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9 **Change in family therapy: Accomplishing authoritative and**
10 **moral positions through interaction**11 PETER MUNTIGL^{1,2} AND ADAM O. HORVATH²12 (1) *Simon Fraser University, Canada*; (2) *Ghent University, Belgium*13
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20 **Abstract**21
22 *A fundamental theoretical premise in structural*
23 *family therapy (SFT) is that changes in individual*
24 *members and improvements in intra-familial rela-*
25 *tions are realized by repairing the family structure.*
26 *Problems in family relations are conceptualized in*
27 *terms of individuals taking on inappropriate roles*
28 *(e.g., children acting as if they were parents) and the*
29 *boundaries between parental executive levels and*
30 *the children/sibling level being unclear, too rigid or*
31 *highly permeable. The therapist's role is to temporarily*
32 *engage (join) with the family members in a way that*
33 *generates in-session interactions that may exemplify*
34 *a more desirable family structure. While the theory*
35 *supporting these interventions is well developed, there*
36 *has been little work done on explicating how such tasks*
37 *may be interactively accomplished in clinical practice.*
38 *We show how a master therapist in SFT accomplishes*
39 *some of these transformations during a single therapy*
40 *session with a mother and daughter. Drawing from the*
41 *methods of conversation analysis (CA), we focus on*
42 *the discursive resources through which the therapist*
43 *is able to readjust the role relationships between the*
44 *mother and her daughter (i.e., in such a way that the*
45 *mother can adopt a more agentic position vis-a-vis*
46 *her children) and how the therapist's actions index*
47 *core SFT principles of restructuring the family.*48 *Keywords: affiliation; alliance; authority; conversa-*
49 *tion analysis; epistemics; structural family therapy*

50

20 **1. Introduction**21
22 The overarching goal of our research program is to
23 examine how family therapy practices designed to
24 effect changes in family structures are realized dis-
25 cursively through interactions in clinical settings.
26 In this study we focus specifically on interventions
27 aimed at altering the relational structure of a family
28 unit and to create a new, more functional, 'moral
29 order'.¹30 The goal of restructuring relationships in the
31 intimate nexus of the client as a means of promot-
32 ing change is most explicitly articulated in systemic
33 therapies which are predicated on the premise that
34 an individual's therapeutic progress is contingent
35 on shifts in their relational context (Watzlawick
36 and Jackson 2010 [1964]). One of the most direct
37 implementations of this concept is in structural
38 family therapy (SFT), an evidence-based supported
39 treatment frequently recommended for a variety of
40 difficult-to-treat psychological problems, such as
41 substance abuse and juvenile behavioral problems
42 (Navarre 1998; Vetere 2001; Fishman and Fishman
43 2003).44 Salvador Minuchin, the founding theoretician
45 of SFT, argued that healthy individual function is
46 facilitated by clear hierarchical familial relation-
47 ships and well-defined but flexible boundaries
48 between generations (Minuchin and Nichols
49 1998). He postulated that the ideal structure or

50

1 moral order in such families operates in terms
 2 of parents functioning as agents at the executive
 3 level, establishing reasonable and clear boundaries
 4 that provide both limits and an appropriate degree
 5 of independence for the children. A lack of clear
 6 roles and responsibilities among family members
 7 (structure), poor, unclear communication or
 8 'boundary violations' – that is, children assuming
 9 executive roles or parents vacating the executive
 10 role – are considered root problems that produce
 11 dysfunction and psychological distress for the
 12 individuals in the family system (Aponte 1992;
 13 Fishman and Fishman 2003). These structural
 14 relational problems are seen as primary targets
 15 for therapeutic intervention. The SFT therapist's
 16 task, therefore, is to restructure the disorganized/
 17 dysfunctional family system and to promote clear
 18 communication and re-alignments, especially
 19 across the generations, that more closely conform
 20 to the moral order described above.

21 The family structure in SFT is seen as con-
 22 structed and maintained by the everyday inter-
 23 actions between family members (Minuchin
 24 1974). For this reason, family therapists pay close
 25 attention to and try to set in motion so-called
 26 dysfunctional family interactions that exemplify
 27 misalignments and problematic role expectations
 28 – displays that are termed *enactments* in SFT
 29 (Fishman and Fishman 2003). By witnessing these
 30 unproductive interactive scenarios *in situ*, the
 31 therapist is in a strong position to respond through
 32 interventions fostering relational re-alignments
 33 that work to destabilize or block the family's usual
 34 relational patterns. While the theory supporting
 35 these interventions is well developed, and the goals
 36 of these interventions are clearly articulated, there
 37 has been little work done on explicating how such
 38 tasks may be interactively accomplished in clinical
 39 practice.

40 Drawing from the methods of conversation
 41 analysis (CA) (Sacks 1992; Schegloff 2007), our aim
 42 for this paper is to show how a master therapist
 43 in SFT interactively works in a therapy session at
 44 readjusting the role relationships between a mother
 45 and her daughter, in such a way that the mother
 46 can adopt a more agentive position *vis-a-vis* her
 47 children. In particular, we focus on how the ther-
 48 apist's social actions may index particular stances
 49 with regard to who has primary entitlements to
 50 knowledge (i.e., epistemics), who has authority

to direct the conversation (i.e., deontics) and the
 degree to which a family member's talk is endorsed
 (i.e., affiliation). Our interest is in exploring how
 these stance-taking practices may open up possi-
 bilities for restructuring the family.

