

Cross-Theoretical Systemic Case Conceptualization 3.0

For use with individual, couple, or family clients

Date: 2/25/22 Clinician: Muslima Boon, MSW Intern Client/Case #: 4001

Introduction to Client & Significant Others

Identify significant persons in client's relational/family life who will be mentioned in case conceptualization:

Adults/Parents: Select identifier/abbreviation for use in rest of case conceptualization

AF1: Age: 38 Occupation: None Other: _____
AM1: Age: 42 Occupation: paper salesman Other: _____

Children/Adult Children: Select identifier/abbreviation for use in rest of case conceptualization

CM: Age: 14 Grade: 9 Other: _____
: Age: _____ Grade: _____ Other: _____
: Age: _____ Grade: _____ Other: _____
: Age: _____ Grade: _____ Other: _____

Others: Identify all: _____

Presenting Concerns

Describe each significant person's description of the problem:

AF38: Couple began to experience relational problems shortly after their honeymoon. AF38 feels that AM42 is emotionally distant. AF38 also feels that since CM1 has entered highschool he has become more combative as he indulges in at risk behaviors such as smoking marijuana.
AM42: Feels that AF38 is too controlling as she doesn't allow him to enjoy the things that make him happy and she interferes with his parenting of CM14 who is now indulging in at-risk behaviors such as marijuana use. As such, AM42 feels alienated from the family.
CH14: Feels that his mother is overbearing and intrudes on every aspect of his life. He feels that his doesn't want to be bothered with him. CM14 has no friends and feels lonely half the time. CM14 smokes marijuana in hopes of changing his lonely mood.

: _____

Additional: _____

Broader System: Description of problem from extended family, referring party, school, legal system, etc.:

Extended Family: AF38 Family of Origin: have distanced themselves from her once she made a choice to go away to college. This went against the family's norm of having women stay at home to prepare for marriage and motherhood. AM42 Family of Origin: N/A. AM42 left his mother due to years of verbal and emotional abuse. AM42 was abandoned by his father as a child.

Name: _____

Name: _____

Background Information

Trauma/Abuse History (recent and past): AM42 reports witnessing his father being verbally abusive toward his mother when he was a child. He was then verbally and emotionally abused by his mother once his father abandoned the family.

Substance Use/Abuse (current and past; self, family of origin, significant others): N/A

Precipitating Events (recent life changes, first symptoms, stressors, etc.): AF38 reports that since CM14 has entered highschool he has become very combative toward her.

Related Historical Background (family history, related issues, previous counseling, medical/mental health history, etc.): AM42 reports that his father was diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder and indulged in at-risk aggressive behaviors before abandoning him and his mother. AM42 states that he would witness his father being verbally abusive toward his mother during his Manic episodes. AM42 describes his mother as being verbally and emotionally abusive toward him once his father left the home. AM42 states that he would be criticized regularly by his mother because he resembled his father. AF38 reports that her parents believed that a woman's place is in the home in order to be good wives and mothers. Her relationship with her parents and siblings became distant once she decided to go away to college in another state.

Client/Family Strengths and Social Location

Strengths and Resources:

Personal: CM14 states that he would like to build a relationship with his father. AM42 states that he would like to have a stronger bond with his son. AF38 is loving, affectionate and supportive of the child. Both parents have made their son a priority and are seeking therapy in order to help their child.

Relational/Social: Neither parent have happiness in their social lives as both have isolated themselves to focus only on the family. AF38 is overly committed to making the child happy while AM42 has given up any attempt to have a social life in order to keep the peace with AM42. CM14 does not have any friends and blames his mother for this as she was overprotective by not allowing him to explore his individualism.

Spiritual: N/A

Based on the client's social location—age, gender race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, social class, religion, geographic region, language, family configuration, abilities, etc.--identify potential resources and challenges:

Unique Resources: Both parents are committed to the happiness of their son.

Potential Challenges: Because there is a history of mental health issues within the AM42 family, CM14 may be predisposed to self medicating in order to alter his moods. Because AF38 has a permissive parenting style while AM42 has an uninvolved parenting style, the child has no one to set real boundaries or give consequence to his behaviors. As a result CM14 may spiral out of control in terms of his drug misuse.

