Learning Objectives

- The history of family science
- Models of couples and families
- Three key relationship concepts
- Couple and family map
- Dynamics change in relationships over time
Concepts Related to Conceptual and Theory Development

- **Conceptual framework**: Helps organize thinking from a particular perspective through a set of interconnected:
  - Concepts
  - Ideas
  - Assumptions

- **Theory**: General principles composed of interrelated concepts
Concepts Related to Conceptual and Theory Development

- **Hypotheses**: Presumed relationships between variables
- **Research study**: Designed to test one or more specific hypotheses
- Eclectic approach - Open-minded approach to learning and to life
  - Very open and accepting of contradictory ideas
Approaches to Understand How Individuals and Families Operate

Idiographic approach

• Focuses on the unique aspects of individuals or families

Nomothetic approach

• Focuses on ideas that apply to the majority of individuals or families
Family Science in the Early Years

- The National Council on Family Relations (1938) - Focuses on:
  - Family research
  - Practice
  - Education

- American Association for Marital and Family Therapy (1942) - Focuses on:
  - Increasing understanding, research, and education
Family Science in the Early Years

- Helping individuals, couples, and families with problems
- **Eugenics**: Breeding to improve inherited characteristics
Table 3.1 - Disciplines Contributing to Family Science

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Topics in Family Science</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anthropology</td>
<td>Cross-cultural studies; kinship; diversity in families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>Conception and reproduction; growth, development, and aging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child development</td>
<td>Development of infant and child; parenting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Studies</td>
<td>Family communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>Family finances; consumer behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Family life education; marriage education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Marriages and families in literature (present and past)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>Historical perspectives on the family throughout time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human ecology</td>
<td>Ecosystem perspectives on family, nutrition, housing, and clothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>Marriage and divorce laws; child custody laws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>Families and health, family practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychiatry</td>
<td>Family therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>Family psychology; assessment of couples and families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social work</td>
<td>Treating problem families; family policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>Marriage and divorce statistics; sociological theories about families</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conceptual Frameworks

- Family systems theory
- Family strengths framework
- Family development framework
- Symbolic interaction framework
- Social construction framework
- Feminist framework
Focuses on the family as an ongoing system of interconnected members

- **Family system**: Group in which family members are interconnected and operate together

Evolved from the general systems theory

- **General systems theory**: Set of principles and concepts that can be applied to all types of systems, living and nonliving

Created by family therapists who realized that working with an individual alone did not produce long-term change
Hierachy of Connected Systems

- **Multiple system levels**: Systems are embedded within other systems
  - **Suprasystem**: Encompasses the larger component of a system
  - **Subsystem**: Encompasses the dyadic unit of a system
- **Boundaries**: Connect and separate a system from other systems
Figure 3.1 - An Ecological Approach to Human Systems
Ecological Approach

- **Ecology**: Study of how all the organisms in a system are related to each other
- **Human ecosystem**: All the concentric circles in a human system are interconnected
  - People in each circle influence those in other circles
General Systems Theory

- **Wholeness**: Whole family is more than the total of all its individual members

- **Interdependence of parts**: Members of a family are interconnected in such a way that when one member changes, it affects the others as well
Flexibility

- Ability of a system to balance both stability and change

- **Open system (morphogenetic system):** Open to growth and change

- **Closed system (morphostatic system):** Avoids change by maintaining the status quo
Cohesion: Balance of Separateness and Connectedness

- **Centrifugal interactions**: Increase separateness by pushing family members apart

- **Centripetal interactions**: Increase family closeness by pulling family members together

- Healthy balance of separateness and connectedness works best for families in crisis
Feedback within the System

- **Positive feedback**: Intended to create change
- **Negative feedback**: Designed to minimize change and keep things the same
- Positive and negative feedback indicate whether change occurs in the system or not
International Family Strengths Framework

- Focuses on how couples and families succeed, from a global perspective
  - Strong families can serve as models for other families wanting to succeed
- Identifying a family’s strengths:
  - Can be the foundation for continued growth and change
  - Boosts the morale of its members
# Table 3.2 - Qualities of Strong Families

