Quick Study: Genograms and Family Maps

Genograms
- Schematic diagram of the family system
- Used in Bowen’s Intergenerational Theory.
  - Diagram the family over three generations to help determine critical turning points in the family emotional process, characteristics of family members, and provide an evolutorial picture of family.

Symbols for Family Members

- Female (heterosexual)
- Male (heterosexual)
- Unknown gender
- Lesbian (bisexual is shown with a dotted triangle)
- Gay man (bisexual is shown with a dotted triangle)
- Transgender (man to woman)
- Transgender (woman to man)
For family members:
- Age is shown inside the symbol.
- Date of birth is shown just above the symbol, on the left.
- Date of death is shown just above the symbol, on the right.
- Death is indicated with an X through the symbol.

Symbols for Relationships

- Offspring
- Fraternal Twins
- Identical Twins
- Adopted Offspring
- Marriage
- Legal Separation
- Divorce
- Engagement
- Engagement and Separation
Symbols for Interactional and Emotional Patterns Between People

- **Distance**
- **Cutoff**
- **Hostile**
- **Physical Abuse**
- **Emotional Abuse**
- **Sexual Abuse**
- **Close-Hostile**
- **Neglect**
Example Genogram

This genograms shows:

- The 45-year-old woman and 53-year-old man are divorced.
- The woman was emotionally abusive to her husband.
- The couple has two children, a boy and a girl.
- The siblings have a close relationship.
- The brother is gay and married to a man.
- The brother and his husband have adopted a daughter.
Family Maps
- Used by Structural Family therapists
- An assessment technique that helps depict the family’s organizational structure
- Allows the therapist to understand structures within the family system, including:
  - Triangles
  - Family interactions and alliances
  - Boundaries
  - Roles and rules of the family
  - Communication
  - Who is included in the family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Stands for</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P, M, F</td>
<td>Living Parent, Mother, Father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DP, DM, DF</td>
<td>Dead Parent, Mother, Father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M_A, F_A</td>
<td>Addicted Mother, Father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M_W, F_W</td>
<td>Psychologically-Wounded Mother, Father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C_1, C_2</td>
<td>Dependent (minor) Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T_1, T_2</td>
<td>Dependent (minor) Teens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[P], [M], [F], [S]</td>
<td>Parent, Mother, Father, or Sibling who is dead or absent but still psychologically important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P&lt;&lt;&gt;&gt;C</td>
<td>Conflicted Parent and Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[HP], {God}, [Allah]</td>
<td>Higher Power(s) that influence the family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>Important Relative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GM, GF</td>
<td>Powerful Grandmother or Grandfather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fr, Pr</td>
<td>Important Friend or Professional Person (e.g., therapist or priest)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(P or (C</td>
<td>Parent or Child who is rejected or excluded from the family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P_1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(P_1 + C_1)</td>
<td>Enmeshed or Codependent Parent and Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C_1 + C_2)</td>
<td>Enmeshed or Codependent Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__________</td>
<td>Rigid Boundary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- - - - - - -</td>
<td>Clear Boundary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>. . . . . . .</td>
<td>Diffuse Boundary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Examples of Family Maps

This family map shows:

\[ M | F \]
\[ - - - - - - \]
\[ C_1 \quad C_2 \quad C_3 \]

- The family consists of a mother, father, and three children.
- The dashed line indicates there is open communication between the parents and the children.
- The solid line between the parents indicates blocked communication between the mother and father.

This family map shows:

\[ MA \quad [F] \]
\[ \quad C \]

- The family consists of an addicted mother, a father who has passed away but is still important to the family, and one child.
- Between the mother and child is blocked communication.

This family map shows:

\[ (F + C_1) \]
\[ M) \]
\[ C_2 \]

- The family consists of a mother, father, and two children.
- The father is in an enmeshed relationship with the first child (C\(_1\)).
- The first child (C\(_1\)) is also controlling of the family.
- The mother is either absent or not involved in the family.
- Closed communication exists with the second child (C\(_2\)).