CHAPTER 2
FRAMEWORK FOR FAMILY COMMUNICATION

TRUE/FALSE

F______1. Families with extremely high cohesion are referred to as nonconflictual.

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.

T 19. Reframing is considered the most challenging and communication-centered dialectical management strategy.

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. Interfactional 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?
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 other’s 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

19. After Maggie and Jen get engaged, they want to post the good news on Facebook, but they also want to keep the secret “just between them” for a couple days. Which dialectic tension are they managing?

A. Openness-closedness
B. Inclusion-seclusion
C. Conventionality-uniqueness
D. Revelation-concealment

20. The day after they get engaged, Maggie wants to post their engagement on Facebook so that “all our friends can be excited for us!” Jen wants to wait a few days, but decides to go along with Maggie and post their engagement on Facebook. Which dialectical management strategy did they use?

A. Separation
B. Selection
C. Discussion
D. Reframing

21. Single dad Craig is trying to decide how to talk with his adolescent daughter about going through puberty. He feels uncomfortable talking with her about taboo issues, but knows that he should. According to systems theory, which secondary characteristic is Craig managing?

A. Images
B. Boundaries
C. Gender issues
D. Biosocial issues

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.

4. What do you think makes a family functional? First, support your argument using the primary and secondary functions of the Circumplex Model. Be sure to specifically explain and then apply each of the primary and secondary functions. Second, how does your conceptualization of “functional” compare to the understanding of “functional” in the Circumplex Model?