Following a brief literature review and a descrip-
 tion of the data and methodology, we turn to our
 analysis by showing the interactional practices in
 which the therapist (a) directs the conversation
 between the family members, helping them to take
 up and negotiate different family role positions, and
 (b) endorses the mother's entitlement to knowledge
 and parental authority.

2. Literature review: structural family therapy and conversation analysis

A number of techniques have been identified in
 SFT to bring about changes in family structure.
 One of the central tasks for SFT therapists – but
 also for family therapists in general – is to build
 alliances with family members (Sutherland and
 Couture 2007; Muntigl and Horvath 2016). For
 instance, therapists regularly adopt practices of
joining by entering the family system to create a
 new therapeutic system that includes the therapist
 and is often achieved through affiliative practices
 of confirming clients' distress. The SFT therapist
 also pays close attention to how families display
 dysfunctional interactional styles, problematic role
 expectations and inappropriate boundaries within
 family subsystems (e.g., parental, sibling, individ-
 ual). These displays, as noted above termed *enact-
 ments* (Minuchin 1974; Aponte 1992; Fishman and
 Fishman 2003), are considered valuable because
 they provide therapists with opportunities, in the
 here-and-now of the therapy session, to unbalance
 or block the family's usual relational pattern and
 to 'search for competence' in order that the family
 discover more desirable functional structures
 (Aponte 1992).

More recently, CA has been used to explicate
 how therapists and family members organize
 their social conduct to perform various kinds of
 therapeutic work. Buttny (2004), for example, has
 argued that problem-tellings, which form a central
 part of family therapy talk, implicate moral frame-
 works that involve social sanction (e.g., blame/
 disapproval or praise/approval). Recent work by

1 O'Reilly (2014) and O'Reilly and Lester (2016)
 2 has shown how blame and accountability arise in
 3 talk when parents work to display themselves as
 4 'good parents'. These researchers have found that
 5 parents would attribute blame to their children or
 6 would make a show of their appropriate parenting
 7 strategies. Family therapists, in response to such
 8 interactions, would work to reframe the issues of
 9 blame by focusing instead on empathy, feelings and
 10 praising the family members. When talk involves
 11 blame, the allegiances among family members
 12 and the alliance between family members and a
 13 therapist may be placed under stress (Sutherland
 14 and Couture 2007; Muntigl and Horvath 2016).

15 Applying CA analysis to SFT, it has been shown
 16 how a therapist may work to restore affiliation and
 17 a strengthened alliance by orienting to the blamed
 18 family member in various ways: identifying with
 19 the person's distress, praising the person's actions
 20 and disagreeing with self-deprecating talk (Muntigl
 21 and Horvath 2016; Horvath and Muntigl 2018).
 22 Problem-tellings involving conflict and blame
 23 may also lead to conversational impasses, but
 24 studies have illustrated how these impasses may
 25 also lead to 'forward moving' or change episodes
 26 in which family members may bridge their dif-
 27 ferences (Couture 2006, 2007). For example, in
 28 order to move the conversation forward during
 29 stuck events, family therapists can make use of
 30 interactional resources to collectively solicit family
 31 members' points of view or to respond in ways that
 32 indirectly lure a family member to provide more
 33 information or consider an alternate perspective
 34 (Couture 2007).

35 In order to examine issues of alliance stress,
 36 blame and accountability and change from an
 37 interactional and discursive perspective, certain
 38 concepts within CA have proven to be especially
 39 useful. These are *affiliation*, *epistemic author-*
 40 *ity* and *deontic authority*. Affiliative actions are
 41 prosocial and work to uphold social relations
 42 (Stivers *et al.* 2011; Lindström and Sorjonen 2013).
 43 Generally, responsive actions such as agreement,
 44 confirmation and compliance function in an affili-
 45 ative manner. Studies in psychotherapy and family
 46 therapy have been examining how ascriptions of
 47 blame or certain client actions such as disagree-
 48 ment can work to disaffiliate and how therapists
 49 can respond in ways that re-establish affiliation
 50 between them and their clients (Muntigl *et al.*

2013; Muntigl and Horvath 2014; Muntigl and
 Horvath 2016).

Epistemic authority concerns how speakers may
 display entitlements to knowledge and experience
 (Sacks 1992; Heritage 2012). For example, parents
 may or may not position themselves as having
 specialized access and primary rights in relation
 to their personal experience, with the added impli-
 cation that they are responsible for the difficulties
 that beset the family. Further, empathic responses
 from therapists may work to endorse parents'
 epistemic authority, especially in cases where they
 have demonstrated uncertainty about the appro-
 priateness of their actions (Muntigl and Horvath
 2016). It has also been shown that children may use
 epistemic resources such as 'I dunno' as an avoid-
 ance strategy in which they resist attempts from
 counsellors to probe their feelings (Hutchby 2007).

Deontic authority is often realized in directive
 actions that propose what can or cannot be done,
 such as requests, offers, proposals and suggestions
 (Stevanovic and Svennevig 2015). Therapist pro-
 posals for behavioral change can be a delicate activ-
 ity, and it is not uncommon for clients to resist such
 proposals (Ekberg and LeCouteur 2015; Muntigl
et al. 2017). Within SFT, therapists regularly exert
 control on the conversation by rearranging the
 setting (e.g., determining who sits where) and by
 having family members enact transactional pat-
 terns (Minuchin 1974).

