

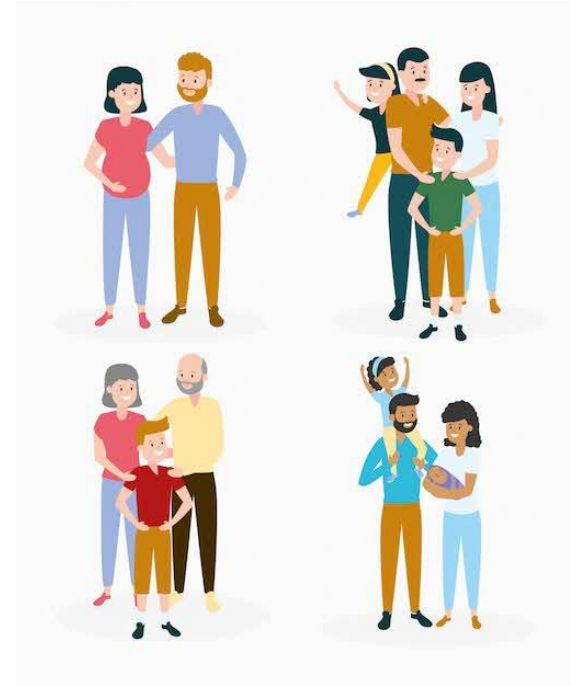
Strength in Numbers: Systemic Multi-Family Therapy (SMFT) with Families in Crisis



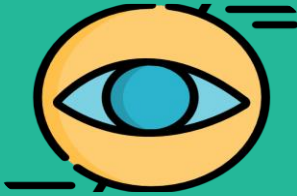
A/P Timothy Sim, Dr Eia Asen, Professor Joyce Ma, Professor Lily Ma, and Ms Soh Siew Fong

What is SMFT?

- Involves the bringing together of different families in a therapeutic context to work jointly to overcome each of their specific and very individual problems (Asen & Scholz, 2010).
- Systemic Multi-Family Therapy (SMFT) is a versatile model that can be adapted in varying ways and settings as well as a variety of needs (Loh *et al.*, 2021).
- SMFT is an evidence-based family-centred intervention.
- SMFT is conducted worldwide including Hong Kong and Singapore. (Ma *et al.*, 2021, & Loh *et al.*, 2021)



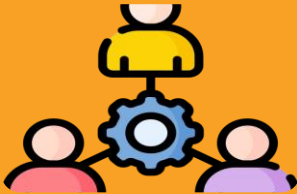
Major aim of SMFT Therapy



To enable families and their individual members to go beyond their own perspectives



To make use of the many resources that exist in a group setting



To encourage families to help other families by observing and understanding seemingly identical problems and by making suggestions. [Being helpful to others does increase their own feeling of self-worth] – Building bridges

Principles of SMFT

01

MFT combines the advantages of **single family therapy** with the specifics of **group therapy**.



Principles of SMFT

02

Group factors: mutual support and constructive criticism, role play and feed back are important ingredients of the approach, as is the discovery that suffering is not an isolated experience and that other people may live in similar circumstances.



