

Marriage, Couples, and Family Counselling

EDPY 442: Intro to Counselling

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Forms of Family

- The nuclear family
- The multigenerational family
- The single-parent family
- The remarried (i.e., blended step) family
- The dual-career family
- The childless family
- The gay/lesbian family
- The multicultural family

Trends

- Sharp rise in the divorce rate (50-65%)
- More women seek employment outside the home.
 - Women's rights movement of the 1960s
 - In 2007, 51% of women in the U.S. were unmarried.
- Expansion of the life span

Pioneers and Leaders

- Ackerman applied psychoanalysis to families
- Salvador Minuchin originated Structural Family Therapy
- Monica McGoldrick emphasized the role of cultural factors
 - Inherited culture: ethnicity, nationality etc.
 - Acquired culture: e.g., learned habits
- Betty Carter discussed gender issues and power structures in the family.

Marriage and Family Therapy in Canada

- Marriage and family therapy is not a distinct profession in Canada
- The Registry of Marriage and Family Therapy has two goals:
 - To develop a Canadian marriage and family therapy professional association with links to the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT). Currently five provinces are linked to AAMFT, including Alberta.
 - To support provinces and territories in enacting regulation of the profession of marriage and family therapy.

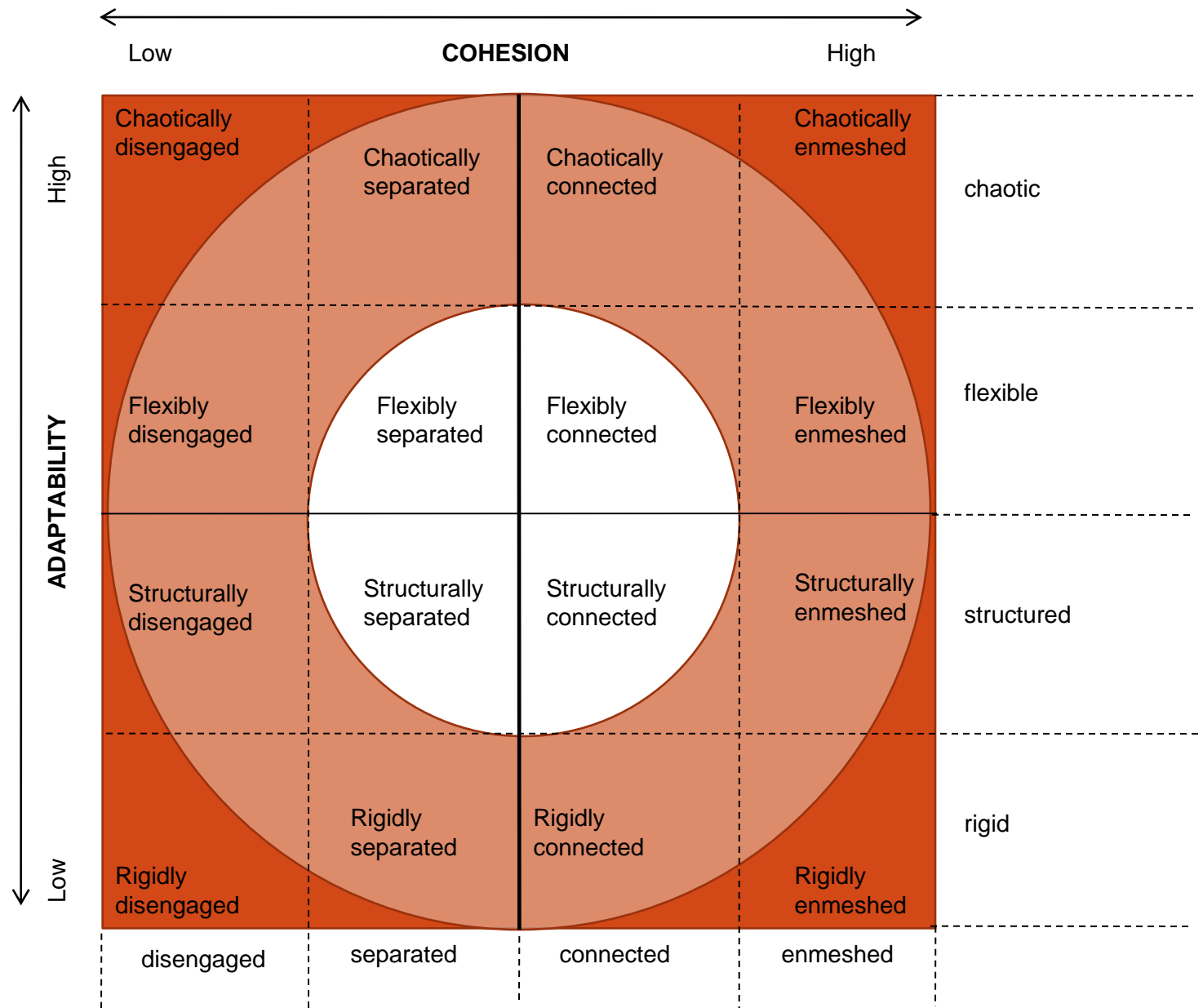
Research

- Family therapy is as effective as individual therapy, but has more durable outcomes.
- Some forms of family therapy (e.g., structural family therapy with substance abusers) is more effective than individual.
- Working with both parents (for family) and both spouses (for couples) is better.
- 97% of clients rate marital, couple, and family counseling as good or excellent.

Family Life Cycle

1. Unattached adult: Accepting parent offspring separation
2. Newly married: Commitment to the marriage
3. Childbearing: Accepting new members
4. Preschool-age child: Accepting the new personality
5. School-age child: Allowing child to establish relationships outside the family
6. Teenage child: Increasing flexibility of family boundaries
7. Launching center: Accepting exits from and entries into the family
8. Middle-age adult: Letting go of children and facing each other
9. Retirement: Accepting retirement and old age