Family Structure

Family Life Cycle Stage (Check all that apply):

- Single Adult
- Committed Couple
- Family with Young Children

- Family with Adolescent Children
- Divorce
- Blended Family
- Launching Children
- Later Life

Describe struggles with mastering developmental tasks in one or more of these stages: Couple has had difficulty communicating effectively with each other. AM42 feels alienated from the family as he has no say in what goes on in his son's life. AF38 feels that all of the responsibility of raising the child is on her. C14 feels resentful toward his mother for him not having a social life while also feeling estranged from his father who resides within the home.

Boundaries with/between:

Primary couple Enmeshed Clear Disengaged NA Example: AM42 throws himself into his job and is emotionally distant from AM42 and the child.

& Children Enmeshed Clear Disengaged NA Example: AF38 makes excuses for the child's troubling behaviors in school. She does not allow him to form his own identity by making clear responsible decisions for himself. However, in order to avoid conflict with the child, AF38 does not set boundaries for him. His role within the home is based on confusion and resentment as he is unsure whether he is allowed to do what he wants or if he has to wait for his mother to tell him what it is that he wants. AF38 is overbearing as she has been raised to believe that she only exist in order to be a good wife and a mother.

& Children Enmeshed Clear Disengaged NA Example: Because he tries to avoid the criticism of his wife, AM42 avoids any attempts at parenting the child. He has been allowing his wife to bear the responsibility of caring for the child alone. In his attempts to avoid being reminded of his own childhood that was filled with criticism by his "first love" (his mother) he has chosen to emotionally abandon his family as his own father had done physically.

Siblings Enmeshed Clear Disengaged NA Example: _____

Extended Family Enmeshed Clear Disengaged NA Example: _____

Friends/Peers/Others Enmeshed Clear Disengaged NA Example: _____

Triangles/Coalitions:

Cross-generational coalitions: Describe: CM14 began as a detour for the conflict between his parents, however, once AF38 began to feel as though she was losing control of her marriage and the child's behavior she began to focus even more on on CM14 creating a sought of Emotional Fusion between she and the child. AM42 has become emotionally cutoff, therefore, he allows AF38 to smother CM14 in an attempt to distract AF38 from seeing his own perceived flaws of himself. As the child becomes the buffer between his parents he is slowly losing his individuality and resenting his mother for it. Although AM1 assumed that by avoiding AF38, he would be free to be himself, he too has lost his identity. Therefore, he and the child have formed their own nonverbal coalition against AF38.

Other coalitions: _____

Hierarchy between Parents and Children: NA

: Effective Insufficient (permissive) Excessive (authoritarian) Inconsistent

: Effective Insufficient (permissive) Excessive (authoritarian) Inconsistent

Description/Example to illustrate hierarchy: Although AF38 has a concrete say of what the child does while in the home as she manages his friends and activities, when the child attends school, AF38 is not as active. Using the excuse that the school officials don't understand him, AF38 tends to side with the child even though she knows that he is wrong. She conveniently takes on the role as an Authoritarian parent in order to ensure that the child does not gain an independence from her but she becomes very

permissive in her desire to protect him from consequence from outsiders. This may be due to her guilt of leaving the family home where she was expected to be nothing more than a nurturing mom. Although she has gained her own independence, she is subconsciously proving that she has lived up to her parents expectations and has become a woman who prioritizes her child over all else.

AM42 has not fully gotten over the behaviors of his domineering verbally abusive mother who has ridiculed and criticized him ever since his father abandoned them when AM42 was a young child. As such AM42 believes that if he doesn't abandon his own family, he could be considered better than his father. However, because of his negative automatic thoughts of his wife's criticism of his parenting skills, he has become an inconsistent parent who neglects all responsibilities of parenting his son.

Complementary Patterns between AF38 and AM42:

- Pursuer/distancer
- Over/under-functioner
- Emotional/logical
- Good/bad parent
- Other: _____

Example of pattern: After marriage AF38 immediately found fault with AM42 attempting to have a life outside of their home and relationship. AF38 is attempting to reestablish the close relationship that she had within her family before marriage. This behavior is also carrying over to her son whom she pursues by attempting to control his life. As she conveniently goes from a permissive parenting style when the child is in school and being disrespectful to his teachers, to an Authoritarian style when she is attempting to control and manage his life in order for him to refrain from any attempts at independence. AM38 has distanced himself from her and his responsibilities to the family as he attempts to remain in the shadows while his wife parents the child. He has cut off his role within the home to protect himself from the criticism of his wife. As such, he has subconsciously chosen to be a neglectful parent who is uninvolved and provide little to no guidance to the couple's 14 year old son.

