

The family system, features, structure and process

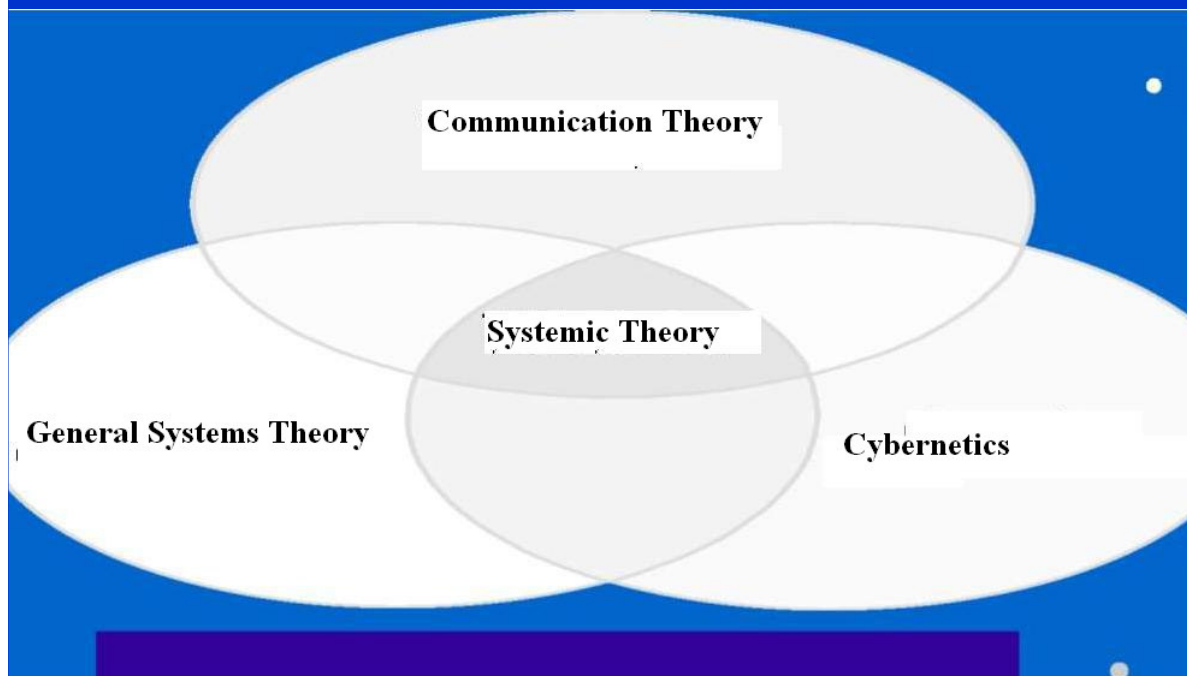
ELENA COMPAÑ POVEDA

THE SYSTEMIC MODEL

- It is holistic
- It is relational
- It considers the context

It is based on:

