The Family Systems Perspective

- Individuals – are best understood through assessing the interactions within an entire family
- Symptoms – are viewed as an expression of a dysfunction within a family
- Problematic behaviors –
  - Serve a purpose for the family
  - Are a function of the family’s inability to operate productively
  - Are symptomatic patterns handed down across generations (i.e., symptom of dysfunctional familial patterns)
- A family – is an interactional unit and a change in one member effects all members

Adlerian Family Therapy

- Adlerians use an educational model to counsel families
- Emphasis is on family atmosphere and family constellation
- Therapists function as collaborators who seek to join the family
- Parent interviews yield hunches about the purposes underlying children’s misbehavior

Adlerian Family Therapy Therapy Goals

- Unlock mistaken goals and interactional patterns
- Engage parents in a learning experience and a collaborative assessment
- Emphasis is on the family’s motivational patterns
- Main aim is to initiate a reorientation of the family

Multigenerational Family Therapy

- Murray Bowen
  - One of original developers of mainstream family therapy
- Bowenian family systems theory (a theoretical & clinical model that evolved from psychoanalytic principles & practices) is sometimes called multigenerational family therapy
- The application of rational thinking to emotionally saturated systems
  - A well-articulated theory is considered to be essential
- Operates on premise that a predictable pattern of interpersonal relationships connects the functioning of family members across generations
- With the proper knowledge the individual can change
  - Change occurs only with other family members
**Multigenerational Family Therapy**

**Therapy Goals**
- Change the individuals within the context of the system
  - To end generation-to-generation transmission of problems by resolving emotional attachments
  - To lessen anxiety and relieve symptoms
  - To increase the individual member's level of differentiation

**Bowenian Key Concepts**
- Differentiation of the self
  - Involves both the Psychological Separation of intellect & emotion &
  - Independence of the Self from others
- Undifferentiated people have difficulty separating themselves from others, fuse with dominant emotional patterns of family
- A healthy person has a sense of belonging to one's family & a sense of separateness & individuality
- Differentiated individuals can choose between being guided by their feelings or by their thoughts

**Techniques**
- Believe that understanding how a family operates is far more important than using a particular technique
  - Genogram work
  - Asking questions
    - Designed to get clients to think about the role they play in relating with members of their family
    - Questions that emphasize personal choice are very important

**Human Validation Process Model**

**Stresses:**
- Enhancement and validation of self-esteem
- Family rules
- Congruence and openness (vs. defensive patterns) in communications
- Sculpting
- Nurturing triads
- Family mapping
- Family life-fact chronologies

**Techniques:**
- Family sculpting
  - To increase family members' awareness of how they function & how they're viewed by others in family
- Family Reconstruction
  - Enables clients to explore significant events in three generations of family life
  - Build family reconstructions around person's family maps, family life-fact chronology, wheel of influence
  - Reenact & observe significant life events
  - Can identify roots of old learning
  - Formulate a more realistic picture of parents
  - Interrupt old entrenched patterns in favor of more useful process
- Parts parties
  - Each person is a system of positive & negative parts to help individuals acknowledge & integrate multiple aspects of self
Human Validation Process
Model Therapy Goals
• Open communications
  – Individuals are allowed to honestly report their
defenses concerning emotional responses
• Enhancement of self-esteem
  – Family decisions are based on individual needs
• Encouragement of growth
  – Differences are acknowledged and seen as
    opportunities for growth
• Transform extreme rules into useful and
  functional rules
  – Families have many spoken and unspoken rules

Human Validation Process
Model Therapy Goals
• Functional communication in families
  – Each family member has a separate life & a
    shared one with their family
  – Different relationships allowed & nurtured
  – Change is expected & invited
  – Disagreements seen as opportunity for
    growth
  – There is freedom, flexibility, open
    communication & each person can speak
    for themselves

Human Validation Process
Model Therapy Goals
• Dysfunctional communication in families
  – Closed communication
  – Pooe self-esteem of one or both parents
  – Rigid patterns
  – This type of family:
    • Resists awareness
    • Blunts responsiveness
    • Little support for individuality
    • Strained relationships
    • Incapable of autonomy or genuine intimacy
    • Rules serve the function of masking fears over
      differences
    • Rules are rigid, many, frequent, & members in family are
      expected to think, feel, & act in the same way
    • Parents control family by using fear of punishment, guilt,
      & dominance

Human Validation Process
Model Therapy Goals
• Defensive Stances in Coping with Stress
  – Family members who use placating behaviors
    • Sacrificing themselves in order to please others
    • People who blame
      – Sacrifice others to maintain view of themselves
      – People who become super-reasonable
        • Strive for complete control over themselves,
          others, & environment
    – Irrelevant behavior
      • Pattern of distractions in the mistaken hope that
        hurt/pain/stress will diminish

Human Validation Process
Model Therapy Goals
• Family Roles and Family Triads
  – Roles of each family member influence family
    interactions
  – Triads may be dysfunctional,
    – But also possible to have parents forming a
      nurturing triad with each of the children
• Therapist’s Role & Function
  – To guide family members through change process
  – Therapist is facilitator in therapeutic process, not
    responsible for making change happen
  – It’s essential for therapist to have faith in ability of
    family members to move toward growth
  – As an official observer, the therapist is able to
    report on what the family cannot see
### Experiential Family Therapy

- A freewheeling, intuitive, sometimes outrageous approach aiming to:
  - Unmask pretense, create new meaning, and liberate family members to be themselves
- Techniques are secondary to the therapeutic relationship
- Pragmatic and atheoretical
- Interventions create turmoil and intensify what is going on here and now in the family

