

Structural Family Therapy in Miniature:

- ❖ Developed in the 1960s by a psychiatrist named Salvador Minuchin
- ❖ Looks for explanation of problems in relational networks rather than individual psychodynamics
- ❖ Makes no assumption about how families *should be* organized
- ❖ **Goal of SFT to restructure family's organization, reduce symptoms, and create flexible boundaries**

➤ **Family Structure (Hierarchy):**

- Relationships between family members are organized into patterns
- Regulated by interpersonal boundaries
- This structure is measured between the extremes of disengagement and enmeshment

➤ Family is organized into *subsystems* with *boundaries*.

■ **Subsystems:**

- Smaller groupings in which family members meet/interact/overlap
- Specific ones to note: Couple Subsystem, Parental Subsystem, Siblings Subsystem, Individual Subsystems

■ **Boundaries:**

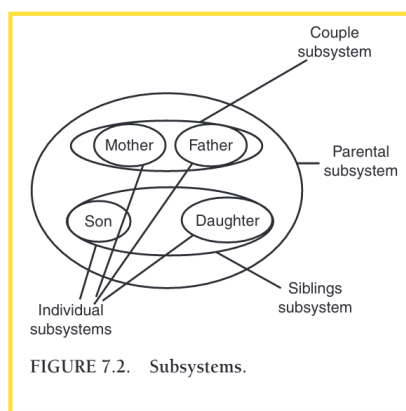
- The physical/emotional barriers that protect and enhance integrity of individuals, subsystems, and families

➤ **Enmeshed (Diffused):**

- Chaotic and tightly interconnected
- Loss of autonomy
- Parents are too close to their children to exercise leadership
- Lack of a clear line of authority

➤ **Disengaged (Rigid):**

- Isolated and emotionally detached
- Parents are too distant to provide effective support
- Lack of a clear line of authority



❖ **Three Main Strategies:**

- Challenge symptom(s), family member(s), or family

reality

❖ **Assessment:**

- Assess presenting problems and observe how family members respond to conflicts

■ **First Step:**

- Ask questions about presenting problems until family members begin to see that the problem goes beyond the symptom bearer to include the entire family

■ **Second Step:**

- Help family members see how their interactions may be perpetuating the presenting problem(s)

- *Third Step:*
 - Brief exploration of the past, focusing on how adults in the family came to develop perspectives that influence their interactions
- *Fourth Step:*
 - Explore options family members might take to interact in more productive ways to create a shift in family structure and help resolve presenting problems

❖ **First-Order Change:**

- Attempt to change rules
- Family changes behavior but still governed by the same rules
- Change within a system that itself remains invariant

❖ **Second-Order Change:**

- Change in family rules
- Reorganization of the system itself