

# Multiple Marriage and Family System Analysis

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## Summary

The author shows how the five ego states CP, NP, A, AC, and FC of TA form a balanced and complete system when there is equal energy available in each ego state. To the extent that there is a lack of energy in one of the ego states, the system is unbalanced and will evolve into a new configuration usually involving outside agents such as therapists, social workers, relatives, or other liaisons. Genograms and egograms are utilized to model families in terms of systems and subsystems. This approach provides diagnostic insights of the current state of the family system as well as predictive capability for future states of the system at critical stress points.

In analyzing family and marital systems, the use of genograms and egograms provides insight and helps predict the results of modifications to the family system. Developmentally, family systems are known to proceed for some time in a stable state of homeostasis. Then some subsystem modification occurs (e.g., the last child leaves home), and the family re-stabilizes in a new configuration. The elements of the new system may or may not include only the remaining members, such as when remarriage occurs soon after a spouse is lost from a family. At these transition points, radical adverse changes are likely to occur as well as significant improvements. This paper uses systems theory to diagnose and predict the results of system change at these life transition points. The systems and subsystems of multiple family units are diagrammed and illustrated using egograms (Dusay, 1977) and genograms (Mueller, 1979).

At the Spring Conference, 1979, Charles R. Mueller presented a paper in which he described how to construct genograms. He used several visual models to show where the various ego state energies are bound in a family system. Figure 1 is an example of a family system, in which the energy of each of the ego states is bound solely in a different family member. In a larger or more complex family, there would be several persons who might be rivals for a particular ego state.

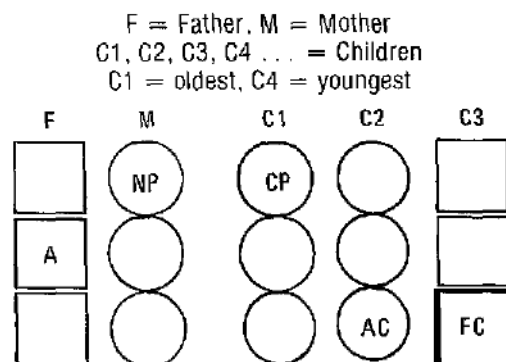


Figure 1  
 Genogram Model of a Family.

The genogram is a simplified map of each individual. It describes the probable location in the family system of each ego state.

To understand how it works, assume for a second, that in a *stable, autonomous* family system, out of the 100% energy available for operating as a system, 20% of the energy will be allocated to each of the CP, NP, A, FC, AC ego states. The egogram for such a family system would be the same as that for a stable, autonomous individual. (See Figure 2.)

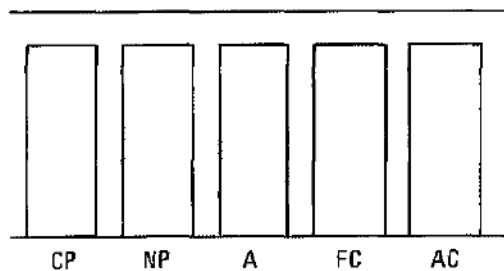


Figure 2

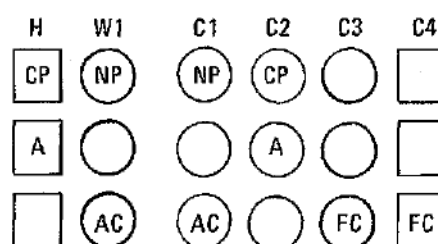


Figure 4

**Multiple Marriage Analysis**

The genogram analysis can provide immediate insight into otherwise complicated marital systems. Consider the case of a man (H), who, married 11 years to his first wife (W1) with 4 children, suddenly leaves her to marry W2, and after 5 years leaves her, stays single 2 years and marries W3. Figure 3 contains the genograms of W1, W2, W3.

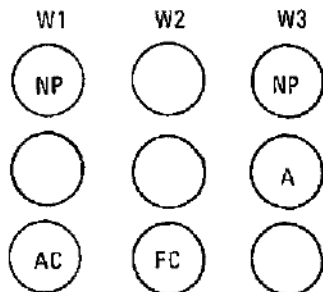


Figure 3

instability. Thus H divorces W1 and marries W2, who brings her FC (in herself) as well as the NP and AC in her two children. In this new family system, H learns to develop his Free Child from W2 and their marriage is happy as long as they are playing freely together.

H remains married to W2 for 5 years. The split comes when W2 goes back to college after 17 years, obtains her degree, and decides to live independently of H. This decision indicates that W2 learned to develop her A during those years with H. From here, H uses his newly created FC and enjoys being single. Marriage is no longer a necessity for him.

After two years, H meets W3 (See Figure 3 for genogram of W3) and is attracted by her strong A and NP and soon becomes her second husband. (H will be referred by H2 to distinguish him from W3's first husband H1.) The genogram for the W3-H2 family system is shown in Figure 5. H1 is included for reference.

Note that the sequential system spread over W1, W2, W3 fills the 5 ego state levels. The statement H made about his transitions from W1 to W2 was, "I fell in love with W2 and left W1 to marry W2." The split and remarriage came at the point the fourth child was 5 years old. The genogram up to that time had been as in Figure 4.

