

# WEEK 2

Communication Patterns and the Creation of  
Family Identity

## RELATIONAL CULTURE

- “private world or rules, understandings, meanings, and patterns of acting and interpreting that partners create for their relationship”
- Relational culture is negotiated verbally and nonverbally
- Gottman found that distressed couples express their feelings, mind read, and disagree with negative nonverbal behavior

# COMMUNICATION RULES

- Communication rules
- Relational rules
- Constitutive rules
- Regulative rules

# RULE DEVELOPMENT

- Rules can be negotiated directly, but most develop as a result of repeated interactions.
- Rules have great staying power.
- Rules are maintained and changed through negative or positive feedback processes.
- Most rules are hierarchical

# IMPORTANCE OF RULES

- Rules set the limits of cohesion and adaptability within the family.
- The higher the relational knowledge between partners, the greater their comfort and ability to predict interaction patterns.
- Rules contribute to a family's sense of satisfaction

# TYPES OF RULES

- What can be talked about?
- How can it be talked about?
- And to whom can it be talked about?
- Metarules – rules about rules

# FAMILY SECRETS

- Family relationships are shaped by what is shared and what is held secret by family members
  - What dialectic does this remind you of?
- Secrets create or reinforce boundaries
- Communication Privacy Management Theory (Petronio)
  - Control is a boundary issue because people believe private information is owned or co-owned with others and revealing private information may make one vulnerable.

# TYPES OF FAMILY SECRETS

- Sweet secrets
- Essential secrets
- Toxic secrets
- Dangerous secrets
- Vangelisti categorizes secrets as:
  - Taboo
  - Rule violations
  - Conventional secrets