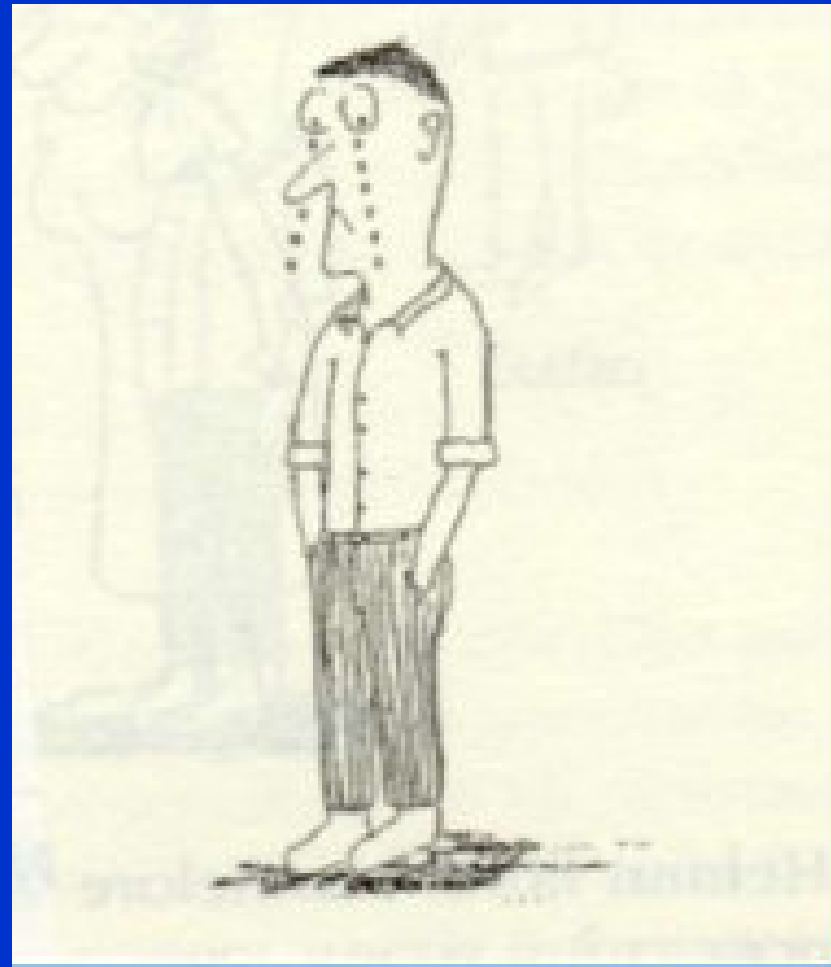
- General Systems Theory
 - Cybernetics
- Human Communication Theory



