NCFR Substance Areas 1-5

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# Substance Area 1: FAMILIES IN SOCIETY

## Research Article 1: The ideal woman

In this article, Holt, (2012) argues that the construction of gender in the United States revolves around social factors. Such is the case owing to the fact that the definition of the notion of gender is embedded in social defined or acquired accoutrements of sex. Holt, (2012) adds that a sociological and psychological understanding of gender presumes that society models individuals to embrace socially appropriate behaviors which from a psychological perspective, is a process achieved through a systemized structure comprising of rewards and punishment. In the formation of the social definition of the ideal woman, Holt, (2012) notes that the 1950’s were a very critical period – the post war era. Such is the case that in the United States, society developed certain ideological as well as institutional constraints which remained entrenched in the construction of women identities throughout the period. Particularly, Lippa, (2002) attributes the formation of these constraints to the cold war era. Specifically, after the war restructured the American labor force embracing women into mainstream labor positions that had been initially the preserve of men, which led to the development of the female identity around the image of Rosie the Riveter, the end of the war forced women out of the labor force and reestablished the prewar sexual labor divisions. In justifying this trend, society through popular culture reemerged with images of women in what had been conventionally accepted as the proper role of a woman – a home maker and a caregiver mainly intended for the function of procreation and helper of man (Holt 2012). Holt also discusses Elaine Taylor in his classic work Homeward Bound in which the author noted that the idea of an independent woman was perceived as a major threat to the cultural order. Major change however, came in the 1960s when the American labor force began to witness an increasing number of women (Renzetti & Curan, 2004). However, as women labor participation began to increase, they nevertheless still felt the need to adhere to the domestic ideal.

My main critique of this article is that it is mainly descriptive and as such rehashes age-old contentions that have been promoted by past research. In this sense the article does not offer something new to research. However, its use of magazines snapshots as evidentiary snippet previews in relation to perception of women goes a long way towards substantiating some of its claims. Snapshots of pieces from Family Circle in 1955, 1956 and Better Homes & Gardens 1956, 1950-1951 also serve as the main source of the article’s quantitative data.

## Research Article 2: Gendered media: The influence of media on views of gender

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Wood, (2013) notes that media portrayals in the United States are wrought with distorted cultural life patterns. Such is the case that the media in America has persisted with representations of women and men with entrenched stereotypes which have the effect of limiting human possibilities. While men are typically portrayed as adventurous, active, sexually aggressive and powerful women on the other hand fill the role of sex objects. Moreover, media portrayal of the female gender primarily focuses on thin, beautiful dependent, passive, dumb and an incompetent image of a woman. According to Wood, the female stereotype in the United States primarily focuses on a figure that devotes all their energy to improvement of their physical appearance and caregiving. This is particularly deleterious owing to the fact that it results in the distortion of how women view themselves in relation to what actions are regarded as normal for a women by society. Wood, (2013) continues to note that in the United States, J.A. Doyle’s masculinity studies using television shows also revealed that males are usually portrayed as aggressive and dominant with a knack for participating in exciting and adrenalin filled activities. Moreover, many men in television shows in the United States are usually reflected in a way that they come across as increasingly independent. Doyle’s studies as Wood reports, also revealed that, another interesting factor when it comes to portrayal of men by American television shows relates to how they are not presented. According to Doyle, as Wood reports, in TV shows, men are rarely presented doing house chores. Moreover, it is rare for boys and men to be presented caring for others. The media according to Wood has also created polar opposites of women – good women and bad women. Good women according to Wood are usually reflected against the bad ones. While good women are usually differential, pretty, and focused on their role as homemakers, bad women on the other hand are usually invisible on television.

### My critique of this article is that while it is mainly qualitative and as such wrought with descriptions, it substantiates most of its claims with interview narratives from a number of its respondents. The interviews particularly strengthen the argument for the portrayal of women through cultural and social stereotypes. The free flowing responses to the interviews denote that the researcher employed unstructured questions which allowed the respondents to provide answers in their own words. This contrasts with structured questions in which the respondents select answers from a list or a set of options/choices.