3. Data and method

For this study we have analyzed a 50-minute
 videotaped session conducted by Dr Minuchin.
 This session was recorded with volunteer clinical
 clients, currently in treatment, and subsequently
 used by Minuchin in a teaching seminar for pro-
 fessional family therapists. As well as Minuchin,
 the participants in the interview included Suzanne
 (35), a single parent and recovering alcoholic; her
 daughter Marcy (12); and Jenny, the family's regular
 therapist.² The vocal and non-vocal features of the
 complete session were transcribed according to the
 CA conventions from Hepburn and Bolden (2013)
 – see Appendix for transcription conventions used
 in this paper. One of the core issues of the session
 concerns family role relations: whereas Suzanne
 has difficulty in recognizing and carrying out her

1 parental entitlements and responsibilities, her
2 daughter Marcy seems ambivalent in endorsing
3 her mother as having authority over her.

4 In contrast to other studies in systemic therapy
5 that illustrate how parents position themselves
6 as 'good parents' and how blame is ascribed to
7 the child (for example, see O'Reilly 2014; O'Reilly
8 and Lester 2016), we were interested instead in
9 exploring how a parent displays difficulty in taking
10 an authoritative stance and how this difficulty may
11 lead to implications of blame and accountability
12 (i.e., it is the mother's fault) and to conversational
13 impasses. We used the methods and concepts
14 borrowed from CA to explore how family restruc-
15 turing is accomplished in SFT interactions. Our
16 primary focus was on the interactional practices
17 that draw attention to the mother's parental
18 authority for agentive action and on the therapist's
19 actions designed to realize an affiliative and secure
20 context through which the clients (i.e., mother and
21 daughter) may 'try out' these alternate roles by
22 interacting with each other.

23 In order to explore these questions, we analyzed
24 the transcript in several ways. First, we identified
25 sequences in which the therapist worked to direct
26 the family members' interactional behaviour, espe-
27 cially in contexts in which the family members'
28 talk seemed to be getting 'stuck' in ongoing dis-
29 agreement surrounding roles and responsibilities.
30 Second, we examined sequences that oriented
31 strongly to epistemic entitlements and particularly
32 when the mother conveyed low entitlements and
33 when the child contested the mother's authority.
34 Third, sequences were examined in which the
35 therapist responded to the clients' opposing views
36 and to the mother's low agentive stances through
37 affiliative practices and interventions that high-
38 lighted the 'systemic' nature of the conflict (i.e., the
39 problem is not located in the person but rather is
40 interpersonal in quality). In this way, we wanted
41 to build on prior work by Couture (2006, 2007) in
42 showing how therapists may turn conversational
43 impasses into opportunities for more productive
44 action.

47 4. Analysis

48
49 Our analysis is divided into two parts. The first
50 part shows Minuchin's use of directive practices

1 that work to shape the family members' interac- 1
2 tional behavior. The second part illustrates his use 2
3 of epistemic practices that reinforce the mother's 3
4 epistemic authority. 4

6 4.1. Directing the family members' 7 interactional conduct 7

8
9 Our analysis of this session revealed that the 9
10 therapist made use of a set of practices that were 10
11 directive, reflecting his deontic authority to help 11
12 shape different aspects of the social interaction. 12
13 The therapist (Minuchin) acted as a facilitator to 13
14 initiate discussions between the mother and the 14
15 daughter around conflictual topics involving the 15
16 mother's authority or a lack of authority, creating 16
17 opportunities for them to respond to each other 17
18 and to provide their views of the situation. The SFT 18
19 therapist was found to guide the family members' 19
20 interactional conduct in the following ways: (1) 20
21 *modifying seating arrangements to facilitate dia-* 21
22 *logue between the mother and the daughter;* (2) 22
23 *getting the family members to address each other* 23
24 *in their talk;* and (3) *creating interactional space* 24
25 *for responding to parental role descriptions.* Taken 25
26 together, these interactional practices worked 26
27 to lead the family members into taking up and 27
28 negotiating family role positions. In this context, 28
29 the family members are obligated to engage with 29
30 each other, creating enactments in which they 30
31 display for the family therapist the ways in which 31
32 the mother and the daughter tend to interact and 32
33 how these interactions may be reflective of prob- 33
34 lems concerning role assignments, authority and 34
35 competence. 35

37 4.1.1. Modifying seating arrangements to 38 facilitate dialogue between the mother 39 and the daughter 39

40 Just as spatial arrangements in a given setting 40
41 have affordances that shape the ways in which we 41
42 manipulate the material world (Kirsch 1995), so do 42
43 bodily formations (e.g., positioning of and distance 43
44 between people) foster certain kinds of interactions 44
45 while hindering others (Kendon 1990). Recently, 45
46 the term *recruitment* has been used to explain how 46
47 embodied interaction can provide a context for 47
48 bringing about or enlisting certain kinds of next 48
49 actions from others (Drew and Couper-Kuhlen 49
50 2014). For example, placing your empty cup next 50

1 to a teapot may solicit someone's assistance to fill
 2 your cup. In Extract 1, the expert therapist in our
 3 study utilized the affordances of different spatial
 4 arrangements by directing the daughter, Marcy,
 5 to sit on a section of the couch in which she more
 6 directly faces her mother, thus allowing the mother
 7 and the daughter to engage in a more focused
 8 social encounter (Kendon 1990), in which both
 9 participants must also attend to the visual aspects
 10 of their interaction, e.g., whether the mother or the
 11 daughter smiles or frowns as a response to what
 12 the other has said. Minuchin (1974:142) refers to
 13 this practice as *manipulating space* or *geographical*
 14 *rearrangement*. For him, one of the main goals of
 15 this discursive maneuver is to create enactments
 16 by facilitating or blocking contact between family
 17 members.

