



# **Understanding Family and Intergenerational- Intercultural Conflict**

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# Concept of Family

- **Affection:** The need to love and to be loved. The need for a healthy intimacy and nurturing is a natural need of every human being. Feeling love for who you are, you then feel free in any relationship - the importance of that unconditional love that in many cases is the “family” that provides affection at that level.

# Concept of Family

- **Control/power:** The power to make decisions, the freedom to decide what we want and the ability to get it. This varied from culture to culture and society to society because the power would include dominance, submission, mediation, obstruction, maintenance, cooperation, opposition, competition, association, option, necessity, superiority and inferiority.

# Concept of Family

- **Sense/meaning:** This is where members of a family aim for understanding. Meaning is a philosophical framework that provides us with explanations of reality, helps us find identity and gather a sense of who we are and who and what human being is. It is a meaning which involves the family and individual's ideas, creed, values, ideologies, worldview, sense of good and bad, sense of right and wrong.

# Concept of Family

The process in the family is complex and very rich. Then we could understand why within a family there are individuals with different ideas, values, and ideologies and of course different worldviews.

In a family, we all need space, time and energy which assists us to form our own worldview.

# Space in the Family

An individual develops their **space** according to the developmental life span - this is expressed in different ways, protecting its own space to play, to eat, to regulate distance between its own family members.

# Time in the Family

In relation to **time**, this is a sense of regularity and pattern which involves work, play, busyness, leisure and sleeping time.

# Energy in the Family

**Energy:-** families and individuals need energy to carry out their particular goals. For example, some parents or one parent works hard to have better living conditions (materials things such as house, car, land and business) to secure a better future for their children. Other parents work hard to educate their children, because they see education as the best life security for their children while others put energy in balancing both working and leisure, and manage their energy over a period of time, according to the needs to meet their priorities and goals in life.

# Power in family relationships

The impact of power in family relationships...

Power is a positive factor when an individual uses the power to support himself/herself, especially when people aim to protect their rights and their feelings and while they do not let others push them around or allow others to step on them.

Rather than being egotistical, they accept the rights of others to be different – to have different ideas and different attitudes and a different value system.

Usually, this is acquired within the family process.

# Power in family relationship

Some people give away their power. They have learnt to do so because of the family process which is related in many cases to societal norms. These people are usually the pleasers that put their own well being in the hands of others.

# Power in family relationship

The abuse of power and control occurs when people become aggressive and do not respect different ideas, attitudes and value systems and try to impose their own will on others, or try to manipulate and control other peoples lives.

# Power and intergenerational conflict

Power- plays an important role in the intergenerational conflict. Generally conflicts are related to the abuse and misuse of power, they are the major key factors.

# Generational Gaps

Generational gaps can be discussed from different perspectives:

- the developmental gap,
- the empathy gap and
- the values gap.

# Generational gap in relation to adults and adolescents.

**Developmental gap:** This occurs as the adolescent withdraws from his parents and begins to test out his own personhood. This is a natural process of a life span. Some parents who have been controlling the life of their children when they were not able to do so for themselves, then find it very difficult to let the adolescent learn to test their own personhood.

Usually, there is fear involved with the conflict.

The question is who is responsible for such fear and who has to deal with the fear?

# Generational gap in relation to adult and adolescents.

**Empathy gap:** Happens due to the fact that adolescent and parents are unable to empathize with each other because of circumstantial differences. Here we are talking about the different stages of life that people experience. For example the level of energy parents and young people experience in family relationships - mum could be affected by the typical symptoms of menopause, and the young girl will be starting her menstrual cycle with all the excitement that this process implies. Some parents are looking towards their retirement stage while their adolescents are dreaming and do not know what they want at this developmental stage in life.

# Generational gap in relation to adult and adolescents.

**Values gap:** This is the sociological and psychological stages experienced by the individual members of the family. Members of the family approach reality differently and they are to a large degree conditioned to accept certain values because of their cultural experience. This value gap is complex enough and occurs between two adults, especially around issues such as political beliefs, social or institutional group affiliations and so on.

# Generational gap in relation to adult and adolescents.

Values gap can be overwhelming when it occurs between youth and adults who are already separated in the developmental and emphatic sense. Young people might reject the basic values of the culture, which conditioned their parents and other adults, especially when they have exposure to another culture but adolescents in many cases do not have much option to disagree and therefore different conflicts arises from this value gap.

# Generational gap in relation to adult and adolescents.

For example, they feel they:

- do not fit into their parents' culture
- have identity issue
- feel inadequate in their family environment because they feel they do not have many choices
- feel rejected from their parents for having different ways of identification in things like: their taste in music/hobbies, their way of thinking and expressing themselves their life expectations and so on.

# Teenagers options

Teenagers are left with not many options: for some, leaving home is one option to live with their peers who are able to understand them, others are just waiting whatever; this means, have no interest for anything.

# Teenagers options

They feel a sense of loss in the new society - no family support which was for them, the more important expectation. Many teenagers see family as the backbone for their development.