# FUNCTION OF SECRETS

- Bonding
- Evaluation
- Maintenance
- Privacy
- Defense
- Communication

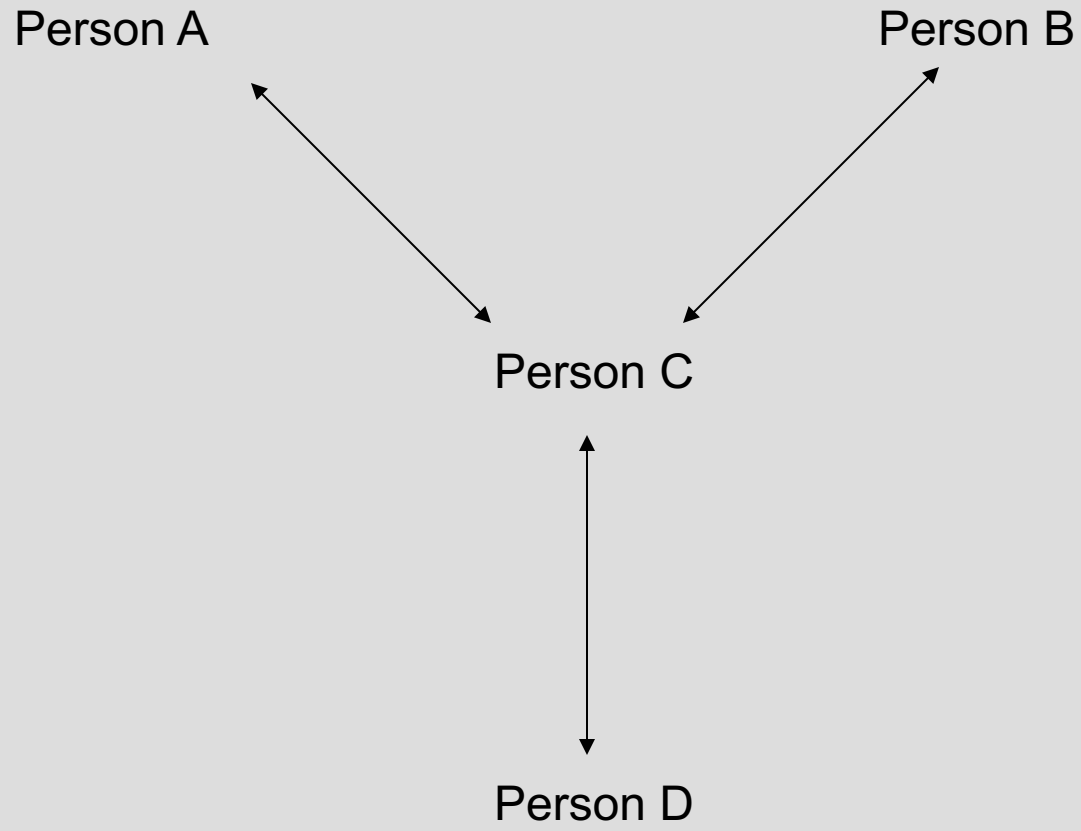
# COMMUNICATION NETWORKS

- Chain
- Y
- Wheel
- All-channel
- Combination

# CHAIN NETWORK

Person A ↔ Person B ↔ Person C ↔ Person D

# Y NETWORK



# WHEEL

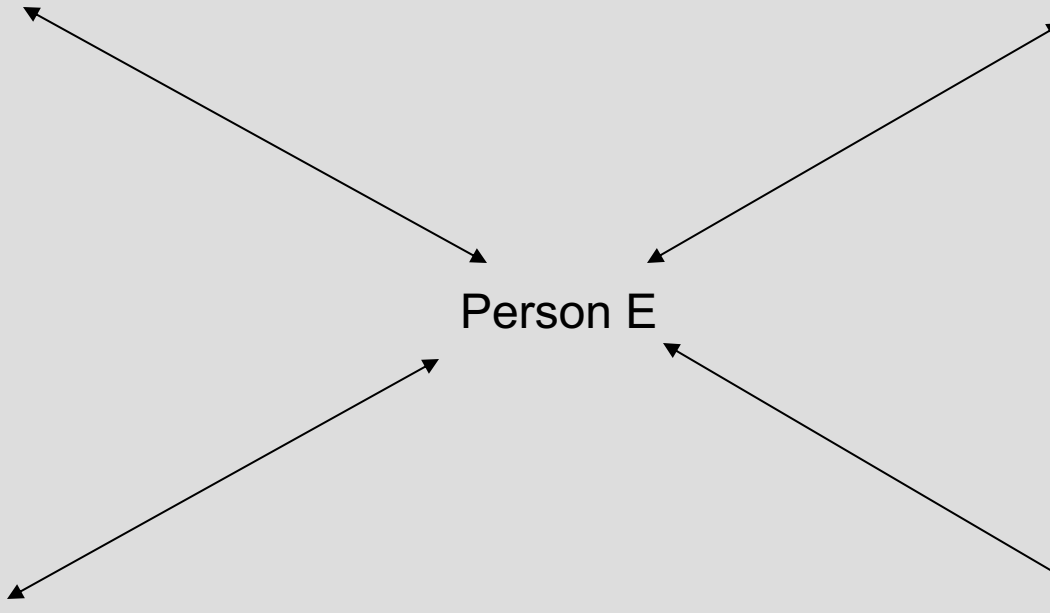
Person A

Person C

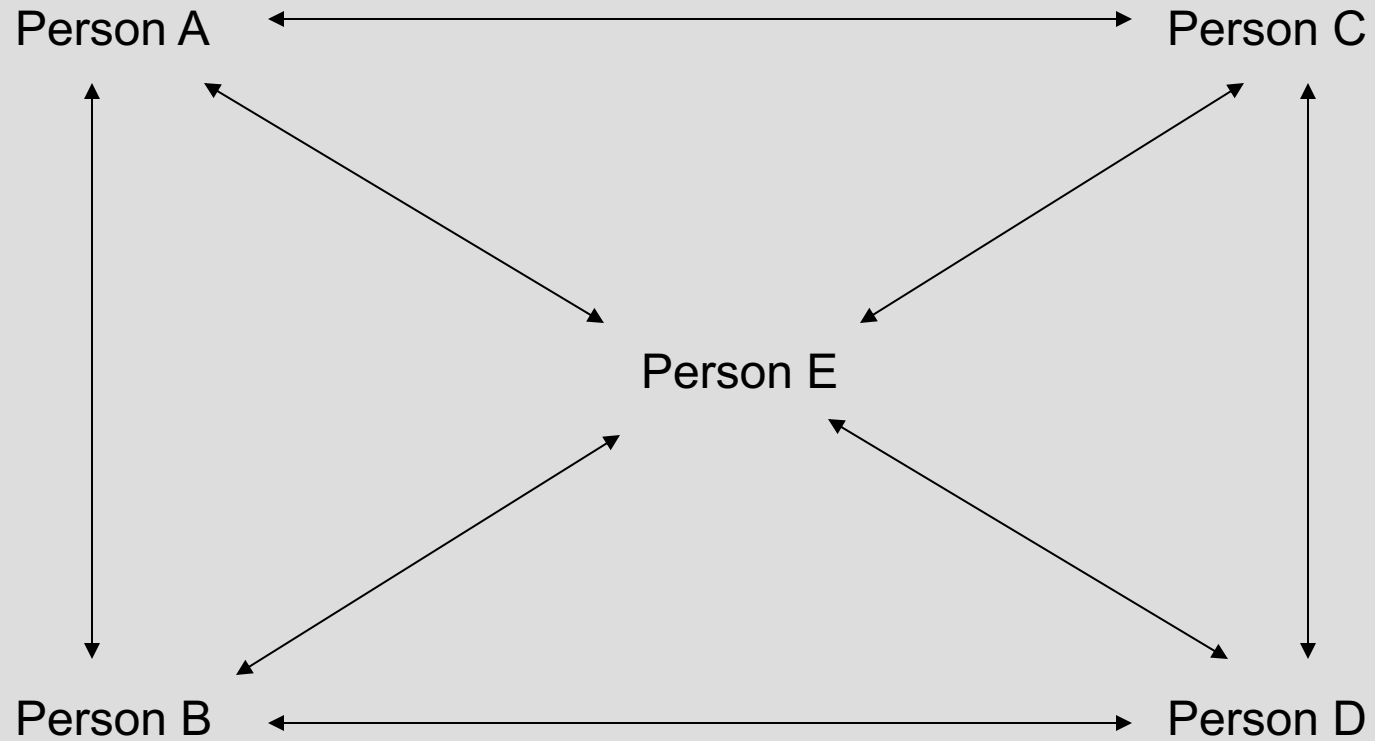
Person E

Person B

Person D



# ALL-CHANNEL



# MEDIATED NETWORKS

- Intentional connections
- Assumed connections
- Random connections
- Networked families

# NARRATIVES

- Functions of Stories
  - To remember
  - To create belonging and family identity
  - To teach expected behavior and deeply held values to current members and to socialize new members to these values
  - To provide stability by connecting generations
  - To entertain



## QUESTIONS STORIES ANSWER:

- How did this family come to be?
- Are parents really human?
- How does a child become an adult in this family?
- Will the family stand behind its members?
- How does the family handle adversity?
- What does it mean to be a \_\_\_\_\_?

# PERFORMING FAMILY STORIES

- Who tells?
  - Dickson's Typology of Couples
    - Connected couples
    - Functional couples
    - Dysfunctional couples
- When and where?