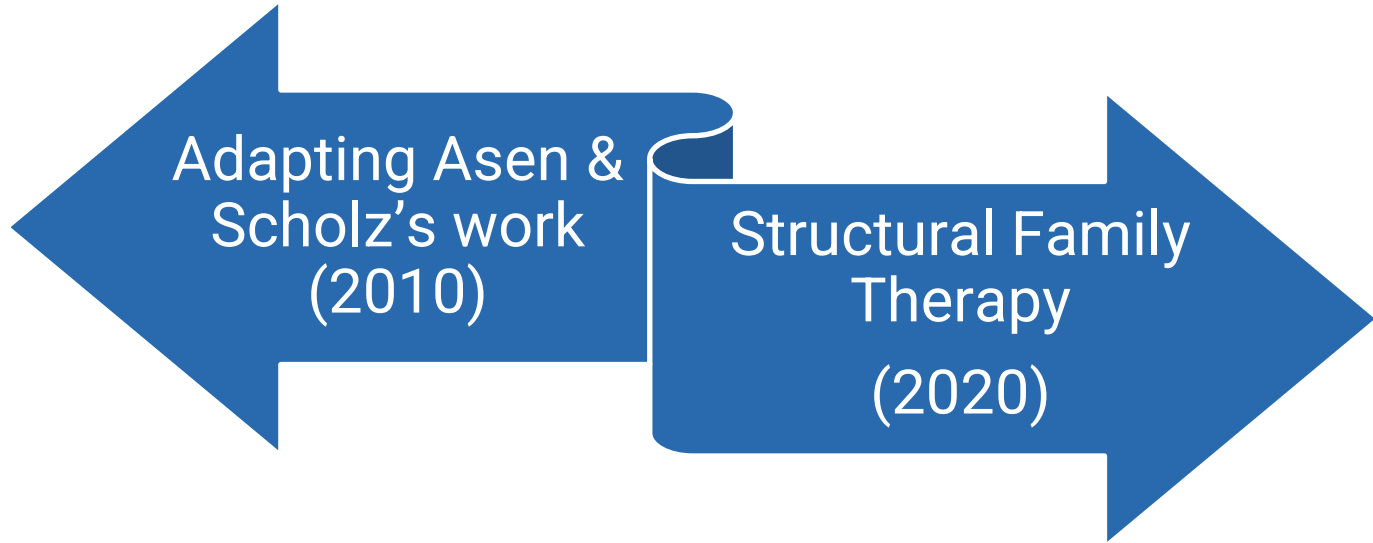
Principles of SMFT

03

The **hope for change**, often visible and embodied in other members of the group, is another factor which plays an important role in group work.



Theoretical Frameworks



Other techniques

- Reflecting team
- Video feedback
- Role reversal
- Cross fostering
- Yellow and red card
- Certificates

Technique – Five step model

[Asen & Scholz, 2010]

01

Observing and ‘punctuating’ problematic interactions and communications

02

Checking perceptions

03

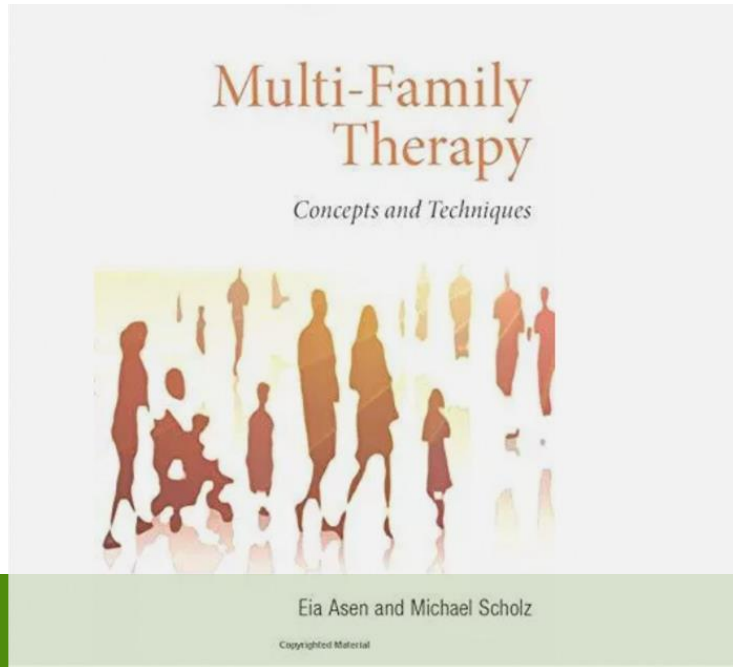
Inviting evaluations

04

Encouraging experimentation and action

05

Determining the wish to change



Structural Family Therapy: The Therapist Pouch

SECOND EDITION



THE CRAFT OF FAMILY THERAPY Challenging Certainties



SALVADOR MINUCHIN, MICHAEL D. REITER, AND
CHARMAINE BORDA

VIDEOTAPE DISCUSSION WITH THE EXPERTS

Why SMFT For Family Violence?