DIFFERENCE

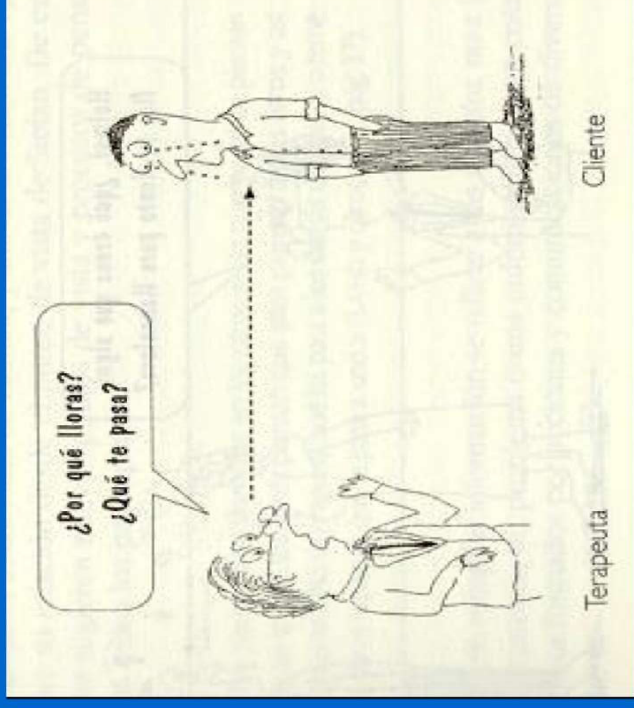
LINEAR AND SYSTEMIC MODEL

- Helmut is crying



VON SCHLIPP and others 1994

Modelo Lineal

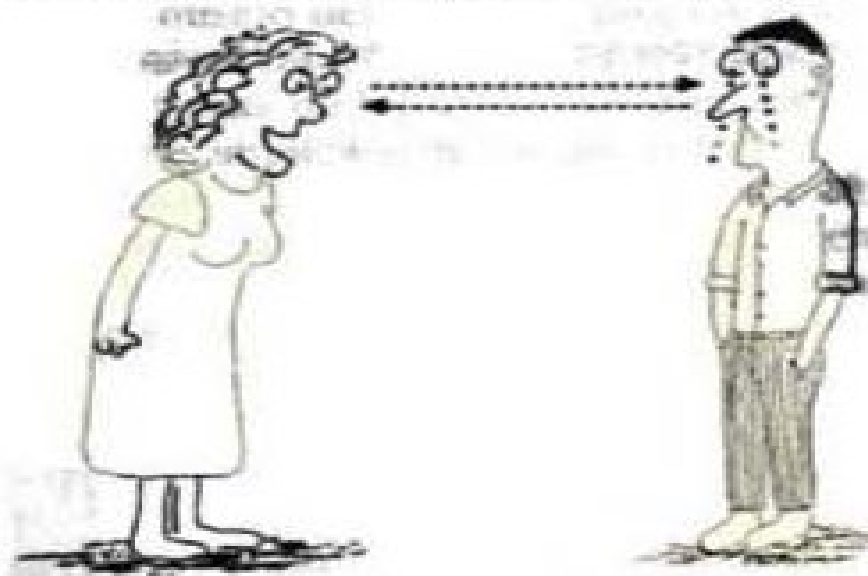


Translation:
Linear Model

- *Why are you crying? What's wrong?*
- *Therapist*

- *Client*

This perspective is important. Feelings can be perceived and valued as the expression of the existence of the human being. However, the word “expression” hides something: every feeling is expressed, in a way it can also be understood as a message from someone to someone else:



Helmut is crying. Hannelore notices that and Helmut *knows* that Hannelore has noticed it.

This communicative aspect is not taken into account in the usual question. Therefore, another type of question is required:



Traducción:

Helmut, what do you think you're crying means to Hannelore?

There are always third parties who observe relationships between two people:



“People constantly think about the others, about what the others think about them, about what the others think that they think about others, and so on. You wonder what happens to the others, you want the others to know what is happening to you or you are afraid of the fact the others know the problem” (Laing and others 1971, page 37).

Translation:

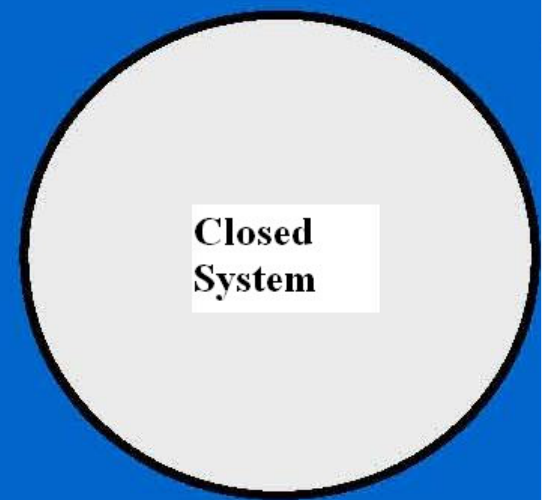
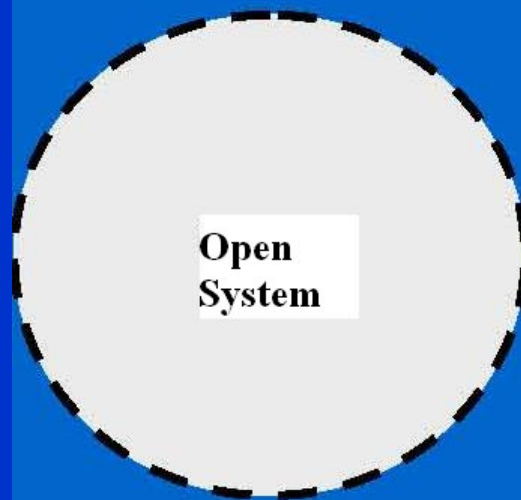
- Stefan, what do you think it happens when your mother sees your father crying?

DEFINITION

Systems = Complexes of interrelated elements

Two types of systems:

- Closed systems: the field of physics and chemistry
- Open systems: live, biological, and social beings.



Family as a System

- Family is an open system, made up of human elements that form a functional unit, subject to its own rules, with its own and unique history and in constant evolution.
- Family growth is produced by the relationship between its members and other systems alien to it, in a never-ending chain of information and feedback.

Structure

It is the collection of functional requests that shows the family members how they should act.

The family system operates through transactional guidelines. Repeated transactions establish rules about how, when and with whom you can mix and they brace the system.

Structure

Two types of functions keep the structure:

- Generic: they are universal rules that govern family organization: power hierarchy, procreation, socialization...
- Idiosyncrasic: they imply mutual expectations of family members; particular way of mixing with others, ritual myths...

