

Cross-Theoretical Systemic Case Conceptualization 3.0

For use with individual, couple, or family clients

Date: 03/04/2023 **Clinician:** Ermal Dautaj **Client/Case #:** 0429

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:** 36 American with Caribbean heritage **Occupation:** Unemployed **Other:**

AM1: **Age:** 40 American with Caribbean heritage **Occupation:** UPS Driver **Other:**

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

CF1: **Age:** 2 American with Caribbean heritage **Grade:** Daycare; Daddy's Daycare **Other:**

Presenting Concerns

Describe each significant person's description of the problem:

- AF1: Couple separated 1 ½ years ago due to AF1 developed depressive and anxious symptoms; AF36's family strongly disapproved of her decision. AF36 refuses to stay together with AM1; Primary concern is AM1 mental health gradually worsened and turned into a major depressive episode about 6 months ago.
- AM1: Left behind the marriage story with AF1 and started new life with new partner obtaining full custody of CF1; feels bad about mental depression effects on AF1 but is

not sure what else he could do to help AF1: primary concern is safety of CM1 from the risk of being taken away from AF1.

- CF1: Too young to understand the situation; Is asking for the AF1 constantly; can meet AF1 under supervision of third parts mandated by the court.

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

Extended Family: AF Family of Origin; Views divorce as abandonment of AF1 from AM1 Van Hook, M.P. (2014). AM Family of Origin; Understanding of divorce as a reasonable solution for the future of CF1 and AM1.

Other: Ms.Taylor: Daycare Counselor: Concerned that CF2 is not sleeping and eating regularly in reaction to parents' separation.

Other: Judge Katz: Family court: Court made a decision for divorce and for the custody of CF1 obtained fully by AM40 until AF36 recovered and showed her mental health change.

Background Information

Trauma/Abuse History (recent and past):

AF reports previous AF1 depression when her father abandoned the family when AF1 was eleven years. AM reports that in the early years of his youth, his parents divorced, and AF1 went to live with his father.

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

AM36's father was drug addicted, as was his brother, who has numerous distant relationships in his family. AF40's mother was alcoholic, as her mother, which has resulted recovered in first emergency aid various times because of high alcohol consumption.

Precipitating Events (recent life changes, first symptoms, stressors, etc.):

The first occurrence of AF1 psychiatric symptoms began 3 1/2 years ago when AF1 began to display mild depressive and anxious symptoms. The precipitant difficulty was at work; her new boss had significantly changed her job responsibilities and AF1 experienced difficulties in performing her job competently. AF1 began to withdraw from other people, including her AM1, and started spending much of the time when she was home sitting on the couch. AF1 symptoms steadily worsened and increased very significantly when she lost her job and AM1 divorced her, about 1 year and half ago. AF1 functioning steadily declined after that. AM40 was having an affair before the legal termination of the marriage with the reason that he felt depressed from AF36 and needed someone who could understand him. AF36 asked AM40 to leave their apartment and she stayed in the home with the children. Court made a decision for divorce and for the custody of CF1 obtained fully by AM40 until AF36 recovered and showed her mental health change.

Related Historical Background (family history, related issues, previous counseling, medical/mental health history, etc.):

AF1 and AM1 had sought family and couple counseling 3 years before their arguing; things improved for awhile but returned later after AF1 got fired from her employment. AF36

comes from a divorced family and religious mother. AM1 comes from divorced and conflictive relations between family members.

Client/Family Strengths and Social Location

Strengths and Resources:

Personal: AF1 was at her best when she finished high school, got employment, and moved into an apartment with her AM1. This period lasted for about sixteen years. She did well on the job, got along well with her supervisor and co-workers, socialized often with good friends, exercised and kept herself in good health, and started saving money for the future. AF1 has the skill of a problem-solver, resourceful and resilient. AF1 was respectful to others and pleasant to be around, often helping family and friends without being asked. AF1 felt that she was hard-working, both at work and around the house. AF1 saw herself as competent, in control, reliable, and responsible. Af1 viewed others and her world as basically benign. AF1's future seemed bright to her. AF1 stated that she also functioned highly after this time, though she had more stress in her life after she married and had children.

Relational/Social: AF1 have strong support networks that are helping her to pass this difficult time. The Court Judge is aware of what is going on. AF36's sisters have helped her with medication and mental health treatment even when AF1 behaves negatively to them. AF36's sisters, also, are helping with the court mandated steps to obtain semi-custody for CF1. AM40's new partner supports him and has stayed off the family dynamics.

Spiritual: AF36's Belongs to the Unitarian Church and she was not attending church at intake. After losing custody of CF1 she turns for inspiration during this difficult time. AM40 also has a sense of being religious by going in christian church Sundays which he finds consoling.

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: AF has strong familial support even though she dont agree with her sisters when they want to take her for mental health evaluations. AF sisters communicated with the Court Judge and asked for a chance for AF1 to change and to retain at least half of the custody of her daughter because it will help her spiritual/mental situation. Since the Court decided to give another chance AF has strong faith in the mental counseling.