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appreciation and Affection</th>
<th>Commitment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caring for each other</td>
<td>Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship</td>
<td>Honesty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect for individuality</td>
<td>Dependability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playfulness</td>
<td>Faithfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humor</td>
<td>Sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive Communication</strong></td>
<td><strong>Enjoyable Time Together</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving compliments</td>
<td>Quality time in great quantity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing feelings</td>
<td>Good things take time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding blame</td>
<td>Enjoying each other’s company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being able to compromise</td>
<td>Simple good times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreeing to disagree</td>
<td>Sharing fun times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spiritual Well-Being</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ability to Manage Stress and Crisis</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>Adaptability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith</td>
<td>Seeing crises as challenges and opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassion</td>
<td>Growing through crises together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared ethical values</td>
<td>Openness to change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oneness with humankind</td>
<td>Resilience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Family Development Framework

- How family members deal with various roles and developmental tasks within the family
  - As they move through stages of the life cycle
- A member’s efficiency in completing the tasks directly impacts the development of the various family members
Family Development Framework

- **Advantages**
  - Focuses on development and change in individuals and the family over time
  - Encourages attention to process
  - Approaches the family as a dynamic system

- **Emerging adulthood**: New stage of development between childhood and adulthood
  - From age 18 to 25
Prolonged period of role exploration focusing on identity

Time spent trying out career and relationship possibilities

Useful for analyzing the stages of family life

**Life course**: Describes the transitions one makes through life

- More fluid
- Reflects unpredictable changes
Symbolic Interaction Framework

- Focuses on:
  - Symbols - Based on shared meanings
  - Interactions - Based on verbal and nonverbal communication

- Explains how people learn about roles by communicating with each other

- Family is seen as a unit of interacting personalities
Symbolic Interaction Framework

**Role**

- Expected behavior of a person or group in a given social category

**Role taking**

- People learn how to play roles correctly by:
  - Practicing
  - Getting feedback from others

**Role making**

- Creating new roles or revising existing roles
Assumptions of Symbolic Interaction Framework

- Meaning arises in the process of interaction between people
  - **Definition of the situation**: Each person subjectively interprets a given situation
- People learn about themselves and develop a self-concept based on interaction with others
  - **Looking-glass self**: Learning about oneself based on the feedback received from others
Social Construction Framework

- Human beings are immersed in the social world
  - Our understanding and beliefs are social products
- Individuality - Difficult to develop in a social environment
- Identities are shaped over time through life experiences
Social Construction Framework

- Compatible with postmodernist and multicultural intellectual movements
  - **Postmodernism**: Emphasizes that we live in a complex world
    - Knowledge-positions - Various perspectives on life that we encounter
Society should commit to empowering women and changing their oppressed condition

Feminist movements
- First wave - Right to vote
- Second wave - Collectivist approach
- Third wave - Individualistic approach

Gender: Learned behaviors and characteristics associated with being male or female in a particular culture
Feminist Framework

- Feminist theories examine gender differences and their justification of power differences between the genders.
- Challenges the definition of family based on traditional roles.
  - **Instrumental role**: Being in charge of tasks
    - Played by the male
  - **Expressive role**: Being nurturing
    - Played by the female
Feminist Framework