Circumplex Model by Olson (1986)



General Family Systems Framework

- Identified patient
- Nonsummativity $2+2<4$
- Equifinality $A\rightarrow B$ & $A\rightarrow C$; $X\rightarrow Y$, $W\rightarrow Y$
- Communication: content and relationship
- Family rules: explicit and implicit
- Morphogenesis : modification
 - First order change: more of the same
 - Second-order change: entirely new response
- Homeostasis: equilibrium can be good or bad

Marriage and Couple Counseling

- Main reasons for couples to seek counseling: finances, children, fidelity, communication, compatibility.
- Three entities: two individuals and one couple.
- Seeing couples together is more effective
- Seeing one partner alone can be harmful
- Solution-Focused couples therapy.

Premises of MCF Counseling

1. Counselors should be psychologically healthy and understand their own families of origin
2. Counselor should not overemphasize or underemphasize interventions: not be overly concerned to make the family happy, but also engage the family
3. Counselor should set the structure and the family should be motivated
4. Counselor should consider the context

Pre-session Planning

- When the client contacts for an appointment the counselor should:
 - Obtain a concise description of the problem
 - Obtain factual information (name, address, phone)
 - Listen for what is said and what is *not* said
 - Hypothesize about the issues, the family life stages, and the cultural issues

Initial Session(s)

- Form therapeutic alliance by:
 - Maintenance: support a member's position
 - Tracking: follow through the events
 - Mimesis: Adopt the family's style or tempo
- Frame and reframe: how the family views the problem, how can it be viewed differently
- Observe the family dance: interactions
- Explore scapegoating and triangulation
- Ask circular questions: questions that highlight difference among family members

The Middle Phase

- Facilitate second-order change: e.g. an authoritarian family starts to make decisions democratically
- Stay active mentally, verbally, behaviorally
- Make outside referrals as appropriate
- Focus on what is happening cognitively, affectively, behaviorally
- Do not get ahead of the family
- Give homework assignments

Termination

- Should not be sudden
- Provide closure
- Assess whether goals have been reached
- Summarize the work that is done and celebrate if appropriate
- Decide on long-term goals
- Predict setbacks
- Follow up