## Research Article 3: Women, men, and the changing role of gender in immigration

In this article, the author reflects the changing roles of women in the United States against the traditional role of a woman in Mexico. In Mexican culture, according to the article the meaning of gender is acquired through everyday life activities. This means that as a child continues to grow, the daily activities in which parents or caregivers have them participate shape the societal gender expectations. One such societal model in Mexico from which children come to learn how masculinity and femininity are constructed in their society is through the spatial organization of residences. In Mexico, men and women’s gender roles are reflected in spatial distinctions of the street and the home, conventionally referred as la calle and and la casa respectively. As such, men are at liberty to leave the home be it for work or leisure which draws from the fact that that in Mexican society, part of the masculine gender role is to provide for the family. Subsequently, men are not expected to ask for permission when leaving home. The notion of la calle or the street signifies a man’s space which in essence has led to the construction of other freedoms including freedom to drink and to be unfaithful (infidelity). Women on the other hand occupy la casa – the home. In Mexican culture as the article reports, women are expected to be homemakers or amas de la casa, as it is popularly referred to in Mexico.

In the United States, owing to the fact that many immigrants come to the country mostly because they seek to improve their economic situations, they are increasingly likely to abandon their traditional gender expectations and join the workforce. The most significant change attributed to women joining the labor force is the fact that they subsequently gain leverage over men and at the same time, they gain their independence.

My critique of this article is that it uses the Spanish language to induce the reader into the cultural context of the topic –Mexican culture. Such is the case with the use of terms such as la casa and la calle whereby the reader is able to transfix their thought on the cultural backdrop on which the article is based. The author also skillfully employs headings which divides the article into different sections thus allowing the reader to concentrate on one aspect of the topic at a time. The use of images to reflect the changing roles of women in the United States provides the reader with a context and as such helps with understanding of the major arguments of the article. The use of case studies provides the author with a chance to have in-depth insight into the topic using real life settings.

# Substance area 2: INTERNAL DYNAMICS OF FAMILIES

## Research Article 1: The relationship between work-family

In this cross-sectional descriptive study, the authors analyze the relationship between work-family conflicts and the level of efficiency among female nurses in an Iranian hospital. The authors contend that work family conflicts are associated with numerous negative outcomes for both individuals’ careers and on the companies for which they work. The results of the study indicate that there is a meaningful difference between the work family relationships of employees in permanent jobs and those on contract. This is partly attributed to the fact that the working hours of the two sets of employees are different. Subsequently, according to the authors while work hours of nurses serving on a permanent basis are usually fixed and regularized, contract workers on the other hand have work hours that are irregular and variable. The authors point out that compared to permanently employed workers, workers serving various organizations on a contract basis are reported to manage their work-family conflicts less successfully. This is attributed to their irregular working hours whereby they are not able to balance their work with their roles in the family. Moreover, the authors also report that employees with a high number of working hours compared to those with fewer working hours report a high degree of work-family conflict. As such, the authors conclude that there is a direct relationship between work family conflict and number of working hours – if the number of working hours is high, the level of work-family conflict is high, while a low number of working hours results in low work-family conflict.

The work family conflict according to the authors also has implications in relation to the nursing profession itself. Such is the case that work-family conflict was linked to emotional distress, lower job satisfaction levels, as well as fatigue, and symptoms of depression.

My critique of this article is that it use of a cross-sectional research design to analyze work family conflict with nurses degree of efficacy in Iran offered the researchers with an instrument to perceive two variables. The study also employed a satisfactory sample size of 180 nurses. Moreover, the sample size was also diverse in the sense that it comprised of both contract based and permanently employed caregivers. However, one of the major disadvantages of the sampling technique, convenience sampling is the fact that by extending the researchers the advantage of a study population that was close to hand or available readily, the inferences cannot be generalized to a larger population.