- Multicultural feminism
  - Focuses on women’s prosperity in developed nations
  - Criticism - Achieved at the expense of women in developing nations
- **Ecofeminism**: Domination of nature or the nonhuman world
**Figure 3.2 - Four Levels of Family Cohesion: Balancing Separateness and Togetherness**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISENGAGED System</th>
<th>Separateness vs. Togetherness</th>
<th>Too much separateness</th>
<th>Unbalanced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CONNECTED System</td>
<td>Separateness vs. Togetherness</td>
<td>More separateness than togetherness</td>
<td>Balanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COHESIVE System</td>
<td>Separateness vs. Togetherness</td>
<td>More togetherness than separateness</td>
<td>Balanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENMESHED System</td>
<td>Separateness vs. Togetherness</td>
<td>Too much togetherness</td>
<td>Unbalanced</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Figure 3.3 - Four Levels of Family Flexibility: Balancing Stability and Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RIGID System</th>
<th>Stability vs. Change</th>
<th>Too much stability</th>
<th>Unbalanced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STRUCTURED System</td>
<td>Stability vs. Change</td>
<td>More stability than change</td>
<td>Balanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLEXIBLE System</td>
<td>Stability vs. Change</td>
<td>More change than stability</td>
<td>Balanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAOTIC System</td>
<td>Stability vs. Change</td>
<td>Too much change</td>
<td>Unbalanced</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 3.4 - Levels of Couple and Family Flexibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Rigid (Unbalanced)</th>
<th>Structured (Balanced)</th>
<th>Flexible (Balanced)</th>
<th>Chaotic (Unbalanced)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Authoritarian</td>
<td>Sometimes shared</td>
<td>Often shared</td>
<td>Lack of leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>Strict discipline</td>
<td>Somewhat democratic</td>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td>Lenient discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiation</td>
<td>Limited discussion</td>
<td>Organized discussion</td>
<td>Open discussion</td>
<td>Endless discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles</td>
<td>Roles very stable</td>
<td>Roles stable</td>
<td>Role sharing</td>
<td>Dramatic role shifts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules</td>
<td>Unchanging rules</td>
<td>Few rule changes</td>
<td>Some rule changes</td>
<td>Frequent rule changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>Very little change</td>
<td>Some change</td>
<td>Moderate change</td>
<td>Considerable change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Family communication is linear
- Better the communication skills, stronger the family relationship
### Table 3.5 - Levels of Couple and Family Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening skills</td>
<td>Poor listening skills</td>
<td>Appear to listen, but feedback is limited</td>
<td>Give feedback, indicating good listening skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking skills</td>
<td>Often speak for others</td>
<td>Speak for self more than for others</td>
<td>Speak mainly for self rather than for others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-disclosure</td>
<td>Low sharing of feelings</td>
<td>Moderate sharing of feelings</td>
<td>High sharing of feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity</td>
<td>Inconsistent messages</td>
<td>Clear messages</td>
<td>Very clear messages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staying on topic</td>
<td>Seldom stay on topic</td>
<td>Often stay on topic</td>
<td>Mainly stay on topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect and regard</td>
<td>Low to moderate</td>
<td>Moderate to high</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Couple and Family Map

- Built on the major dimensions of cohesion, flexibility, and communication
- Built on principles and concepts from family systems theory
  - Has features in common with other frameworks
Figure 3.4 - Couple and Family Map
Figure 3.5 - Degree of Balance in Problem and Healthy Families

- **Families with an Emotionally Disturbed Child**
  - Balanced Types: 49%
  - Midrange Types: 35%
  - Unbalanced Types: 16%

- **Families in Therapy**
  - Balanced Types: 48%
  - Midrange Types: 40%
  - Unbalanced Types: 12%

- **Healthy Families with a Down Syndrome Child**
  - Balanced Types: 78%
  - Midrange Types: 14%
  - Unbalanced Types: 8%

- **Healthy Families**
  - Balanced Types: 80%
  - Midrange Types: 8%
  - Unbalanced Types: 12%
Balanced Relationships Are More Healthy

- Function more adequately across the family life cycle
- Families with:
  - Balanced cohesion - Allow members to be independent from and connected to them
  - Balanced flexibility - Maintain stability while being open to change
Value of Couple and Family Map

- Provides a common descriptive language for talking about real couples and families
- Concepts and ideas from three major frameworks
  - Family systems, family strengths, and family development
- Helps describe how relationships change as challenges appear
- Turns concepts into working themes so family dynamics can be measured
Figure 3.6 - Couple and Family Map: Change Over Time

[Diagram showing a map with different states of cohesion and flexibility, numbered 1 to 6, each representing a different stage such as dating, newlywed, first year, second year and pregnancy, birth of baby, and baby 1 year old.]