Potential Challenges: When AF looked thoughtfully for a long time at her divorce, she must consider her mental health situation when people don't agree with her, cultural, and family values and balance them with asserting her personal needs.

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 establishing family connection since AF1 lost her job. AF36 feels as though she has had primary financial responsibility in the couple's relationship and for raising CF1, AM40 feeling disconnected from AF1 because of her depression and self isolation.

Boundaries with/between:

Primary couple: Enmeshed Clear Disengaged NA **Example:** Enmeshed; the last 4 years, the couple boundary definition has gotten confused with the divorce and child custody, each having a more difficult time allowing the other to have time to recover from depression or other mental health concerns, and feelings: especially about the children. Most every interaction is charged by the Judge to be under supervision.

AF & Children: Enmeshed Clear Disengaged NA **Example:** AF36 can be highly depressed when the supervised meeting with her children is over and when CF1 doesn't follow the rule to hug her when she asks.

AM & Children: Enmeshed Clear Disengaged NA **Example:** AM has been attached father figure and protective since the full custody of CF1.

Siblings: Enmeshed Clear Disengaged NA **Example:**

Extended Family: Enmeshed Clear Disengaged NA **Example:** Extended family very involved in separation

Friends/Peers/Others: Enmeshed Clear Disengaged NA **Example:** AM has left family for lover; he does not balance time with his new partner and children

Triangles/Coalitions:

Cross-generational Coalitions: None

Other coalitions: AF36, with sisters. **Describe:** AF36, and her sisters united against AM40 because of the affair, AF hold AM40 responsible for the separation

Hierarchy between Parents and Children: NA

Effective Insufficient (permissive) Excessive (authoritarian) Inconsistent

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Description/Example to illustrate hierarchy:

AF36 has tended to be inconsistent with moderate effectiveness due to her mental health situation. AM40 has tended to be a lenient parent with moderate effectiveness even when he is higher-protective.

Complementary Patterns between AF and AM:

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

Example of pattern:

Since the first month of the divorce AF36 pursued AM40 for connection and engagement with similar dynamic. In addition to the love affair with his new partner, AM plays the role of good parent and AF the bad parent.

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:

AF1 got fired and the finance of the family got lower.

Describe Conflict/Symptom Escalation:

AF36 begins yelling and accusing AM1 for not working and contributing equally. AF36 accused AM that he drinks and he has a love affair while she is working. When AM40 heard the accusation tried to calm AF36 and ask for an explanation of her accusation. AM40 went to ask the AF36 employer the reason for employment termination. AM40 visit escalated in severe verbal fighting.

Describe Return to "Normal"/Homeostasis:

After one or two weeks of distance, AF calmed down and softened and reconnected with AM; within a couple of weeks the pattern repeat.

What is the metacommunication in this interaction ? The metacommunication seems to be about power and the child custody:

AF1 behavior wanting more independence from the Court mandated steps to follow, while the sisters are also trying to assert their influence in her life.

Intergenerational & Attachment Patterns

Summary of Genogram Key Findings:

Substance/Alcohol Abuse: **History:** AM40's mother and grandmother abuse alcohol; AM has potential to develop same problem.

Sexual/Physical/Emotional Abuse: NA **History:**

Parent/Child Relations: NA **History:**

Physical/Mental Disorders: **History:** AF36 has a history of depression.

History Related to Presenting Problem: **History:** Breakup of marriage with AF36 is a recent development.

Describe family strengths, such as the capacity to self-regulate and to effectively manage stress:

AF36 has a strong religious connection, which helps to stabilize her and the relationship with her sisters.

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

AF: _ Anxious _ Avoidant Anxious/Avoidant **Frequency:** Very often **Describe:** Pursue AM1, and often used verbal to re-engage him; she also pursues her sisters when they remind her of the Court order to follow. Distancer in marriage; using verbal aggression to solve marital problems.

AM: _ Anxious _ Avoidant Anxious/Avoidant **Frequency:** Often **Describe:** When feels unsafe, generally pursues connection, especially when faced with AF1 sisters. Often disappears when having to face AF1.

Additional:

Solution-Based Assessment

Attempted Solutions that DIDN'T work:

1. AF1 supervised video-call with CF1
2. AF1 drug testing
3. AF1 engagement with AM1 to discuss about custody

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. AF1 reports since she started to frequent church more often to find spiritual comfort she feel much better
2. AF1 reports that the community group meeting to discuss depression and divorce is helping to move forward.
3. AF1 reports that her new employment is helping her to socially connect

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. AF and AM would participate in the same community group to discuss and understand the consequences of the divorce
2. AM and AF would take CF to the park without being supervised.
3. AF and AM would share the 3 days each with the custody of their child.

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)? AF36's culture and previous family experience reinforce the idea that divorce is a sin, which created significant pressure and internal struggle for her because it is unwise to remain in a relationship with a man who will not give up his love affairs. This view seems to increase the disengagement between the ex-partners and the need for always supervised meetings between AF1 and CF1.