# Intergenerational-Intercultural Conflict Needs Analysis

Sepulveda, Martinez and Ostapiej-Piatkowwski (2001)

## **DEFINITION:**

*Intergenerational conflict is a gap that exists between generations when they find themselves in a new environment. People said that during the process of adaptation, the family relationship suffers. The differences in people's values and beliefs create difficulties for them while adapting to the new pattern of living. Sometimes the perception of the pattern or the pattern itself is not clear so the process of adapting might be stressful and hindered. This is especially the case in times when people experience grief and loss of their strong patterns.*

# Intergenerational-Intercultural Needs Analysis

## DEFINITION

*Intercultural conflict is seen when common things in any culture that are important to the whole group of people are affected by societal changes including socio-economic factors. While cultural norms occur within an ethno-specific group, living in a multicultural society requires a different approach to culture, so the issues are bigger for newcomers and the host society as well.*

# Young and adult insights

- Young people said, an organisation like Kinections should talk to parents to teach them what it is like to be a teenager in another culture, what a teenager needs, how a teenager feels.”
- Parents said, “How do we learn to live with those conflictive issues”.
- Young people believe that, “Parents need to learn to control themselves, that parents have to get used to living in Australia and to realise that in this country things are different from their own country of origin.”

# Young and Adults insights

- Parents said, “Early intervention in raising awareness of realistic expectations to provide opportunities for sharing experiences, expectations and frustrations. In other words they discussed the need for developing preventative services.”
- Young people said, “Parents should talk more to counselling organisations but they are shy because they do not speak English and they do not believe in interpreters’ confidentiality.”
- Parents said, “Facilitate the process of supporting each other.”
- Young people said, “Parents need to treat children’s ideas seriously and with respect, parents need to know that young people have their own likes and dislikes. Parents need to learn to accept teenagers’ feelings and what they want. Parents should spend at least two hours on Saturday talking to their children. Tell the children that they love them and care about them, explain why things are not good for them.”

# Young and Adults Insights

- Parents said, “Support groups: small and flexible groups. This could be people who know each other and want to gather according to their needs, this group could be ethno-specific or multicultural. The main thing is that these groups need to be facilitated by professionals who are ethically aware of working with diversity of people’s backgrounds.”
- Young people said, “Parents need to be more flexible like Australian parents. If they do not understand children, do not punish them, they need to understand more.”
- Parents said, “Community education and psycho-educational programs which needs to consider the whole person in the settlement process, including safe human interactions, counselling training etc. as well as to educate schools to intervene in a more sensitive way, considering the family structure of the child.”

# Young and Adults Insights

- Parents said, to facilitate opportunities for people to participate in community, opportunities in which a person could develop their potential regardless of people's linguistic and cultural backgrounds. It was also discussed the need for to help the helper, especially for those people who are not accessing counselling and who rely on community leaders.”
- Parents said, “To facilitate positive dialogue between parents and children, considering the child's developmental process.”
- Young people said, “Parents should not expect their children to live how they live or to do what they do. Parents have to remember what they did when they were young.”

# Young and Adults Insights

- Parents said, “Information about parents rights.”
- Young people said, “Parents should not expect children to be very smart in order to compete for future employment. Parents need to be not only parents but also friends.”
- Parents said, “People need more information about the services available and opportunities for people to provide feedback about the effectiveness and relevance of services. Provide seminars about problems new arrivals might face. This may include dissemination of information at a personal level, not just through written information.”

# Young and Adults Insights

- Parents said, Kinnections as an advocator, could advocate to the education department for a new curriculum in which students learn to value other culture's differences and languages, thus students could learn another way of living. To advocate for ethnic schools, these schools are inclusive, free of charge and students do not only learn the language but also the history and the culture.”
- Parents said, “Organising therapeutic classes for mothers in a more social manner, where women could share their experiences and expertise (cooking, craft, English, yoga etc.).”

# Young and Adults Insights

- Parents said, “Support and culturally understand men by helping them in the transition period of the new culture, preparing them for new job environments, not just with skills but also mentally and emotionally.”
- Young people said, it would be good if father shows how he feels. I prefer talking to mother, she understands me more that father does.”
- Parents said, “Seek more funding in order to train and employ more multicultural counsellors in a variety of languages and from different ethnic backgrounds.”

# Summary of the needs analysis

- It is time to develop programs relevant to what people have identified as intergenerational and intercultural conflictive family relationship issues.
- To develop and deliver programs in a sensitive manner, considering people's diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This means that those conflictive issues impact and is dealt with differently from family to family.
- To develop family relationship program at a grass roots community development /community capacity building levels by considering participant's inputs, strengths, knowledge, wisdom and suggestions.

# Conclusion

The family values determine the importance and definition of affection, control/power, meaning or sense and how they will use space, time and energy to achieve their goals in their family life.

The family process is unique, and each member of a family is unique, therefore by understanding the family process we are able to see the diversity, complexity and richness all around us.



**Muchas Gracias**

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH**

*Mercedes Sepulveda*