Subsystems

- Family system is made up of different subgroups which are called subsystems. They have different functions assigned and are subject to rules that regulate the way of mixing with others.

Marital subsystem

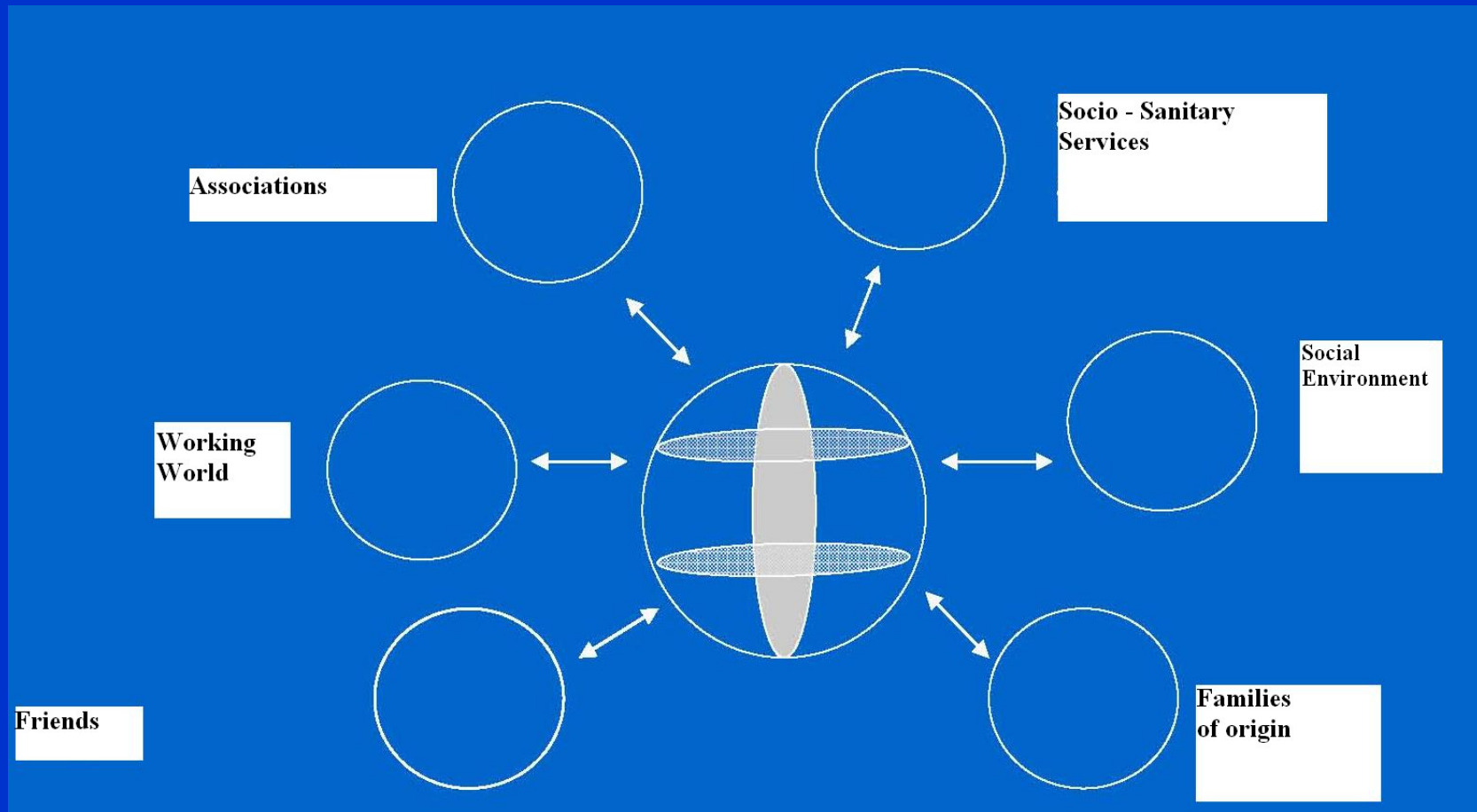
Filial subsystem



Parental subsystem

Suprasystem

Family not only has an “internal relationship scheme”; it influences and it is influenced by the context or collection of systems external to it. It is called “Suprasystem”.



CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SYSTEMS

Postulates described in the General Systems Theory are applicable to the family system.

1.- TOTALITY

2.- PROTECTION – GROWTH

3.- CIRCULAR CAUSALITY

4.- IDENTITY

5.- HIERARCHICAL ORDER

1.- TOTALITY:

Regarding the smaller group of elements, dyadic relationship, we can affirm that $1 + 1 = 3$. The content of the third element would be defined by the content of the relationship created, by the influence that this relationship has on them, of that relationship with the context, of the context on these elements.

2.- PROTECTION – GROWTH:

Concepts of homeostasis and morphogenesis (stability – change) are like the reins a system manages in order to keep the balance and evolve as time goes by. A successful way of managing both elements will guarantee a healthy life and will reduce the risk of appearing dysfunctions (functional system).

Occasionally, family members persist in repeating actions that were successful in the past. Since it is no longer working, the more they repeat the action, the more dysfunction is produced. Imagine that the horseman who rides a horse only tightened a bridle to straighten it out (dynamics of dysfunction).

3.- CIRCULAR CAUSALITY

The past is only analysed to detect repetitive interactions (vicious circle, recurrence). From the information obtained, it would be important to design new interactions which modify the present in order to change the future.

EQUIFINALITY

We can reach the same aim starting from different initial states.

EQUIPOTENTIALITY: the same start can lead to different purposes.

IDENTITY AND MEMBERSHIP

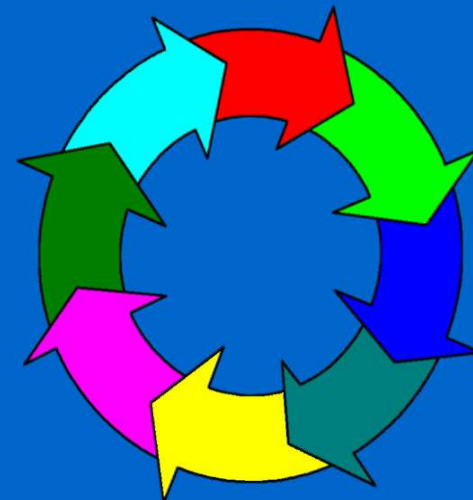
1. – The sum of what a group could consider as their “belongings”, with the double purpose of “feeling part of” and “different from” shape the group identity.

IDENTITY AND MEMBERSHIP

2. - In the process of an individual's identity configuration, family plays an important role. It is in charge of broadcasting information to the individual that enables him to know who he is and how he is going to create the self. However, in this individual's maturing process, family is not only responsible for broadcasting the necessary information so that the person manages to culminate successfully the purpose of being a healthy and independent adult.

IDENTITY AND MEMBERSHIP

- 3. – It is not a problem of unilateral responsibility for the main character of the process, nor bilateral (ancestors – children). We face a problem of multilateral interaction whereby all social actors who mix with the individual in training are involved in the final result of the process: friends, neighbours, relatives, teachers, therapists, etc. It is to this extended “family” that we shall attribute shared responsibility, not of the failure, but of the remedy and rehabilitation of the failed emancipation (E. Gil Calvo, 2002).



HOW YOU CAN ACQUIRE THE IDENTITY

It is necessary to establish an ongoing interpersonal contact to transmit information, models of conduct, values..., all in all, significant data for the individual in training. Daily interaction: with the family, at school, with friends, with extended family brings about this interpersonal contact. Verbal and non verbal communication which takes place by living everyday with people who are significant for the child and teenager also helps it.



IMPORTANCE OF RITUALS

- Rituals and family routines are good for physical and mental health of people. Routines are patterns established that operate in action and in communication and rituals are events or acts that evoke feelings or confer meanings to different aspects of life.
- Studies carried about by Dr. Fiese (Syracuse University) show us that, in families which present more or less predictable routines, children have less respiratory illnesses, a better general health and a better school performance. Fiese holds that teenagers who belong to families with sound rituals have a stronger identity, at the same time couples say they are happier in their marriage and children interact more often and better with their grandparents.