## Research Article 2: Conflict management in the family

According to the author, conflict is not only an intrinsic but also an inevitable part of human existence. This means that people cannot avoid conflict because people are bound to pursue their interests as well as goals a process that is inherent with struggle over values not to mention claims to wealth, prestige and power. Significant to note is the fact that in such pursuit, members of the family are bound to neutralize, injure and in some cases, are also forced to get rid of other members that they perceive as competitors and as such, deem as a danger. Conflict is also inevitable among members of a family owing to the fact that in pursuit of personal interests, different family members are likely to disagree because of variations in personal principles. The author list a number of causes that are attributed to conflict in the family. Firstly, according to Edinyang, (2012) conflict among family members is usually attributed to financial constraint. Particularly, members of a family usually come into conflict because the head of the family is not in a position to provide critical financial assistance. Such financial assistance usually goes towards paying for school fees, provision of basic needs among other chores. Financial constraint may also result in conflict because it makes a provider to have numerous unfulfilled promises. Other conflict in the family are attributed to children. This is attributed to divided children loyalties whereby male children may for instance, ally with the mother and gang up on their father. Sexual problems are also a cause of conflict in families. According to Edinyang, (2012) this may be an attribute of incompatibility or the inability of one partner to satisfy the other. Other causes include psychological and social causes.

My critique of this research is that its use of secondary sources allows it to review several subtopics related to family conflict management. Moreover, the author also divides the article into several subsections which allows the reader to focus on one item at a time ultimately allowing easy synthesis of information. Its use of bullet points also enumerates several points clearly which enables the reader to generate a list, for instance of causes of conflict, as well as different ways of managing conflict.

## Research Article 3: Family conflict resolution: Its measurement

In this research, the authors developed a measure of family conflict resolution (FCRS) and provided and preliminary reliability validity information by adapting items on the scale frm existing measures or rationally developing new measures and adapting them to the scale. According to the authors, the measure was reported to have high internal consistency. The authors also reported that FCRS scores were negatively correlated with conflict measures. The authors conclude that the measures of conflict resolution tap into different but related constructs. Particularly, the authors report that the measures of the FCRS scores were negatively consistent with other measures reported elsewhere for maladjustment. Contrastingly, the FCRS scores were positively correlated with life satisfaction measures which in essence supports convergent construct validity.

In relation to clinical relevance of the FCRS unit measure as relates to conflict avoidance and management, the results of the study – as relates to its conflict management group- the authors report average levels of perceived conflict although they note that the results exceeded the cutoff score noted for identifying distress or maladjustment. Conventionally, clinical work as well as research point to the fact that that report self-avoidance of conflict under their own volition do not perceive such conflict as existing; however, the authors caution that the risk of maladjustment for this cohort is extremely high. Another observation that the authors make is the fact that avoidance of conflict should be taken as a clinically meaningful risk factor that increases the likelihood for maladjustment.

My critique of this article is that it employed a satisfactory sample size of 332 participants. Moreover, the sample was also diverse comprising of 98 males and 234 females, drawn from a population of young urban adults. However, the results may be limited from a cultural perspective in the sense that the sample size was mainly drawn from a Midwestern Catholic tertiary institution. The study also employed a diverse line of instruments including the Family Environment Scale and the Brief Symptoms inventory, not to mention the Langner Symptom’s survey. At the same time, to measure the construct validity, the study deployed a correlation analysis (Pearson correlation analysis). Construct validity is particularly important owing to the fact that it helps to examine the degree to which a given measurement scale ascertains the theoretical construct that the tool is expected to measure.

# Substance Area 3: HUMAN GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT OVER THE LIFESPAN

## Research Article 1: Accelerating progress: A new era of research on character development

The authors contend that the development of character among adolescent youth has to be prioritized among educators, frontline youth workers, and policy makers. In order for these stakeholders to meet these rising demand, there is a need for scholars specializing on character to draw from a wide range of disciplines and push beyond conventional boundaries that have been established by scientific studies. The first step in this approach according to the authors is understanding the underlying structure of adolescent character. This is critical owing to the fact that one of the pressing and significant questions within character development studies relates to the nature of an adolescent’s character. Subsequently, an understanding of the philosophical literature related to the area is critical. Particularly, the study highlights the work of the classical scholar, Aristotle, who pointed out that an individual’s character comprises of both civic and moral virtue. The question that remains relates to how educationalists and psychologists can incorporate this elements in the overall structure of adolescent behavioral theories in trying to understand this stage of development. A key starting point that the authors propose is Davidson’s (2005) conceptual framework of moral and performance character. Additionally, the authors also high a four-dimensional framework that comprises of intellectual, civic, moral, and performance character. The authors also highlight relationships among character strength. There justify their proposal using Nicomachean ethics in which the classical scholar Aristotle postulated the notion of unity of virtues – primarily, according to Aristotle, in order for one to excel in one, they were required to be better in all of them, meaning that, an individual, particularly, an adolescent needs to be all rounded when it comes to character and virtue in order to avoid maladaptive behavior. Another area that the authors propose relates to individual profiles, whereby according to the authors there is a need for studies on the trajectories of specific character strengths. What this means is that individuals, in developing a particular character strengths, usually follow a marked path. Understanding of this character trajectory can go a long way towards avoiding maladaptive behaviors among adolescents and establishing contexts that promote the formation of desirable characters among youth.