At approximately that time, C3 and C4 moved from a Natural, Free Child state to NP and CP, leaving little or no energy in FC, thereby causing a predictable system

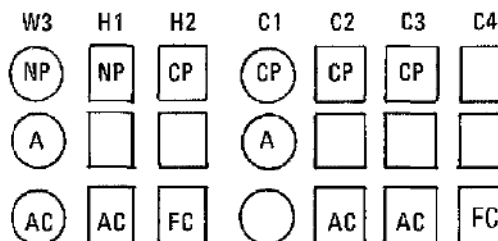


Figure 5  
Genogram at Transition from H1 to H2.

Note how the first family system of W3-H1 requires that CP reside in their children since both W3 and H1 lacked CP energy. C4 is the sole repository of the FC energy, or at least the major source of it. In the new family system, we can see that the W3-H2 represents an even distribution of energy in each ego state and we can predict several things that may likely occur. The W3-H2 pair will function as an independent system even though interdependent on each other. The egogram of the W3-H2 subsystem in Figure 6 shows clearly the interlocking nature of the symbiosis of the early marriage period.

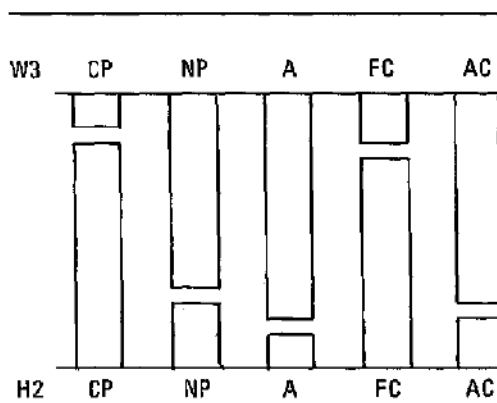


Figure 6  
W3-H2 Subsystem (Early Marriage)

The W3-H2 subsystem as represented in Figure 6 is stable and autonomous with equal energy available in all ego states. Equally well represented is the interlocking symbiosis of W3 and H2. The paradigm for movement to individual autonomy exists, however, because through second order learning,\* W3 can begin to develop her Critical Parent and Free Child and H2 can likewise his Adult, Nurturing Parent and Adapted Child.

The problem areas in the family system of W3-H2 are also predictable. In the beginning H2 will usurp or compete for the CP energy and will be extremely unpopular with C1, C2, C3. The relation H2-C4 will

tend to blend as well as compete for the FC energy. As W3 develops her CP and begins to compete for the CP energy, H2 can relinquish his CP energy as well as C1, C2, C3, who are no longer forced by default to fill the CP gap.

After a year of the predictable problems, including decreasingly stormy interactions between the W3-H2 subsystem and the children, the two subsystems evolve into a healthy symbiosis appropriate for teenage children and their parents in this culture. See Figure 7.

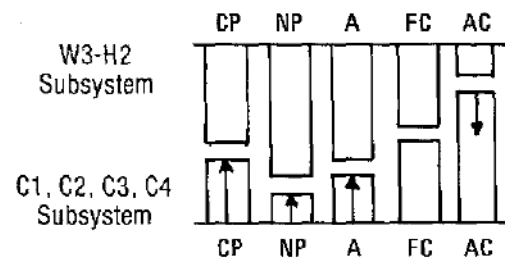


Figure 7

The arrows indicate the direction of movement of the energy levels which will allow each child in turn to develop (through second order learning) the capacity for representing energy at either CP, NP, A, FC, or AC in an appropriate, mature fashion. More importantly, the movement is towards the autonomy paradigm as diagrammed in Figure 8.

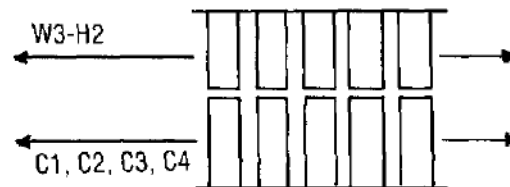


Figure 8  
Autonomy Paradigm

\*Second order learning is called Deutero-learning by Gregory Bateson in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, 1972.

#### MULTIPLE MARRIAGE AND FAMILY SYSTEM ANALYSIS

If you imagine the bars of the double egogram as made of sticks of wood, you can see that in a symbiosis such as shown in Figure 6. (W3-H2) or in Figure 7. (Family Symbiosis), that an attempt to separate (imagine a left/right movement) the two parts of the symbiotic system will cause the sticks to break, which can be considered a metaphor for a "catastrophic condition." The results are catastrophic only in the sense that the results are *not* predictable, except at the level that we can predict that outside help will be required to stabilize the subsystem (C1, C2, C3, C4) into a new system with balanced energy in

each ego state. In Figure 6, if H2 is removed, W3 would tend to restabilize as part of the C1, C2, C3, C4 subsystem. In Figure 7, if the W3-H2 subsystem is removed, then the C1, C2, C3, C4 subsystem would require outside resources (from relatives, friends, or social welfare services) in order to restabilize into a new system or systems.

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