18
 19 **Extract 1:** 7:16 (J = Jenny; Mar = Marcy;
 20 Min = Minuchin; S = Suzanne)

21 01 S: that didn't (right-) (0.3) †tha:t
 22 02 S & Mar are sitting adjacently,
 23 03 (0.3) †we have never †really been in
 24 04 side by side
 25 05 a meeting together.
 26 06 (0.6)
 27 07 S: [(o:r w-) ta:lks,]
 28 08 J: [do- do you feel you] can't talk
 29 09 to your mom together. (.)
 30 10 when you're all by your selves. (.)
 31 11 >°do you think that< works?°
 32 12 (0.4)
 33 13 Mar: u-no. (0.4) I can't talk to her
 34 14 mar: shakes head
 35 15 when we're alone like just me and
 36 16 her.=I can't talk to her alone.(0.9)
 37 17 [if] there's someone else there I=
 38 18 Min: [m-]
 39 19 =can feel better. °right,°
 40 20 Min: **M:Arcy. (0.3) maybe you can sit**
 41 21 **here because the mic (.) is here.**
 42 22 **(0.4) then- is- that way, (0.3)**
 43 23 *Minuchin & Marcy switch places*
 44 24 **you also- >you an your mom< can**
 45 25 **(0.4) talk >face to face<**
 46 26 **this this kind of thing it's not,**
 47 27 **(0.3) it's not good.**
 48 28 (3.3)
 49 29 min: gestures with left hand to continue
 50 30 Mar: we'll when me and my mom are
 31 together just sittin alone in the
 32 house we either start (.) screaming
 33 and yelling at- †yelling at each other,
 34 (0.7) or we jus- (0.7) I just walk
 35 away or something.=but when we're

36 with someone else I can't †do that
 37 right, (0.4) so I jus sit here
 38 an †ta:lk.

4
 5 The room's seating arrangements consist of two
 6 couches that form an 'L' shape and a chair oppo-
 7 site Suzanne and Marcy that is occupied by Jenny.
 8 Suzanne and Marcy sit side by side occupying one
 9 of the couches and Minuchin sits on the other,
 10 closest to and partially facing Suzanne. When
 11 Marcy discloses her inability to talk to her mother
 12 alone, Minuchin in line 20 begins a turn in which
 13 he directs Marcy to change places with him. At
 14 first his account for issuing the directive is related
 15 to structural reasons (Marcy is then closer to the
 16 microphone), but then he elaborates by claiming
 17 that the new seating arrangement places Marcy
 18 and her mother face to face and is better than the
 19 old side by side arrangement. We can thus infer
 20 that this new spatial arrangement will create new
 21 affordances in which more mother–daughter dia-
 22 logue will be facilitated.

23 Minuchin's directive may also be seen as
 24 uniquely responsive to Marcy's prior claim that
 25 the degree of communication between Marcy
 26 and her mother is limited. Thus, the therapist's
 27 directive may be seen as restorative, as the new
 28 spatial arrangement is more conducive for getting
 29 communication between them underway. This
 30 arrangement also has implications for future align-
 31 ments between the participants; that is, by now
 32 sitting next to the mother, Minuchin may be in a
 33 stronger position to align with her, especially in
 34 contexts where her authority becomes challenged
 35 by the daughter (see Section 5).

4.1.2. Getting the family members to address each other in their talk

38
 39 Interactions involving more than two people may
 40 consist of multi-faceted alignments between the
 41 participants. Drawing from Goffman's (1981)
 42 concept of participation frameworks and roles,
 43 Levinson (1988) has shown that a speaker's utter-
 44 ance may address one interlocutor and yet target
 45 another. For instance, speaker B may respond
 46 to speaker A's prior action (e.g., answering a
 47 question) by also complaining about or blaming
 48 speaker C who happens to be present. Thus,
 49 although speaker B's answer addresses the prior
 50 action/speaker A, it also targets speaker C, making

1 it relevant for speaker C to respond to the com-
2 plaint or blame.

3 These contexts are typical of family therapy
4 interaction. Minuchin (1974) discusses how family
5 members often use therapists as listeners to talk
6 about the behavior of other family members. To
7 counteract this tendency, he suggests that thera-
8 pists 'recreate communication channels' by direct-
9 ing these family members to directly address the
10 one who was talked about. For example, a family
11 member may address the therapist, while at the
12 same time complaining about another family
13 member. Although this practice may serve a pro-
14 social function by allowing a family member to
15 say something face threatening to another without
16 having to address them directly, it may also realize
17 a form of avoidance; that is, by addressing the ther-
18 apist, the family member passes up an opportunity
19 to engage with a significant other on an important
20 topic.

21 Just prior to Extract 2, Suzanne had mentioned
22 that Marcy's father, who lives in a different city,
23 had invited Marcy to his wedding. Suzanne had
24 already expressed her reluctance to allow Marcy
25 to go. In this extract, we see that Marcy is upset
26 with Suzanne's decision. Thus, a dialogue about
27 this issue could allow Suzanne to display her
28 entitlements to make decisions for Marcy and, if
29 Mary accepts the mother's rationale, would help to
30 restructure the family by endorsing the mother's
31 authoritative role.