01

Recognition that some families wish to reconcile



02

Recognition of the power of groupwork

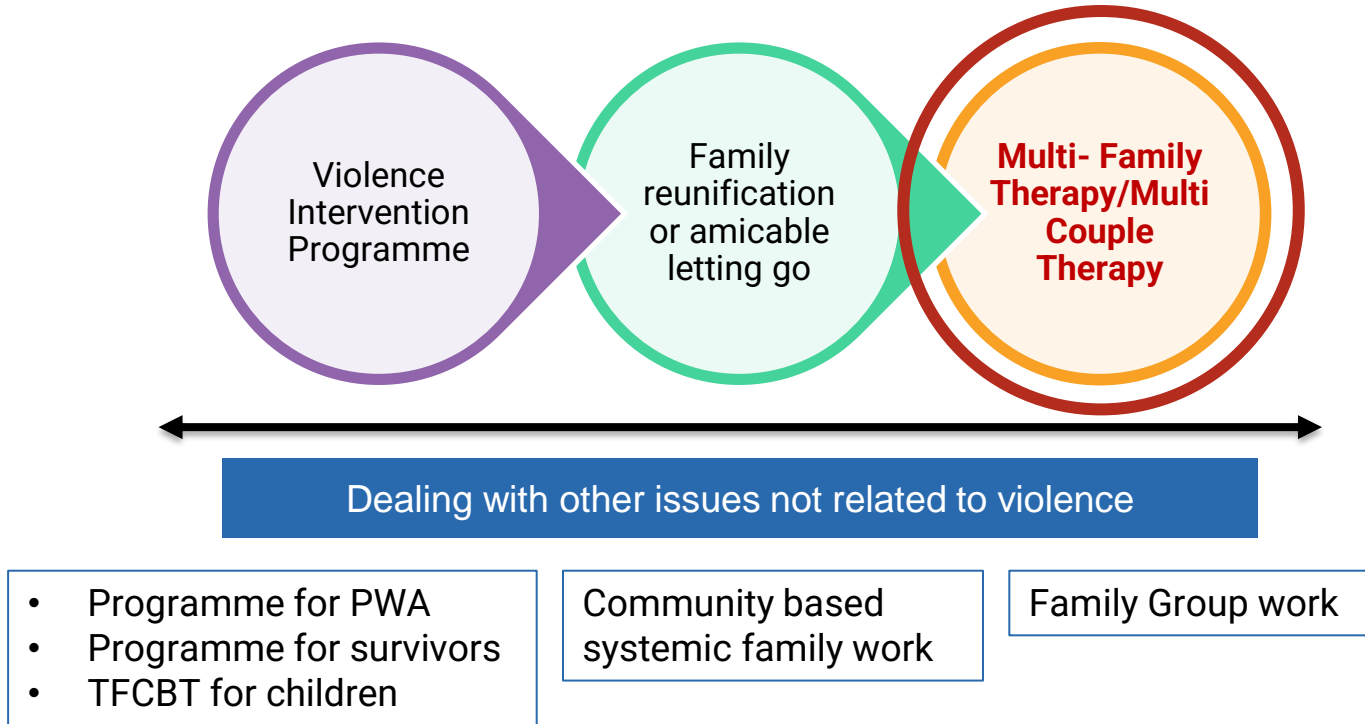


03

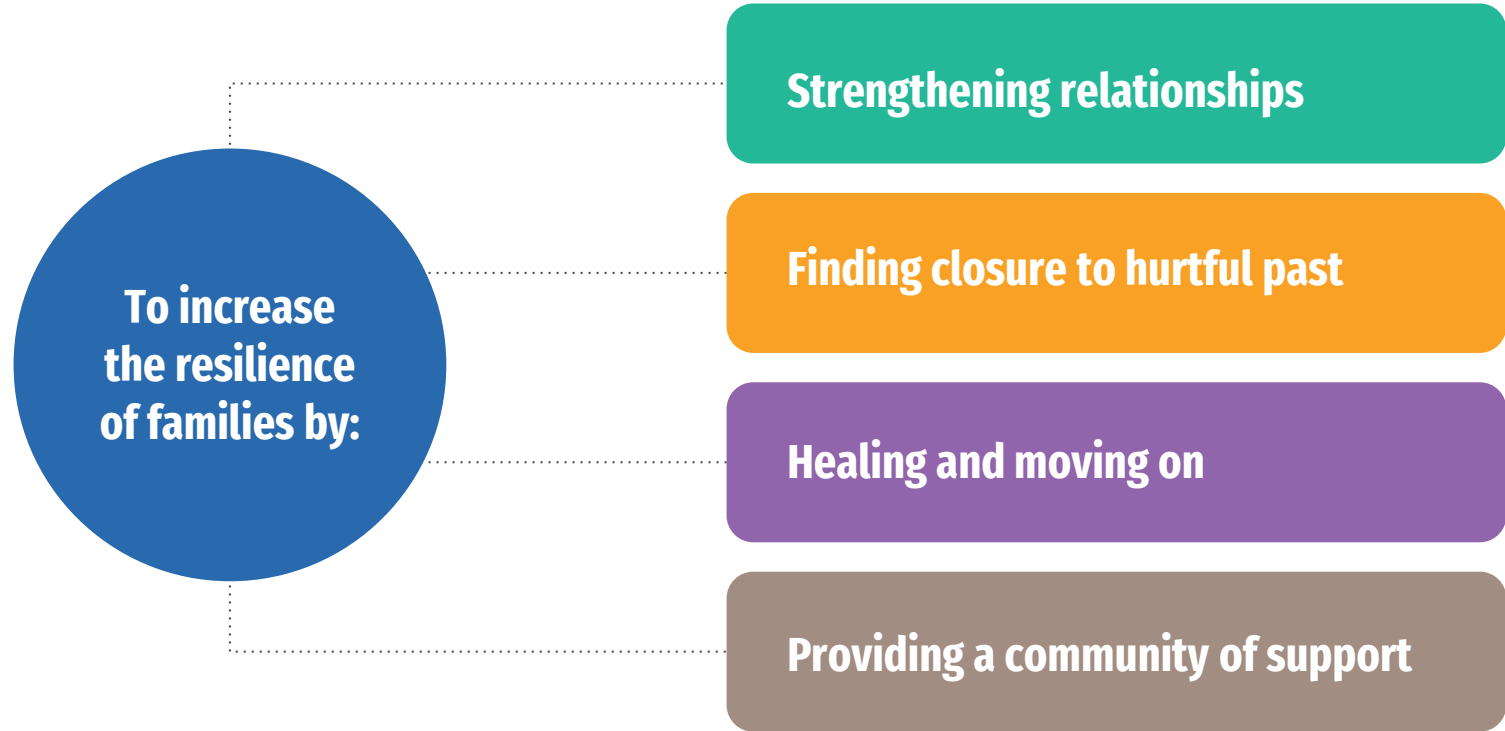
Cost-effectiveness

The Integrated Model – what it looks like

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE INFORMED



Goals of PAVE's MFT



Finding Connections

Module 1: Connecting the past, present and future

Activities: Learning park & Family Photo

Module 2: Challenging the family's rigid rules and roles

Activities: Kingdom & Blindfold maze

Module 3: Apology, healing and moving on

Activities: Ritual of Healing & Tree of hope

Using Asen & Scholz's work (2010) & Structural Family Therapy

Selection Criteria

Inclusion Criteria

01 All ethnicities, nationalities & socio-economic status

02 Families with at least one child

03 Safety is no longer a concern

04 Person who abused has taken responsibility in earlier phase of intervention

Exclusion Criteria

01 Ongoing substance abuse or mental health issue

Format

01

**First Run
(Oct 2022)**

- 2-day 1-night camp
- Kampung Siglap

02

**Second Run
(Jan 2024)**

- 2-day programme over 1 weekend
- Singapore University of Social Sciences

Participants

01

First Run (Oct 2022)

- **Total no. of participants: 11 (3 families)**
- Mainly primary school children (age range between 6 to 12)

02

Second Run (Jan 2024)

- **Total no. of participants: 15 (4 families)**
- Young children (age range between 2 to 9)

- ❖ Diversity: Different ethnicities, nationalities & socio-economic status
 - ❖ Mindful of developmental needs of children

Finding Connections

```
graph TD; A[Finding Connections] --> B[Module 1: Connecting the past, present and future]; A --> C[Module 2: Challenging the family's rigid rules and roles]; A --> D[Module 3: Apology, healing and moving on]; B --> E[Activities: Learning park & Family Photo]; C --> F[Activities: Kingdom & Blindfold maze]; D --> G[Activities: Ritual of Healing & Tree of hope];