My critique of this article is that it employs a focused literature review to analyze character development among adolescent youths. The researchers formulate five major research questions whereby they proceed to transform the research questions into the major areas of emphasis throughout the article. Ideally, the article uses evidence from numerus peers with a total of 32 references. The authors also declare their conflict of interest and mention their compliance with ethical standards while researching the subject.

## Research Article 2: What do teachers think about youth purpose

According to Moran (2016) when it comes to adolescents, purpose development is particularly critical in their educational effectiveness. The authors start by acknowledging that among many youths, purpose is usually normative whereby the school particularly plays a central role as an instrument for promoting normative behaviours and goals. Such is the case because, the schooling system is the backdrop against which children and adolescents find mentors as well as models for behaviors which in essence generates an opportunity to step into a certain pathway of personality. However, the authors are quick to caution that the relationship between todays schooling practices as well as purpose development is a poorly understood dimension in research. Such is the case that while on one hand many youths in the United States find it hard in establishing the link between the schooling process and their long term goals, a majority of school based programs have proved that life purposes can be achieved via civic engagement, character education as well as whole child curricula. The authors also note the primary distinction between purposeful development and educational practices in which many learning institutions in the United States tend to acknowledge the fact that purpose has content – this primarily defines what an individual student intends to become in the future. Such is the case that students choose a variety of disciplines and professions including becoming and astronaut, eliminating racism or increasing conscience among students. Significant to note is the fact that more specific classroom programs can go a long way towards linking students to an area of success. However, this is not the case because schooling in many countries around the world usually has its basis on objective academic standards and as such overlooks individual students’ personal goals. This is further worsened by the fact that in many countries, most school curricula embrace a one-fits-all strategy which ultimately results in students discounting the value of a lesson to their individual future plans.

In correcting for this anomaly, the authors highlight the central role of teachers noting that teachers are a source of strong interpersonal relationships and also at the same time add an emotional dimension to the process of learning. This is particularly critical, owing to the fact that it stimulates personal meaning and as such transcends the personal self-orientation among adolescents. Moreover, the author reports that teachers, in the education process are also known to be purposeful. As purposeful individuals, teachers remain resilient and as such are increasingly inclined to pursue lifelong motivations. Ultimately, this forms a strong and powerful source of reference point for young learners.

My critique of this article is that while striving to understand teachers dimensions of purpose in their lessons the use of case research allowed a longitudinal observations of teachers (a male in their 20s, female in their 30s and female in their fifties) over a period of two years. This in essence allowed the study to derive detailed and contextualized inferences and thus ultimately led to an understanding the dynamic process of teachers’ dimensions of purpose in their lessons.

## Research Article 3: Developing leaders of character at the United States military academy: A Relational Developmental Systems Analysis

In this study, the authors use the US Military Academy to understand the development of character in an institution of higher learning. USMA according to the authors, has built a reputation as a world leader when it comes to development of leaders. This fact about the institution is captured under its mission in which it is stated that the school intends “To educate, train, and inspire the Corps of Cadets so that each graduate is a commissioned leader of character committed to the values of Duty, Honor, Country and prepared for a career of professional excellence and service to the Nation as an officer in the United States Army.” In order to fulfil this mission USMA also referred to as WestPoint relies on curricula as well as programs whose design is aimed at inculcating cadets with attitudes, behaviors, as well as values and virtues that are a reflection of an evolving commissioned leader. Particularly, Westpoint as Callina et al (2017) report relies on a 47-month program in which the institution introduces its diverse student community to a repertoire of behaviors, competencies, attitudes, as well as skills to become commissioned officers.