32
33 **Extract 2:** 27:31

34 01 Min: so you had. (0.3) a very hard
35 02 ↑li:fe. (0.8) both of you. (2.7)
36 03 and it continues being ha:rd now
37 04 Marcy.
38 05 (1.2)
39 06 Mar: yeah.
40 07 (0.7)
41 08 Min: why.
42 09 (1.4)
43 10 Mar: well um, (1.0)
44 11 *mar: gazes at Minuchin*
45 12 *s: gazes downwards*
46 13 I really do wanna see my da:d.
47 14 =I mean, (0.7) my mom may not wa-().
48 15 want me te see e:m. (0.6)
49 16 but ↑I haven't seen him in about a
50 17 ↑ye:ar=>so I< thin-k, (0.3) ye know
51 18 ~>I have a right te see my ↑father.<~
52 19 (0.4)
53 20 Mar: ~ri:ght?~

21 Min: ye- you're talking to me or 1
22 you're talking to your mom,=Suzanne. 2
23 (0.8) 3
24 Mar: I guess I'm talking to 4
25 my mom a:nd you.=jus:=- 5
26 *min: multiple nods* 6
27 Min: =yeah. (0.8) but ye- you, (0.6) 7
28 you are saying to your mom that you 8
29 want °to see your dad.° 9
30 ((lines omitted)) 10
31 Mar: she may not ↓li:ke it, (.) bu:t, 11
32 (1.0) I do love him.= ~I do, (.) 12
33 wanna stay ↑arou:nd him 13
34 once in a while, ri:ght?~ 14
35 (3.0) 15
36 *mar: sniffs and wipes eyes with tissue* 16
37 Min: °ye:-,° (0.5) e- I think Suzanne 17
38 that, (1.1) she's asking you 18
39 something.=>°I don't know< what.° 19
40 (1.9) 20
41 S: she does love em.=I want her 21
42 *s: gazes downwards* 22
43 te see that love that she has for 23
44 him.=an- an work it out, 24
45 (0.5) 25
46 S: I wanna see (0.4) just (0.6) 26
47 how real it is. 27
48 (0.6) 28
49 Min: but t- talk, 29
50 *min: hand gesture,* 30
51 *points towards B then M, repeated.* 31
52 *s: turns her gaze towards Marcy* 32
53 *and begins to speak* 33

In responding to Minuchin's 'why' question **is** line 34
08, Marcy formulates a complaint that she wants 35
to go and visit her father, but her mother will 36
not allow it. Thus, although Marcy is responding 37
to Minuchin, the complaint aspect of her turn, 38
and especially the distress conveyed through her 39
tremulous voice (Hepburn and Potter 2007) in 40
line 18, is more directly targeting her mother as 41
an addressee. But when Marcy in line 20 explicitly 42
seeks confirmation from Minuchin that she has 43
a right to see her father, Minuchin refrains from 44
giving confirmation and instead topicalizes the 45
actual target of Marcy's complaint. Through this 46
move, Minuchin provides Marcy with the option 47
of redirecting her talk at her mother. However, 48
Marcy's response in line 24 weakly claims that she 49
is addressing both of them, which leads Minuchin 50
then to assert unequivocally that her wanting to 51
see her dad is directed at the mother.

As a response, in lines 22–25 Marcy contin-
ues in the same vein by uttering a distress-laden

1 complaint. But Minuchin again refrains from
 2 taking up the role of respondent and instead offers
 3 the turn to Suzanne by stating in an epistemically
 4 downgraded form ('I think'; '>°I don't know<
 5 what.°') that she is the target of Marcy's talk. In
 6 claiming not to understand Marcy's remark, he
 7 not only blocks the possibility of indirect commu-
 8 nication, but also rejects epistemic authority on
 9 Marcy's entitlements, which affords an opportunity
 10 for Suzanne to assume an expert moral position of
 11 'what is right'. Suzanne then takes the turn but does
 12 not direct her gaze at Marcy, which may also make
 13 it ambiguous as to whether she is addressing the
 14 therapist or her daughter. Minuchin, however, is
 15 quick to intervene by verbalizing that they should
 16 engage in a dialogue ('but t- talk') while gesturing
 17 for them to direct their focus at each other. This
 18 then leads to subsequent talk in which Suzanne
 19 explains her reasons for not wanting Marcy to go
 20 and visit her father. Thus, Minuchin helps to create
 21 an interaction in which parental roles and authority
 22 are discussed and negotiated.

24 4.1.3. *Creating interactional space for* 25 *responding to parental role descriptions*

26 There are also situations in which family members
 27 do not respond to prior actions, although it may
 28 be relevant for them to do so. Certain initiating
 29 actions of sequences such as questions, blaming
 30 and assessments strongly mobilize a next response
 31 from addressees (Stivers and Rossano 2010). Other
 32 actions, however, are more implicit and thus do
 33 not directly recruit another's response. In these
 34 situations, family therapists may be called upon
 35 to enlist a response from the family member who
 36 is being implicitly addressed – especially if certain
 37 moral positions or familial moral orders are being
 38 conveyed through talk. Getting family members
 39 to respond can be very important in these cir-
 40 cumstances, because it reveals how they position
 41 themselves with respect to the moral positions put
 42 forward – whether they agree, oppose or espouse
 43 alternative positions. **Consider Extract 3, in which**
 44 **Suzanne provides a detailed account to her daugh-**
 45 **ter of what it means to be a parent.**

47 **Extract 3:** 31:10

48
 49 01 S: >I grew up with my grandmother
 50 02 s: gazes downwards
 03 an her second husband,< my

