

# Family Functioning: Meaning, Conceptual Frameworks & Theoretical Models



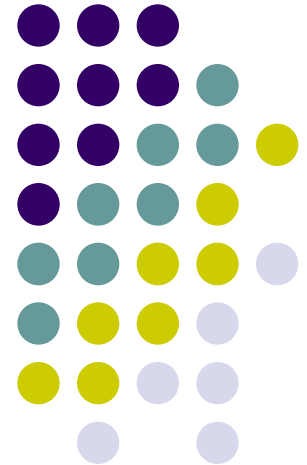
***SWRK 4023: Working with Families and Children***

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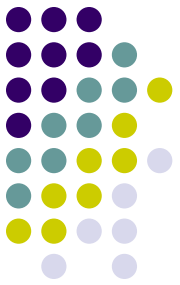
# Unit-I: Theoretical Models of Family Functioning

## OUTLINE



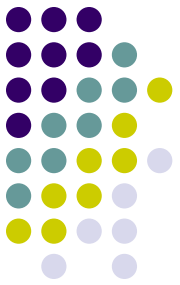
- **Family Functioning – Meaning & Scope**
- **Conceptual Frameworks** for Understanding Family Functioning
  - Family Systems Framework
  - Family Development Framework
  - Symbolic Interaction Framework
  - Feminist Framework
  - Social Construction Framework
  - **Circumplex Model**
  - Family Strengths Framework

# Family Functioning: Meaning & Scope



- Family as a primary institution in society is a unit of research
- What is attempted at understanding is the structure of the family and the nature of its functioning.
- **Family structure** refers to the type of family being discussed, with a wide variety of terms used to describe family structure – nuclear, joint, extended, single, matriarchal or patriarchal, live-in relationship type etc.
- **Family functioning**, on the other hand, refers to the **roles family members play and the attitudes and behaviors** they exhibit in their relationships with each other.

# Conceptual Frameworks for Understanding Family Functioning

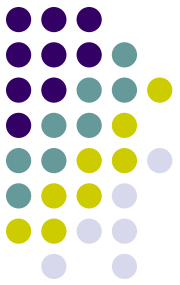


To help us understand better the functioning of families various frameworks have been developed by researchers, practitioners and theoreticians.

- Family Systems Framework
- Family Development Framework
- Symbolic Interaction Framework
- Feminist Framework
- Social Construction Framework
- Circumplex Model
- Family Strengths Framework

# Family Functioning:

## Family Systems Framework

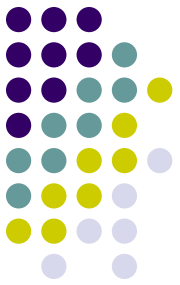


### Family Systems Framework:

- Most popular framework among theoreticians and family therapists
- Used often by family therapists to strengthen relationships
- It says that anything & everything that happens in the family impacts each and every member (strong relationship of the parts with the whole)
- Further, it considers families to live in a hierarchy of interconnected systems in the community: neighbourhood, village, school, religious institution, market, civil society organisation, hospital, etc.
- It's also connected with the wider society at the local, state, national and international level – panchayat, block office, government, judiciary, political parties, economic systems et.

# Family Functioning:

## Family Development Framework



- Helps to understand how family members deal with various roles and developmental tasks within the family as it moves through different stages of development.
- Stages of development in a family (Evelyn Duvall 1950s) is represented by:
  - A newly married couple (each partner adjusting with the other)
  - Child-bearing
  - Pre-school of children
  - School-age children
  - Teenagers
  - Launching youth into adulthood
  - Middle-aged parents
  - Aging family members (coping with retirement, loneliness & death)

# Family Functioning:

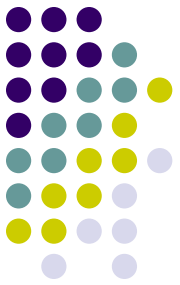
## Family Development Framework



- However, not all families in recent years have gone through this predictable path – children can be had outside marriage through adoption or surrogacy, families do break leading to separation or divorce, families are restructured through remarriage changing the relationship pattern etc.
- This makes the situation complex for a family and its members. It may lead to single parenthood, conflict, upbringing blues, negligence, etc.
- It is said that the Family Development Framework cannot adequately describe the complexity of life in families today.
- It, however, helps us understand that couple and family relationships are likely to change over time and may take new forms and evolve into new relationships.

