INTERPERSONAL ENVIRONMENT

- Focus = interpersonal communication.
- Communication is critical for family adaptability, cohesion & functionality
  - There is a common communication pattern in each culture; each family develops its own communication pattern
  - People develop communication skills within the family system; learning both the cultural patterns & the specific family styles & rules

Communication = the exchange of thoughts or ideas

- A symbolic transactional process involving creating & sharing meaning through consistent patterns

Assumptions:
- Family comm. Is not random
- Comm. is transactional (exchange of info / ideas)
- It is impossible to not communicate

THE COMMUNICATOR

- Creates & sends messages
- Individual is considered as a total system
  - Many nonverbal aspects of the individuals are important == I.e appearance, posture, facial expressions, gestures, tone of voice, ways of touching / not touching; ways we stand / sit / distancing our space from others; ways we furnish our “space”
  - A good communicator knows how to “READ” people with whom they are communicating

THE MESSAGE

- Is the heart of communication
- Units of information transmitted between sender & receiver
- May contain feelings, thoughts, ideas, suggestions or commands
- After preparing (encoding) the message, the sender decides whether the message needs to be:
  - Explained, disguised, censored, or made appropriate to the receiver / situations
- Message is sent to the receiver who will decode the info as an input for the individual system

The structural elements of communication

- The communicator
- The message
- The medium
- The recipient

Technology is an adjunct to one or more of these elements
- Focus on the message & the medium; often neglecting the communicator & the reaction of the receiver
• Messages are thought of in terms of words
  • 4 general parts of each message:
    • A subject (who the action of the message is about)
    • A predicate (what is being done)
    • An object (to whom the action is directed)
    • The content of the action
  • Words are actually signs or symbols
  • We are now in a more semiotic age == visual symbolic communication (image symbols)

**THE MEDIUM**

• Is the WAY a message is presented to the receiver
• Influences the “meaning”
• I.e. TV ads. Are costly; messages are short; aiming for quick impressions through sounds, colors, movements, images, few words which are normally “powerful”

**THE RECIPIENT**

• The receiver of the message
• Communicator must understand the receiver & be aware of the context of the message being received
• Different words or gestures can give different meanings to recipients who have different perceptions from those of the sender
• “Interpretations” lead to reactions
• I.e. table manners; “specific jokes”, slangs etc
• Responses to communication are either visible physiological appearances or through technological devices (I.e testing biofeedback - body temperature, brain waves, stress levels etc)

**Communication Patterns Influence Family Meanings**

• Meanings come through continuous interpretations of & response to messages
• The sensitivity of our basic senses serve as the first filters in communication
• Our perceptions are also filtered through our family system & social system through (a) language (b) accepted ways of seeing & interpreting things & (c) all socially-agreed upon conventions that standardized our world

• Our cultural background influences our perceptions; so do our socializations agents & contexts (family, friends, teachers)
• Place & space add to contextual meanings & influence our interpretations & understandings of a message (whispering = scared or shy?)

• Through the filtering process we assign general meanings to verbal & nonverbal symbols
• General experiences are shared with many people we encounter; specific & unique experiences are gained within one’s family
The language that we use often limits the shape & meanings we can ascertain.

Individual characteristics can uniquely influence one’s interpretations.

After functioning in a family system, an individual is comfortable with their ability to handle the language symbols since they can interpret them on all levels for their systems ⇒ “pattern”

Communication pattern:
- Is both verbal and nonverbal
- Is specific to the relationship within the system
- Is reciprocal & interactive
- Is often predictable
- Contain both content & feeling messages
- Defines relationships
- May be changed by forces within the systems
- May stimulate changes in that system

Family of origin
- The family that we are “born into” a.k.a “family of orientation”
- Specific experiences within the family reflect a unique combination of personalities – family as our 1st socialization context
- Will influence later experiences in life i.e. one’s own family of procreation
- I.e “family secret”, “in the honour of the family”

Family communication rules
- Rules are relationship agreements that prescribe & limit a family’s behaviour over time
- Family system has its own “administrative” system that forms a structure which serves as guidance for the family

Factors that influence the creation of meanings in communication
- Family of origin influences
- Family communication rules
- Gender & communication
- Communication framework

We may not realize some of the rules since many are not told but are learned through repeated interactions (a range of explicit ⇒ implicit rules)
- Family rules developed over time & set predictable patterns that regulate behaviour
- They involved expectations; unknown rules may create conflict
- I.e communication rules: what, how, to whom
**GENDER & COMMUNICATION**

- **GENDER** may influence the way people communicate & meaning of the messages perceived & received by people involved.
- Socio-cultural influences dictate which behaviour is gender appropriate (I.e big boys don’t cry.)
- Contextual influence = office setting vs non-formal setting; male-female in private vs in public

**COMMUNICATION PATTERN**

- Flow of information; verbal exchanges within one’s family
- All patterns have their strengths & weaknesses; may work well for one family at one specific time; while for others it may not work at all
- Horizontal chain; vertical chain; Y, Wheel; Gap & Network

**FAMILY COMMUNICATION FRAMEWORKS**

- Family members communicate in order to form a group that can share information.
- This is arranged through a communication framework.
- Family members establish certain channels for information flow, share the meanings through interactions & by a prescribes path through the family communication framework.
- Vertical vs. horizontal communication

- The family comm. framework reflect power structure in the family.
- Some structures promote dominance, others encourage sharing.
- It helps to maintain the roles & rules operating within the system (vv)

**Communication pattern**

- Horizontal chain – negotiable rules
- Vertical chain – non-negotiable rules