04 ↑grand [father-] 1
 05 Min: [you are] talking 2
 06 min: points arm towards Marcy 3
 07 Min: (.) with [(Mar-)] 4
 08 S: [↑yeah.] 5
 09 s: returns gaze to Mar; nods 5
 10 my grandfather kne:w↑ my father. (.) 6
 11 my ↑real father.=the one, .hh (.) 7
 12 that- (0.3) that got my mother 8
 13 pregnant. (0.9) an he said to me. 9
 14 (0.9) would you↑ like to see your 10
 15 real da:d. (0.8) >ye< know what I 11
 16 said, (1.3) I said no:. (0.6) he is 12
 17 not my ↑da:d. (.) I don't know him 13
 18 as a dad. (1.2) a:nd, (1.9) I: I was 14
 19 fortunate.=my grandmother remarried 15
 20 an- an a- (.) an a man did adopt me 16
 21 and he was my father as far as I'm 17
 22 concerned. (0.8) an one thing that 18
 23 (.) gives me a lotta ↑pa:in, (0.4) 19
 24 is to know↓ that you an Travis 20
 25 does not↑ have a father. (0.5) 21
 26 but that is the reality of it. (0.8) 22
 27 the reality ↑is. (0.4) that yous 23
 28 do you not have a fa:ther↓= 24
 29 an I want you to see that reality. 25
 30 because it's important te ↑you:. 26
 31 (1.6) it is <very important to ↑you. 27
 32 (0.5) that you do see that reality. 28
 33 (2.0) 29
 34 S: because a FAther↑ as far as 30
 35 I'm concerned an a mother, (0.5) 31
 36 is somebody, (0.4) tha:t. (1.8) 32
 37 parents you. 33
 38 (1.7) 34
 39 S: an brings you up.=. 35
 40 and teaches you right from wrong 36
 41 (4.4) 37
 42 S: and cares about you. (0.6) 38
 43 and really cares about you. 39
 44 (0.8) 40
 45 Min: °let Marcy answer.° 41
 46 ((several lines omitted)) 42
 47 Mar: ~if you ↑cared about me 43
 48 you'd↑ show- you'd know 44
 49 how I feel↑ about my ↑father.~.shih. 45
 50 (1.4) 46
 51 mar: wipes eyes with tissue, sniffs, 47
 52 sides of mouth turned down 48
 53 S: I do know how you feel 49
 54 about your father.=Marcy, 50
 55 (1.4) 51
 56 S: a:nd, 52
 57 (2.5) 53
 58 S: and I'm working >that out.=I never 54
 59 s:-< (2.5) ↑you have te work it out. 55

At the beginning of her turn, Suzanne is gazing
 downwards yet addressing Marcy. Minuchin in

1 line 05 then intervenes with overlapping talk by
 2 pointing out that she is speaking to Marcy, which
 3 leads Suzanne to redirect her gaze at her daughter.
 4 Suzanne then begins her narrative about not having
 5 grown up with her biological father and continues
 6 by drawing a moral implication from her early life:
 7 that the man who raises you has entitlements to
 8 being recognized as a ‘father’. Thus, because the
 9 children’s biological father is not involved in their
 10 upbringing, they (Marcy and her brother Travis)
 11 do not have a father.

12 In effect, Suzanne makes an attempt to assert
 13 her epistemic authority – she has first-hand knowl-
 14 edge about who qualifies as a parent (lines 10–32)
 15 – and this relates to her deontic authority of being
 16 able to make decisions on Marcy’s behalf (lines
 17 58–59). This is certainly a difficult viewpoint to
 18 convey to a child of twelve and it is probably even
 19 harder to solicit a child’s agreement in this matter,
 20 as evidenced by the two-second pause in line 33
 21 in which Marcy still has not reacted to Suzanne’s
 22 reasoning.

23 This is most likely why Suzanne proceeds to
 24 do further accounting work. Her account, in lines
 25 34–44, appears in a *three-part list format* (Jefferson
 26 1991) and provides a catalog of some of the most
 27 salient parental attributes such as parenting, teach-
 28 ing and caring. Suzanne withholds from speaking
 29 after each list item, but Marcy does not take up a
 30 turn at any of these points that would mark poten-
 31 tial *transition relevance places* (Sacks *et al.* 1974).
 32 Marcy’s withholding may be construed as *disa-*
 33 *greement implicative* (Schegloff 2007), and thus
 34 that she does not affiliate with the mother’s views.

35 Further, Marcy’s withholding plays an implicit
 36 yet central part in completing the three-part list,
 37 for had she answered already in lines 38 or 41,
 38 Suzanne would most likely not have continued with
 39 her accounts. As a result, Suzanne ends up con-
 40 structing a strong argument for what constitutes
 41 a father and, by implication, who would not pass
 42 the ‘fatherhood’ test (i.e., Marcy’s biological father).
 43 Jefferson (1991) has argued that the completion of
 44 three-part lists often makes speaker transition rele-
 45 vant, and so it would seem that Minuchin orients to
 46 this practice by explicitly giving the floor to Marcy
 47 (line 45), allowing her to take up a position on what
 48 Suzanne had just said. As might be expected, rather
 49 than endorse Suzanne’s position, Marcy disagrees
 50 that her mother is caring towards her and, further,

resists the implication that her biological father is
 not her real father through the possessive pronoun
 construction ‘my †father’.