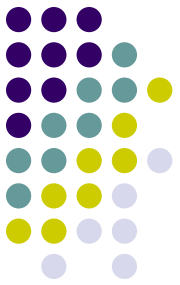
# Family Functioning:

## Symbolic Interaction Framework



- A family is a **unity of interacting personalities**, which emphasizes the importance of individual perceptions of the interactions that occur.
- Each member occupies a particular position (as father, mother, husband, wife, son, daughter etc.) in the family with assigned / allotted roles & functions
- Each of these persons occupying various positions act as **role models** for the younger generation in the family.
- The members can and need to understand the shared meanings of each of these positions, patterns of functioning, and ways of interaction.
- This cannot be understood simply by observing the family.

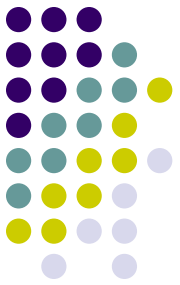
# Family Functioning: Feminist Framework



- According to the feminist perspective women in society and the family are discriminated, devalued, exploited and oppressed.
- Feminists try to understand the family functioning in terms of how women are sometimes forced into roles that as individuals they might not wish to play. They are of the firm belief that structural arrangements & functional arrangements breed inequality and ill-treatment of women.
- Traditionally, women were expected to marry and have children; and stay at home to focus on marriage, motherhood and act as a care-giver to infants & the old.
- Talcott Parsons, assumed that the family was most functional when husbands played the **instrumental role**, being in charge of tasks, and wives played the **expressive role**, being nurturing in the home.
- **Feminists** however countered that **women should play a more active role in the decisions** taken by the family that affect them.

# Family Functioning:

## Social Construction Framework



- Theoreticians believe that our views and understanding about this world is a **product of our social interactions**. Our view of the world is colored by the social environment in which we live.
- Post-modernists, however say that, we do not see the world as it is; rather, we see the world as we are.
- It is also claimed that the proponents of this framework may have been colored by their experiences and by the social environment in which they have lived. Others at some later point of time, most likely, may come up with a considerably different perspective.
- A product of the Social Constructionists and Postmodern thinkers is **Narrative therapy** which is an approach to family therapy that **helps a family develop a new way of looking at itself and creating a new story line for a better future.**

# Family Functioning:

## Family Strengths Framework

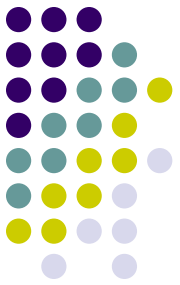


- Developed by **Herbert Otto** in the 1960s and was further improved by Nick Stinnett, John DeFrain, and many colleagues.
- Focus is on understanding the strengths of families that describe themselves as strong, happy, and satisfied with their life together, and believe they love and care for each other well.
- Strong families often exhibit the following: *Appreciation and affection for each other; Commitment to the family; Positive communication – blame avoidance; Enjoyable time together; Spiritual well-being; and the Ability to manage stress and crisis effectively*
- This model tries to demonstrate how family strengths, community strengths, and cultural strengths are woven together in a seamless fabric which in turn **contribute in positive ways to the healthier communities** in which they live and the cultural values of the nation of which they are a part.

# Family Functioning:

## Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems

(Couple and Family Map)

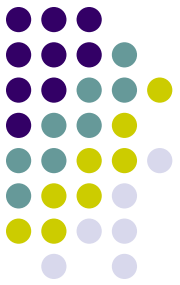


- **David H. Olson and his colleagues** created the Family Circumplex Model which has its origins in the family systems theories.
- It uses **Couple and Family Maps** which is a framework to describe how families function.
- This model uses **three broad aspects/dimensions** to understand how a family functions:
  - Cohesion
  - Flexibility
  - Communication

# Family Functioning:

## Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems

(Couple and Family Map)

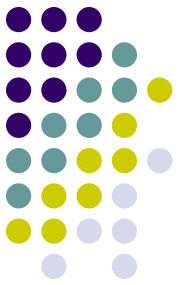


- The Circumplex Model of family functioning tries to distinguish between **balanced & unbalanced** functioning of families.

### *Hypotheses related to the Circumplex Model:*

- The basic **hypothesis** of the Family Circumplex Model is that families that are **balanced** (central areas of the model) i.e., exhibiting more of **cohesion & flexibility** tend to function better than families that are **unbalanced** (more extreme areas of the model) exhibiting either a highly **rigid** or **chaotic** family system .
- Another hypothesis is that balanced families tend to have **better communication** compared with unbalanced families.

# References



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# THANKS