My critique of this article is that it employs a descriptive approach to understand current practices for developing leaders at a military institution. It then weighs the strengths of the derived models against relational developmental system theories. This is particularly ideal, because these theories are part of the cutting-edge techniques in contemporary human development studies.

# Substance Area 4: HUMAN SEXUALITY

## Research Article 1: Relationship of sexual dysfunction and its associated factors in women with genital and breast cancers

The authors begin by defining the concept of sexual dysfunction whereby they relate sexual disorder to mental as well as social changes in an individual’s life. Primarily, sexual dysfunction as the authors report creates both interpersonal problems and stresses which include among others hatred of sexual activity, a decline of personal human desires orgasmic disorder, as well as sexual arousal disorder. There are a number of factors that are attributed to this state and include quality of relationship, age duration, individual psychological factors. One of the most significant observations that the authors make in the article is the fact that sexual dysfunction is linked to childhood relations as well as previous failed relationships and in some cases individuals with sexual dysfunction usually do not having a strategy to cope with negative or stressful emotions whereby they are forced to turn to drugs. Sexual dysfunction is also explained as a result of diseases. Particularly, the authors emphasize on the role of disease in sexual dysfunctions noting that it can be a primary contributor because of several reasons including body dementia, long term hospitalization, as well as reduced ability for an individual to carry out daily activities. The authors also mention that sexual dysfunction is particularly prevalent among women – sexual dysfunction has a 40 percent prevalence among women with the rate even higher among those with gynecologic cancer.

My critique of this study is that it employed a large enough sample of 150 women who all had genital and breast cancers. Moreover, the two-stage sampling tool, a type of probability sampling, allowed the researchers to obtain their research needs – a disease demographic need as well as the sexual function need. At the same time, the researchers also used sufficient data analysis tools including t-test, SPSSS, and ANOVA.

## Research Article 2: A Review of affecting factors on sexual satisfaction

In this study, the authors aimed to explore the factors that are attributed to sexual dissatisfaction among women. One factor that is mentioned in the study is demography under which the authors discuss age as it relates to duration of marriage, and the age gap between the spouses age. According to the authors, in the general population sexual satisfaction continues to decrease for women with an increase in age. This is attributed to new emerging tasks including child care in addition to other responsibilities that women are expected to oversee in the community. The authors also explain that, in given demographics, when the age gap between married couples is less (10 years or less) the level of sexual satisfaction is reported to be higher. However, in some cohorts, when the age gap between married couples was 5-6 years higher, the level of sexual satisfaction is usually lower.

My critique of this article is that its research terms and subsequent synthesis of the derived articles for inclusion of the study resulted in a sufficient number of articles related to the research topic. However, although one of the strength of the study is that some of the old articles are dated but remain relevant to current knowledge related to sexual dysfunction. A number of ideas might be outdated.

## Research Article 3: Psychosocial and relationship issues in men with erectile dysfunction

According to this article, erectile dysfunction is not just limited to older men – it affects men of all ages including younger men. The author also discusses numerous effects of erectile dysfunction including functional effects, psychosocial effects, as well as emotional effects. According to Dimeo (2014) the inability of a man to function, that is, to physically maintain or achieve an erection is critical to the male person as well as their sense of maleness. This is the case owing to the fact that maintaining an erection is a highly-prized ability in a man’s hierarchy of functions. This is followed by penile penetration, sexual desire, and ejaculation in that order. Significant to note is the fact that the inability of a man to function sexually greatly affects the role that man plays in the world which in essence means that it takes way that ability. A part from functional effects, erectile dysfunction also results in psychological effects. This is proven by the fact that among men who suffer from erectile dysfunction, a number are reported to seek professional psychological help. However, many men who suffer from erectile dysfunction may end up not seeking therapy owing to the lack of support from their spouse or alternatively, because of denial or the problem of fear. Men, according to Dimeo, (2014) are also reported to erect barriers in front of themselves making resolving the psychological underpinnings of erectile dysfunction particularly hard. Erectile dysfunction is also attributed to emotional effects including anxiety, low self-esteem, as well as depression.

