

# Family/Systemic Therapy

# The Family Systems Perspective

- Individuals– are best understood through assessing the interactions within an entire family
- Symptoms– are viewed as an expression of a dysfunction within a family
- Problematic behaviors–
  - Serve a purpose for the family
  - Are a function of the family's inability to operate productively
  - Are symptomatic patterns handed down across generations
- A family– is an interactional unit and a change in one member effects all members

# Structural Family Therapy Treatment Goals

- Reduce symptoms of dysfunction
- Bring about structural change by:
  - Modifying the family's transactional rules
  - Developing more appropriate boundaries
  - Creation of an effective hierarchical structure
    - It is assumed that faulty family structures have:
      - Boundaries that are rigid or diffuse
      - Subsystems that have inappropriate tasks and functions

# Strategic Family Therapy Treatment Goals

- Resolve presenting problems by focusing on behavioral sequences
- Get people to behave differently
- Shift the family organization so that the presenting problem is no longer functional
- Move the family toward the appropriate stage of family development
  - Problems often arise during the transition from one developmental stage to the next

# Limitations of the Family Systems Approach

- An overemphasis on the system may result in the unique characteristics of the individual family members being overlooked
- Concern with the well-being and function of the system may overshadow the therapist's view of the needs and functioning of the individuals in the system
- Practitioners are cautioned not to assume that Western models of family are universal and must be culturally competent
- Therapists with a Westernized view of the family may inadvertently overlook the importance of extended family when working with families from other cultures