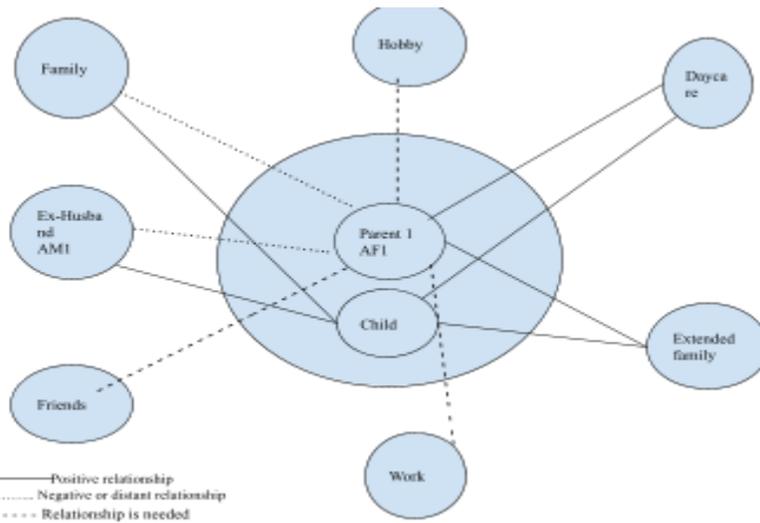
- ***Gender and Sexuality Discourses:*** *How do gender and sexuality discourses inform identity(ies), what is perceived as a problem and the possible solutions? Do these intersect with ethnicity and/or religion?* AF36 maintains her Caribbean traditional family views especially in her role as a mother. AF36 also has American views on women's rights in relationships, especially with regards to equal family finance contribution.
- ***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?* CF1 is hanging around in her Daycare with her friends and teachers in various baby role play.
- ***Identity Narratives:*** *How has the problem shaped each significant person's identity?* AF36 feels extremely conflicted between her cultural values and her new modern gender identity Gehart, D. (2013). AM40 reports some guilt for the fact he didn't support AF36 more but a stronger pull to do what is good to keep him happy- he appears to be trying to show his emotional side that he has not frequently acted upon Gehart, D. (2013). CF1 reports she wants to see AF1 and AM1 together while she is playing with them- She appears to be missing her mother.

Client Perspectives (Optional)

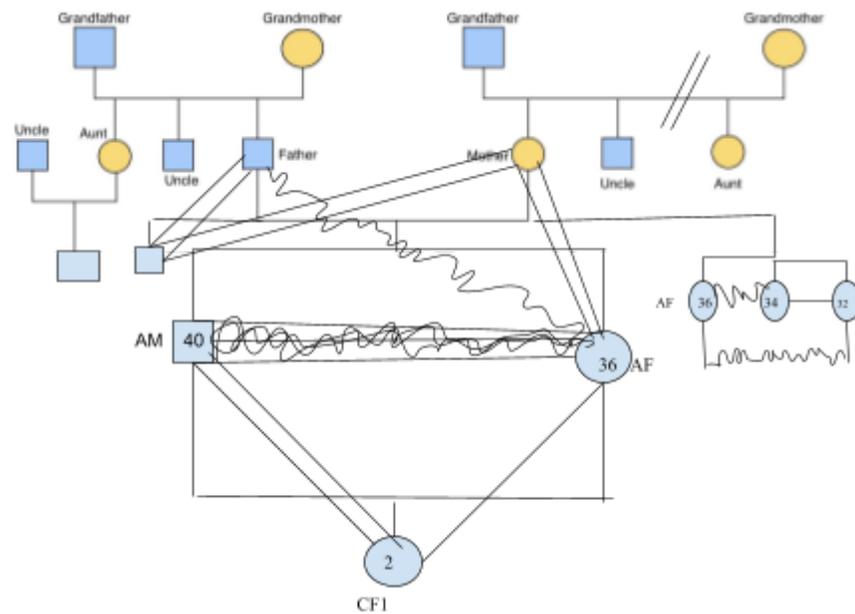
Areas of Agreement: Based on what the client(s) has(ve) said, what parts of the above assessment do they agree with or are likely to agree with? Role of AF36 family, family dynamics, follow Court mandated reports.

Areas of Disagreement: What parts do they disagree with or are likely to disagree with? Why? Custody of CF1 and the timeline of supervised visits

How do you plan to respectfully work with areas of potential disagreement? AF1 reports that she will complete all the Court mandated report steps to obtain half custody of CF1.



Family Ecomap



Case Genogram

References

Gehart, D. (2013). *Mastering Competencies in family therapy: A practical approach to theory and clinical case documentation* (3rd ed.pp.521-525). Pacific Grove,

Van Hook, M.P. (2014). *Social work practice with families: A resiliency-based approach* (3rd ed.pp.112-113). Oxford University Press. Print ISBN13: 9780190933555, ISBN10: 0190933550