Dimeo in this series uses a sufficient number of research questions in the survey to find out the respondent’s sexual psychosocial history. The questions are also diverse and cover both the frequency and quality of erections. However, the researcher opts a descriptive approach in presenting the results with no quantitative statistics.

# Substance Area 5: INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

## Research Article 1: Interpersonal Relations: Cooperation and Competition

The author in this article contends that the social relationships between any given two people requires that the consequences or effects that draw from their continued contact are in part the result of a response pf the other party. The author goes on to explain that historically studies have emphasized contingency and cooperation whereby relationships are reinforced by both parties’ responses. However, in their study, the authors focus on finding out the specific contingency that plays a larger role. The authors rationalize their approach on grounds that addressing these area, especially in experimental research will go a long way towards unravelling the relevant controlling variables in the relationship. One such variable includes the frequency of opportunities to audit others performances, level of face to face interaction, as well as number of participants, not to mention types of reinforcement contingencies. Shmitt (1984) also notes that one of the contingencies that researchers tend to neglect is cost effectiveness – that is the amount of behavior that a given reinforce maintains. The authors conclude by noting that the exchange that typically occurs between subjects is in many cases followed by reinforce inequities and shortages that different parties find aversive.

My critique of this article is that Schmitt in his review of interpersonal relations divides the topic into subareas thus allows the reader to synthesize the data in constituent blocks. One of the major strengths of the article is the fact it employs a sufficient number of references to support the authors claims and comments on several areas including influence of group size and cost effectiveness.

## Research Article 2: Human communication and effective interpersonal relationships: An analysis of client counseling and emotional stability.

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 In this study, the Okoro and Adigwe focus on the role of interpersonal communication in client counselling contexts with the aim of developing stability and long lasting client-counsellor relationships. The researchers, based on analysis of content related to the interactions between counselors and clients, in addition to literature reviews, personal discussions and interviews, they conclude that effective interpersonal communication is a central factor in the achievement of high level client recovery, speedy compliance, as well as enhanced self-awareness. In their review, the authors analyze the role of psychology in communication discussing several practice and responsibilities implications. They note that in practice, the role of the counsellor is to reduce their client’s personal and interpersonal distress as well as neurotic anxiety. In order for a counsellor to carry out their roles effectively they need to remain informed about different areas of knowledge and a good comprehension of all issues in the patient’s context. Significant to note is the fact that by deploying strategic approaches in interpersonal communication, it can go a long way towards improving the relationship between counsellors and their clients. However, counsellors need to experiment with new communication strategies and approaches. The authors also tackle the interpersonal relationships, self-awareness, and social relationships. According to the authors, a social relationship is crucial in sustaining the relationship between the counselor and their client. Key to this relationship is interpersonal communication skills.

My critique of this article is the fact that the meta-analysis of various studies support the studies hypothesis that the quality of interpersonal relationships between clients and their counsellors plays a major role in improving the former’s self-esteem as well as emotional stability. However, the meta-analysis is thinly spread whereby the reader has to strive to link disparate sections into a single flowing read.

## Research Article 3: The impact of past relationships on interpersonal behavior: Behavioral confirmation in the social-cognitive process of transference

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This research extended previous studies on social perception and transference. The authors note that if transference affects social relations, it therefore follows that it has a place in interpersonal behavior between two individuals. The hypothesis that the authors assert in relation to social-cognitive model, and which falls at the center of the concept of transference, presumes that the social-cognitive model has a significant impact on interpersonal relationships. This draws from studies that have illustrated that the relational connections between one individual and the other that reside in both parties’ memories are usually set in motion during transference together with the significant other’s representations. Significant to note is the fact that this relationship should be invoked in the course of transference which in essence should have implications for interpersonal behavior. In relation to social cognition and transference, the authors note that in individual’s social cognition, the basic presumption in clinical practice usually presumes that transference operates in accordance with social cognitive rules. In the resulting model, the activation as well as subsequent invoking of significant other representation to be used in interpreting a new individual is thus thought to be critical for transference to occur.

My critique of this study is that it used a large enough sample whereby the study’s findings could be generalized on a research population. The researchers surveyed 240 undergraduates taking introductory psychology at a university in New York. Moreover, the study was also diversified with females comprising of 120 of the respondents while the rest were male.

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