member of the family? What does this example reveal to you about the importance of stories in the formation of family identities and why?