CYCLES OF FAMILY LIFE

Elena Compañ.

Leaving home.....

Making a difference

Developing close relations

Establishing oneself at work

Pairing off.....

Establishing a level of commitment:

- Way of resolving individual differences
- Surrendering
- Making a pact
- Symmetry – complexity
- Modifying relations with FO
- Including the partner in FO

Upbringing

Making room for children

Distinguishing M. and P. subsystems

Encouraging couple's rituals

Establishing family rituals

Confronting expectations to children

Avoiding triangulations

Family with children.....

Parental team

Limits with FOS

Function of grandparents

Order and hierarchy

Upkeep of the house: functions

Transmission of models

- Rituals
- Verbal messages and conduct

Family with teenagers

Change of limits and functions

Use of control

Differentiation of teenager

Does the system allow them to “take off”?

Step rituals

CYCLES OF FAMILY LIFE

Elena Compañ.

Middle – age

Professional approach

Couple's approach

Free time approach

Use of losses

- Family
- Friends
- Physical and functional

• Following on

The third age

Losses

Mournings

Solitude

Death

Maintenance of functions

Long – term plans

Positive sense “on a daily basis”

Relation with children: a change of order

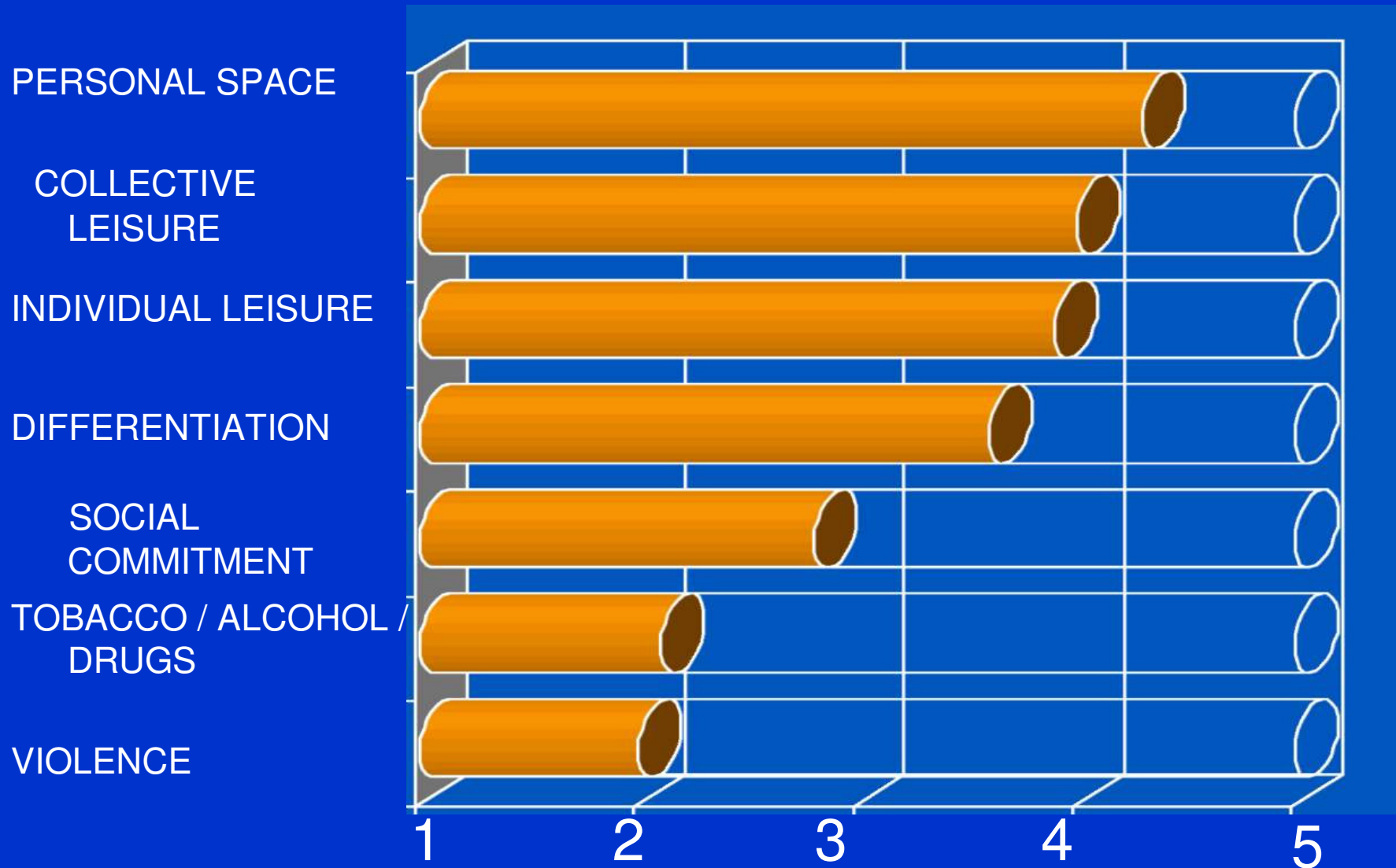
FO = family of origin M = marital

P = parental

Analysing interactions produced when three generations are juxtaposed, living different moments of the cycle.
Complexity of the system.

PREFERENCES OF TEENAGERS

Hipócrates plan 2002 Council of Alicante