### Experiential Family Therapy

- Experiential approach stresses choice, freedom, self-determination, growth
- Family with a therapist who is willing to be real
- Focus on the here & now interaction between family & therapist
- Change must be experienced rather than understood or designed
- Focus on the subjective needs of the individuals in the family
- Techniques are secondary to the therapeutic relationship
- Pragmatic & atheoretical, even anti-theoretical
- A highly intuitive form of therapy

### Experiential Family Therapy

- **Therapy Goals**
  - Promote the feeling dimension
  - Facilitate individual autonomy and a sense of belonging in the family
  - Help individuals achieve more intimacy by increasing their awareness and their experiencing
  - Encourage members to be themselves by freely expressing what they are thinking and feeling
  - Support spontaneity, creativity, the ability to play, and the willingness to be “crazy”

### Experiential Family Therapy

- **Therapist’s Role & Function**
  - Therapists interested in interaction between themselves & family
  - Their role requires immediacy, a willingness to be oneself, vitality, a degree of transparency, & willingness to use personal reactions during sessions
  - They intensify what is going on in here & now session
  - Focus on impulses & symbols of family
  - Family therapy in three phases:
    - Engagement (therapist assumes all powerful position)
    - Involvement
    - Disentanglement (therapist will gradually become more personal & less involved)
  - Therapy for the therapist is viewed as essential

### Experiential Family Therapy

- **Techniques**
  - Therapist is main therapeutic factor
  - Emphasis on being with a family
  - Recommend use of Co-Therapist

### Structural Family Therapy

- Focus is on family interactions to understand the structure, or organization of the family
- Symptoms are a by-product of structural failings
- Structural changes must occur in a family before an individual’s symptoms can be reduced
- Techniques are active, directive, and well thought-out; aimed at re-structuring family
**Structural Family Therapy**

**Therapy Goals**
- Reduce symptoms of dysfunction
- Bring about structural change by:
  - Modifying the family’s transactional rules
  - Developing more appropriate boundaries
  - Creation of an effective hierarchical structure

**KEY CONCEPTS**
- Family Structure
  - Invisible set of functional demands or rules that organize the way family members relate to one another
  - To understand family structure, observe family in action especially observe appropriateness of hierarchical structure of family
- Family Systems
  - Spousal, parental, sibling, extended family defined by rules & boundaries
  - Important to note that each family member plays roles in different subgroups

**Therapist's Role & Function**
- Three (3) Interactive Functions of Therapist:
  - Joining the family in a position of leadership
  - Mapping its underlying structure
  - Intervening in ways designed to transform an ineffective structure

**Techniques**
- Structural family therapy
  - Provides a context for viewing a family,
  - Offering a clear description of how a healthy family operates,
  - Therapy of action, not insight
  - Therapist join family to modify its function
  - Joining is a process of building & maintaining a therapeutic alliance
Structural Family Therapy

• **Techniques**
  - **Family Mapping**
    • Mapping structure of family identify boundaries & transactional styles
  - **Enactments**
    • Therapist asks family members to act out some conflict situation that would happen at home
    • Change as a result of enacting & dealing with problems
  - **Reframing**
    • Therapist casts a new light & provides a different interpretation to a problem situation in family

Strategic Family Therapy

• **Focus on solving problems in the present**
• **Presenting problems are accepted as “real” and not a symptom of system dysfunction**
• **Therapy is brief, process-focused, and solution-oriented**
• **The therapist designs strategies for change**
• **Change results when the family follows the therapist’s directions & change transactions**

Strategic Family Therapy

**Therapy Goals**

• **Resolve presenting problems by focusing on behavioral sequences**
• **Get people to behave differently**
  – Behavior change is main goal
• **Prevent repetition of maladaptive sequences & introduce greater number of alternatives**
  – Shift the family organization so that the presenting problem is no longer functional
• **Move the family toward the appropriate stage of family development**
  – Problems often arise during the transition from one developmental stage to the next

Strategic Family Therapy

**Therapy Goals**

• **Therapy characterized by a number of stages:**
  – **Social stage**
    • Goal to make family feel comfortable
  – **Problem stage**
    • Goal to find out why the family is seeking help
  – **Family-Interaction stage**
    • Therapists allows the family to communicate with one another while noting the patterns of behavior, power struggles, hierarchies, etc.
  – **Goal-setting stage**
    • Specific goals set, both therapist & family members participate in process & contract is established

Strategic Family Therapy

Therapy Goals

• **Assume that people often develop problems during transition from one developmental stage to the next**
• **Therapy moves family forward to appropriate stage of life:**
  – The courtyard period
  – The early years of marriage
  – Childbirth & rearing of children
  – The middle years of marriage
  – Weaning parents of children
  – Retirement & old age

Strategic Family Therapy

• **Therapist’s Role & Function**
  – A consultant, an expert, a stage director
  – Directive & authoritarian
  • But no direct educating; don’t explain themselves
  – Responsibility for initiating
    • Change rests with therapist
  – Therapist’s task is to design interventions aimed at client’s social situation
    • Key techniques are: paradoxical interventions, joining, reframing, amplifying, pretending, asking about attempted solutions, & enactments
  – **Paradoxical interventions**
    • Place clients in a double bind so that therapeutic change occurs regardless of directive
    • Clients may be asked to exaggerate & even perfect a problematic behavior