Interactional Patterns

Primary Pathologizing Interpersonal Pattern (PIPs; A □ B): Describe dynamic of primary PIP:

- Pursuing/Distancing Criticizing/Defending X Controlling/Resisting Other: _____

Describe Start of Tension: AF38 implements an Authoritarian style of parenting, thereby isolating the child from friendships or any attempts at gaining independence. _____

Describe Conflict/Symptom Escalation: CM14 attempts to gain independence by making the choice to indulge in marijuana use and become increasingly disrespectful toward his mother. AM42 who is aware of the tension between his wife and son does not intervene as he has become emotionally cutoff from his small family in an attempt to regain his own independence and avoid criticism from his wife. _____

Describe Return to "Normal"/Homeostasis: After cutting himself off from AF38 and CM14 by spending most of his time at work, AM42 returns home with his pay check and pays the family bills then begins his pattern all over again. _____

Hypothesized homeostatic function of presenting problem: How might the symptom serve to maintain connection, create independence/distance, establish influence, reestablish connection, or otherwise help organize the family?
AM42's behavior appears to be his way of having some sought of male role within the home as he has given AF38 total control of everything else. _____

Intergenerational & Attachment Patterns

Construct a family genogram and include all relevant information including:

- Names, ages and birth/death dates
- Relational patterns
- Occupations
- Psychiatric disorders and alcohol/substance abuse
- Abuse history
- Personality adjectives

Genogram should be attached to report. Summarize key findings below:

- Substance/Alcohol Abuse: NA X History: AM42's father abused alcohol; CM14 has potential to develop an addiction to substances.
- Sexual/Physical/Emotional Abuse: NA xHistory: AM42 witness DV between his parents and suffered emotional abuse from his mother, as such, AM42 avoids the same abuse within his home by becoming emotionally detached from his wife and child.
- Parent/Child Relations: NA xHistory: AF38 is controlling of both AM42 and CM14. This causes the child to lack a bonding relationship with his father who cannot protect him and resent his mother.
- Physical/Mental Disorders: NA x History: AM42's father suffers from Bipolar Disorder. This disorder may resurface in CM14.
- History Related to Presenting Problem: NA xHistory: AM42's father self medicated due to SUD as such, he would become violent and aggressive towards, not only AM42's mother, but also strangers in bars when he would drink. CM14 has become increasingly disrespectful toward AF38 who has recently found evidence of the child's possible SUD.

Describe family strengths, such as the capacity to self-regulate and to effectively manage stress: AF38 was raised to prioritize her child, therefore this has helped in her being nurturing of the child. She has also been raised to be a good wife, therefore her efforts to keep the family close is what led them to therapy. Although he's under a great deal of stress, AM42 has refrained from abandoning his family the way his own father had done to him. The fact that the family is in attendance in the therapy session shows that they are all committed to the success of the family.

Describe typical attachment behavior when a person does not feel secure in relationships; include Satir survival stances (placating, blaming, super reasonable, and irrelevant) used in description.

- :AF38: XAnxious Avoidant Anxious/Avoidant. Frequency: Describe: Pursues husband and child when they distance themselves from her.
- :AM42: Anxious XAvoidant Anxious/Avoidant. Frequency: Describe: Avoids his responsibility of parenting in order to avoid being criticized by his wife. As such, he immerses himself into work as a way of being independent from the family.
- :CM14: Anxious X Avoidant Anxious/Avoidant. Frequency: Describe: As the child attempts to gain independence from his mother he becomes more resentful of her and attempts to avoid her by choosing to indulge in behaviors that she is not aware of and therefore has no say in.
- :: Anxious Avoidant Anxious/Avoidant. Frequency: Describe: _____
- Additional: _____

Solution-Based Assessment

Attempted Solutions that DIDN'T work:

1. AF38's attempts at controlling CM14's life and not allowing him to be independent has only caused the child to be socially inept and inturn, resenting his mother.
2. AM42's attempt to become emotionally cut off from the home has only caused AF38 to resent him and CM14 to become distant from him.
3. CM14's attempt to repress his anger and confusion has not helped him with gaining friendships outside of the home.

Exceptions and Unique Outcomes (Solutions that DID work): Times, places, relationships, contexts, etc., when problem is less of a problem; behaviors that seem to make things even slightly better:

1. CM14 reports that he would like to have a closer relationship with his father
2. AM42 reports that he has always wanted to be closer to CM14 but had not done so in order to keep the peace with AF38
3. AF38 states that CM14 is the center of her world.