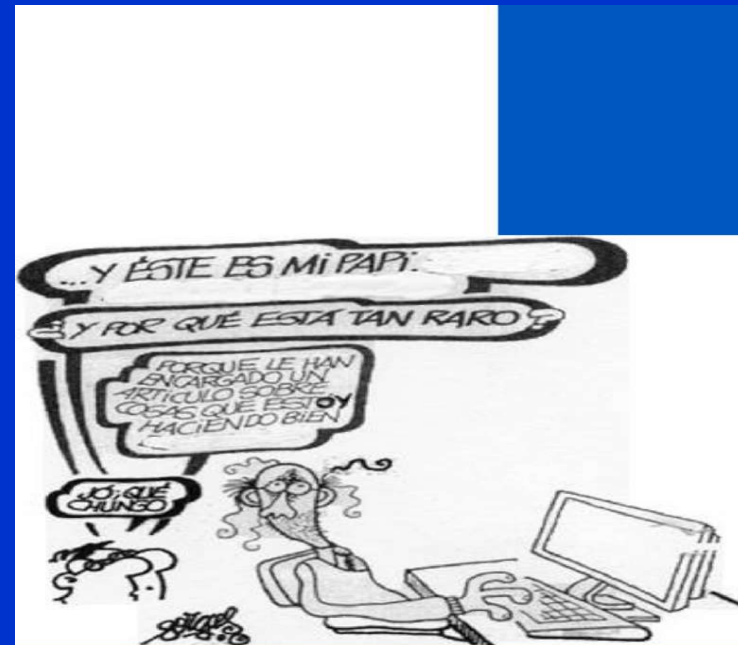


VITAL CYCLE: 21st Century

For those who were born now: “they will probably live with their parents, or only with their mothers, or with their mothers and their stepfathers; they will jointly gather somebody without getting married, afterwards they will marry this person or another one and they will get divorced. They will live again alone and they will again get married, to live again alone when they are widowed or they are divorced for the last time, or they are about to stay in a place for the elderly” (Castells – 1999).

WHAT DO SOCIAL ACTORS SAY?

- 40 % of parents say they do not bring up their children very well because they do not know how to do it.
- 80 % of teachers of public schools point out psychological disorders are their main problem.
- 90, 7 % of young people trust their family above everything and, secondly, teachers.



- Translation:
- *And this is my daddy*
- *And why is he acting very strangely?*
- *Because he was asked to write an article about all the things I am doing well.*
- *Damn it! That's tough!*

AUTOREGULATORY CAPACITY OF SYSTEMS

In spite of the uncertain outlook described, family seems to be able to survive, as it has been doing since the most ancient times and in more adverse situations because, although it has played the difficult role of mediator between society and individuals and it has such a weak structure, it has a quality that human history has shown us it is basic: the capacity to adapt to the change of social structures or, from a systematic perspective, its capacity of autoregulation.