4.2. *Epistemic positioning to support the mother’s authoritative role and to contest contrasting viewpoints*

The enactments brought about by Minuchin’s
 directive actions provided a context for another
 set of practices. This involved Minuchin’s use of
 differential epistemic positions to either affiliate
 with talk that supports the mother’s epistemic
 authority or oppose talk that undermines the
 mother’s authority. These interactional practices
 helped Minuchin to construct a certain familial
 moral order (Hutchby and O’Reilly 2010) and, thus,
 to provide opportunities for changing the existing
 family structure: from the mother as bearer of the
 stigma of her alcohol addiction and thus lacking
 agency, to the mother as authoritative and agentive;
 from the daughter as displaying a lack of confidence
 in the mother’s abilities, to the daughter’s recog-
 nition that changes have taken place and that the
 mother has entitlements to authority.

Three epistemic practices were identified: (1)
endorsing the mother’s epistemic authority; (2)
*displaying lesser epistemic entitlements to promote
 reflection and affiliation*; and (3) *contesting view-*
points that undermine the mother’s authority. Each
 of these practices will be considered in turn.

4.2.1. *Endorsing the mother’s epistemic authority*

Throughout the session, the mother reported on
 parental decisions that she had recently made,
 such as whether her six-year-old son should have
 attended family therapy with them or whether
 Marcy should visit her father alone. Although
 Suzanne did at times use language to express cer-
 tainty when formulating opinions and decisions,
 there were instances where her language became
 less certain and indexed low epistemic authority.
 Just previous to Extract 4, Minuchin wondered
 whether the family situation sometimes led Marcy
 to conduct herself in ways more typical of an
 year old (i.e., a grown up) and, moreover, whether
 Marcy’s resistance to parental authority may be
 related to that. This was then followed by Suzanne
 reflecting on the difficult life she had growing up

1 and if this bore any relation to Marcy's life and her
2 being 12 years old.

3
4 **Extract 4:** 14:12

5 01 S: well. ↑I don't know I was on my
6 02 o:wn, (0.5) in a big city,
7 03 (0.8) workin (0.9) at fifteen years
8 04 ↑old. (1.0) and makin my own way
9 05 in life. (0.8) and I don't see where
10 06 I- I: ↑I was, (1.0) fifteen years
11 07 o:ld. (2.1) I- I can't- I can't say
12 08 that you can sa:y that this is the
13 09 times,=an this is the way it i:s.=
14 10 I- I don't s:ee that point.=at all.
15 11 (0.7) I jus- I just believe that
16 12 we're human beings an- (0.5) a:nd
17 13 (.) a twelve year o:ld, (3.8)
18 14 does ↑not- (1.1) we:ll, twelve year
19 15 ol- ↑I: don't know.=a twelve year
20 16 old's a twelve year old, an whatever
21 17 you ↑are an whatever you grew up
22 18 an ↑learnt.=that's what you, (0.7)
23 19 you ↑do.
24 20 (2.0)
25 21 S: I don't know.=↑I'm not making any
26 22 s: gaze moves up, hands to head,
27 23 adjusts herself in the seat
28 24 sense. [I- I'm] (.) I don't=
29 25 Min: [you make,]
30 26 min: reaches out and touches B's arm
31 27 S: =[know.=I-]
32 28 Min: [(you rilly)] make, you make a
33 29 lot of sense [to me:.
34 30 S: [°I don't know.°
35 31 (0.8)
36 32 Min: you make a lot of sense to me.
37 33 (0.4)
38 34 Min: >uh.< (0.5) does she make ↑
39 35 sense to you.
40 36 (1.1)
41 37 Mar: yeah.
42 38 (1.3)
43 39 Min: but ↑mo:m doesn't feel frequently
44 40 that she has, (0.5) the ri:ght (1.4)
45 41 to, (1.2) to make ru:les for you.=
46 42 is that true?
47 43 (0.5)
48 44 Mar: we:ll.
49 45 (0.9)
50 46 Mar: I think she has the right to
make rules for me,= >but I jus<
don't like the rules she makes.

47 After Suzanne finishes her comparison between
48 her life at 15 and what a 12-year-old may be experi-
49 encing at the present time, there is a two-second
50 pause (line 20). This creates an opportunity for

Marcy to take up a turn and engage with the moth- 1
er's implicit claim that she, in comparison, may 2
have had a more difficult time growing up than 3
Marcy and, as a result, has acquired much experi- 4
ence and knowledge in the process. In responding, 5
Marcy could have confirmed or challenged the 6
mother's claim, but instead remains silent, thus 7
passively resisting Suzanne's authority as someone 8
who has 'made her own way in life'. Subsequently, 9
Suzanne continues by making numerous displays 10
of uncertainty ('I don't know'; '↑I'm not making 11
any sense.') and nonverbal displays such as shift- 12
ing around in her seat and placing her hands to 13
her head, which may be conveying discomfort or 14
distress.³ From the daughter's perspective, this can 15
be interpreted as a confirmation of 'weakness', in 16
which the mother appears uncertain – as someone 17
who is unable to confidently appropriate a position 18
of epistemic authority. 19

It is interesting to note that the therapist imme- 20
diately aligns with the mother by showing strong 21
endorsement of the mother's epistemic status and 22
her ability to make perfect sense to others ('you 23
make a lot of sense to me:;', line 32). Minuchin also 24
strongly affiliates with Suzanne by using intensi- 25
fiers such as 'rilly' and 'a lot of' that upgrade his 26
endorsement of her sense-making abilities and by 27
touching her arm during her brief displays of dis- 28
tress and uncertainty. He then repeats his endorse- 29
ment of Suzanne's ability to make sense and next 30
asks Marcy whether she is of the same opinion. 31
Through this move, Minuchin works to gain 32
Marcy's endorsement of her mother as someone 33
with epistemic entitlements and as someone whose 34
talk is transparent and logical. When Marcy voices 35
agreement in line 37, Minuchin then leverages her 36
response in order to draw Marcy's attention to the 37
implied paradox of having parental authority, while 38
at the same time not having rights to make rules 39
for one's children. 40