Miracle Question/Answer: If the problem were to be resolved overnight, what would client be doing differently the next day? (Describe in terms of doing X rather than not doing Y):

1. CM14 would have friends that he feels close to
2. AM42 would have a fulfilled life both within the home and outside of the home. He would also have an equal part in raising his son.
3. AF38 will have a close relationship with her husband and child without feeling as though she is forcing them to interact with her. She would feel secure in knowing that their independence does not mean the end of their small family.

Postmodern: Social Location and Dominant Discourses

Describe the client(s) overall social location (the groups a person belongs to based on diversity factors) and influential dominant discourses related to presenting concerns:

- **Ethnic, Race, Class, Immigration Status, and Religious Discourses:** *How do key cultural discourses inform client identity(ies), what is perceived as the problem, and possible solutions (specify ethnicity, e.g. Italian American rather than White or Caucasian)?* AF38's family background reinforced that a woman's role and mere existence is to focus only on being a good mother and wife. This is creating an internal struggle for her as she holds the guilt of leaving her once close knit family in order to go against the norm or what was expected of her, by moving away to attend college. As such, she is now subconsciously attempting to prove to herself that her act of independence was in fact worth it by creating her own close knit family. However, CM14 and AM42 are not aware of AF38's feelings or intentions and instead of feeling closer to her, they are left feeling smothered by her controlling behavior. This possibly contributes to CM14's rebellion and AM42's distancing himself from the family.
- **Gender and Sexuality Discourses:** *How do gender and sexuality discourses inform identity(ies), what is perceived as a problem and the possible solutions? Do these intersect with ethnicity and/or religion?* Although AM42 was raised in a dysfunctional home, he has adopted the role as provider for his own home. This is important to him because his mother continuously belittled him for being like his father. By continuously providing for his family and not abandoning his wife and child, AM42 is proving to himself that he is nothing like his own father.

- **Community, School, Work and/or Extended Family Discourses:** *How do other important community discourses inform identity(ies), what is perceived as a problem and the possible solutions? Because CM14 is learning that his behaviors aren't acceptable in school and he's having a difficult time making friends, he is slowly learning that his home life isn't what he thought it was. Instead of seeing AF38 as protecting him as he thought when she would make excuses for his bad behavior, CM14 now views his mom as someone who has limited him and restricted his ability to have a social life. Therefore, he now indulges in marijuana use in order to assert his independence.*_____
- **Identity Narratives:** *How has the problem shaped each significant person's identity? AF38 feels a sense of confusion because she was raised to believe that if she makes her family her entire focus, they will reciprocate and become close just like the family that she had growing up.*
- *AM42 is repressing his feelings in order to ensure that he is nothing like his father. Therefore he remains in a home where he isn't happy as to not abandon his family the way his dad had done him. He distances himself from his small family in order to avoid the criticism of his wife but he is critiquing himself far worse and projecting his feelings onto his wife.*
- *Although CM14 immediately became the detour for his parents as while AF38 focuses all of her attention on CM14 she does not have to focus on her loveless marriage.*_____

Client Perspectives (Optional)

*Areas of Agreement: Based on what the client(s) has(ve) said, what parts of the above assessment do they agree with or are likely to agree with? The family needs to communicate better. AF38 and AM42 need to focus more on their marriage and allow CH14 a chance to gain his independence. CH14 need to feel protected not only by AF38 but also by AM42 when he is feeling overwhelmed by his mother. AM42 need the opportunity to prove to himself that he can be a better father to his son emotionally more than financially.*_____

*Areas of Disagreement: What parts do they disagree with or are likely to disagree with? Why? AF38 may disagree with CM14 having more control of his life because she believes that if she gives him too much control, he may distance himself from her as her family before him did. She may also disagree with allowing AM42 time away from her and the child for the same reason. AM42 may disagree with being proactive in the child's life because he never had to and he fears his wife's critiquing of his parenting.*_____

*How do you plan to respectfully work with areas of potential disagreement? I plan to use solution based therapy in order to keep the family positive. Instead of focusing on what AF38 and AM42 have been through that have contributed to their lack of parenting skills I will focus on the reason that the family came to receive therapy and that is, to make their family better. Because this is one thing that the three of them can agree on, I will ask each of them what they believe would make their family better, then I will assist them in implementing strategies in achieving that goal.*_____