```

Module 1: Connecting the past, present and future

Activities: Learning park & Family Photo

Module 2: Challenging the family's rigid rules and roles

Activities: Kingdom & Blindfold maze

Module 3: Apology, healing and moving on

Activities: Ritual of Healing & Tree of hope

Using Asen & Scholz's work (2010) & Structural Family Therapy

Reflections

01

**Role of
facilitator**

02

**Use of children's
voices**

03

**Power of group
dynamics**

04

**Resiliency of
families**

Clients' Feedback

The camp was excellent. All of us had a great time, especially both my children. My wife asked to be linked up with the others so that she can stay in touch.

Participant of 1st run

Previously, me and my wife never got a chance to see other couples who have similar problems. It never occurred to us that despite all the quarrels, they can talk together calmly. It is an eye opener for me.

Participant of 2nd run

Other Considerations

Commitment

Group Size

Homogeneity vs Heterogeneity

Future direction

- 2 possible models: Multi-couple and multi-family therapy according to the ages and needs of families
- Next phase: Regular group work sessions with couples



References

- Asen, E., & Scholz, M. (2010). *Multi-family therapy: Concepts and techniques*. Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.
- Loh, C., Liang, W., Lee, H., & Tang, C. (2021). Development of multi-family therapy for first episode psychosis in Singapore. *Journal of Family Therapy*, *45*(1), 21–46. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6427.12329>
- Ma, J. L., Xia, L. L., Yau-Ng, M., & Yan-Yee, C. Y. (2021). Treatment efficacy of multiple family therapy in helping Hong Kong Chinese parents recover from depression. *Journal of Family Therapy*, *45*(1), 47–64. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6427.12340>
- Minuchin et al (2020). *Craft of family therapy: Challenging certainties*. Routledge.