EL PAÍS, Saturday 5th February, 2005

64 % of teachers demand an increase of the discipline at schools.
Nine out of ten teachers lay the blame at permissiveness of families.

MARTA AGUIRREGOMEZCORTA, Madrid.

64 % of teachers think it would be necessary to adopt more severe measures with children that cause problems. The report "Teachers' opinion about coexistence at schools" says 87 % of teachers think the cause of the conflict is the "students do what they want at home". Only 21 % think parents pay attention to their homework.

Coexistence at schools

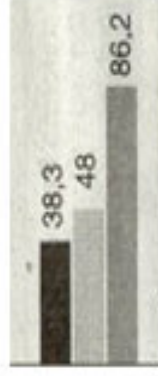
Causes of conflicts according to Secondary teachers, students and parents (in %).

% of students and Secondary teachers think it would be necessary to adopt more severe measures with children that cause problems.

There are very problematic students

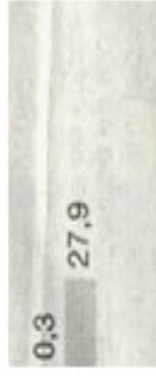


Students do what they want at home

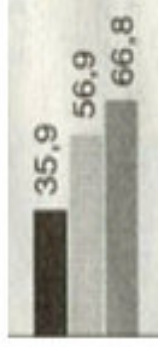


% parents, students and Secondary teachers say parents usually pay attention to their children's homework

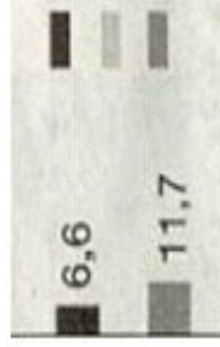
Teachers are too intolerant



Students do not respect the authority



Teachers avoid their responsibilities



PARENTS
STUDENTS
TEACHERS

Source: CIE – FUHME and EIDEA

EL PAÍS

“Children who beat their parents will be required to be reeducated”

Wednesday, 16 th September, 2009
José Antonio Martínez, Información newspaper

“The large number of reports about children’s assaults on their parents led the Court to expand courses of reeducation and ask judges to force these children to do them.

Province registers an average close to 1.000 reports a year on this type of assaults.

The Court sets in motion new formative sessions addressed also to women who beat their husbands.”

“The principle of authority works”

Wednesday, 16 th September, 2009
Victoria Bueno/ M. Información newspaper, Alicante.

- *Community finishes its first course with the new coexistence decree which came into effect and introduced, for the first time, the consideration of “public authority” for teachers in the course of their duties”.*
- *“Coexistence decree (passed by the Council the 4th April 2008) finishes its first course with 37 cases of teachers who were insulted taken into court.*

“15 % of Secondary teachers assure they have been physically assaulted”.

*27 th September, 2006
EFE. Heraldo de Aragón*

Verbal assaults affect 73% of teachers and 13% of them recognise they are afraid when they entered the class.

According to the study, those assaults are mainly carried out by the students in the class, and 81 % of teaching staff claim the concession of authority to the teacher as a tool against this situation, while 49 % declare they are demotivated for teaching.

Data obtained from 12.376 national surveys between teachers of public schools collected by the trade union CSI – CSIF in the second two weeks in June, 2006.



Translation:

- *Who are those pests hounding the teacher?*
- *Her lawyer and her bodyguard*



Translation:

BEFORE

- I failed because the teacher has it in for me.
- Hmph! You are not to do anything until you pass, except breathe! For blaming the teacher, you are going to feel my slipper on your behind.

NOW

- I failed because the teacher has it in for me.
- Don't go to pieces honey, I am going to buy a "Playstation" right now and, afterwards, we are going to school with daddy to kick up a fuss. He is a bastard!



Translation:

BEFORE

- Mr. Lorente, we need to talk about your son.
- I am leaving the office right now. I will be there in 20 minutes.

NOW

- Mr. Lorente. We need to talk about your son.
- Listen, I have to work. We will talk at the end-of-course party.



Translation:

BEFORE

- Look! That one is Don Juan.
- Hello Don Juan
- Hello, this wine is really good.

NOW

- Look, the “Language” teacher is always at the street. He has so much spare time.
- He has a nice life!