From an SFT perspective, the sequence between 41
Marcy and her mother in which Marcy refrains 42
from responding and supporting the mother as 43
an authority on salient experiences (i.e., overcom- 44
ing/surviving hardships) may be demonstrating a 45
breakdown of the appropriate structural hierar- 46
chy between parent and child. Suzanne (mother) 47
depends on Marcy's (daughter) endorsement of 48
her status as a mother/executive. From an SFT 49
theoretical perspective, this reversal of roles or 50

1 ‘parentification’ can be understood in the context
2 of the family’s history; when the mother was drunk,
3 Marcy had to step in and assume a more adult,
4 executive role. Thus, Suzanne’s uncertainty and
5 Marcy’s subsequent silence could be viewed as
6 an enactment in the sense that it illustrates that
7 Susanne and Marcy are still confused about their
8 ‘appropriate’ respective roles. What the SFT ther-
9 apist attempts to do in these contexts is to reverse
10 the old pattern by forming a strong alignment with
11 the mother to support her role as someone who
12 has legitimate parental authority.

14 4.2.2. *Displaying lesser epistemic entitlements* 15 *to promote reflection and affiliation*

16 Drawing attention to role relations and how they
17 construct a certain familial moral structure can be
18 a very delicate business. For example, in Extract 4,
19 when Minuchin pointed out Suzanne’s feelings of
20 not having rights to make rules for Marcy, there
21 is an implication that Marcy is in some way con-
22 tributing to her mother’s downgraded authority. In
23 order to offset any allocation of blame, Minuchin
24 often formulates a stance that downgrades his
25 epistemic rights and access. Extract 5 continues
26 on from this.

28 Extract 5: 15:18

29
30 46 Mar: I think she has the right to
31 47 make rules for me, =>but I jus<
32 48 don’t like the rules she makes.
33 49 (0.9)
34 50 Min: but you know (.)
35 51 **what I:↑ (0.5) hea:r, (0.5)**
36 52 is that mo:m feels very frequently,
37 53 (0.6) that she needs (.) to, (0.8)
38 54 ↑apologize to you for being your
39 55 ↑mom.
40 56 (0.8)
41 57 Min: is that true.
42 58 (0.8)
43 59 Min: does she do that?
44 60 (0.5)
45 61 Mar: mm hm.
46 62 *mar: multiple shallow nods*
47 63 (1.7)
48 64 Min: an what do you think.

47 In line 51, Minuchin prefaces his turn with an
48 evidential expression (‘what I:↑ (0.5) hea:r’) that
49 displays his lesser access and knowledge about
50 what Marcy’s mother is actually feeling. Thus, the

ensuing claim that the mother needs to apologize 1
to Marcy when acting like a parental authority 2
is put on record as based on hearsay and is thus 3
presented as a possibility that seeks confirmation 4
from Marcy. This epistemically downgraded turn 5
design allows Marcy not only to take up a position 6
of epistemic authority by confirming the veracity 7
of this claim, but also to reflect and elaborate on 8
the reasons why this may be so. Although Marcy 9
does not immediately respond, she does, after a 10
couple of confirmation seeking prompts, provide 11
verbal and nonverbal affiliation. 12

After having gained Marcy’s confirmation, 13
Minuchin proceeds to probe into the reasons why 14
the mother may have trouble taking up authority, 15
by asking for Marcy’s opinion (‘an what do you 16
think?’). With this question, Minuchin is able to 17
upgrade Marcy’s epistemic status, i.e., that she is 18
knowledgeable and her knowledge matters. These 19
sequences also reveal the SFT technique of *unbal-* 20
ancing at work: first Minuchin affiliates (joins) with 21
the mother, then shifts the balance of epistemic 22
status towards Suzanne as mother, and Marcy as 23
child with lesser privileges. He then he upgrades 24
Marcy’s status as someone who is able to display 25
knowledge about the appropriate familial moral 26
order pertaining to mother–child relationships. 27

The conversation continues in Extract 6. Here 28
we see that Marcy provides Minuchin with an 29
in-depth report on the mother’s actions, but also 30
how she is unable to apologize to her mom when 31
it is clear that the mother is not at fault. 32

34 Extract 6: 15:38

35
36 64 Min: an what do you think.
37 65 (1.3)
38 66 Mar: we:ll I: told the counselor
39 67 that I’m seeing, (0.5) that u:m,
40 68 (0.8) ↓u:h (.) me and my mom, (0.5)
41 69 like if ↑me >an my mom< get into a
42 70 fight ri:ght?
43 71 (0.6)
44 72 Mar: it’s almost all the time.=
45 73 or it used to be at ↑le:ast. (0.4)
46 74 >that she’d come< u:p- I’d go
47 75 up into my room or something, (.)
48 76 and she’d kept on- (.) come up
49 77 an ↑apo:logize.
50 78 (0.7)
51 79 Mar: a:n most of the time I
52 80 don’t think it was even her ↑fa:ult.
53 81 (0.4)

1 82 Min: °yeah.°
 2 83 Mar: I: (0.3) ↑I used to think it was
 3 84 (0.3) we:ll, I still do think
 4 85 >some of the times it's< ↑my fault.
 5 86 =[but I jus] can't bring myself
 6 87 Min: [yea:h.]
 7 88 mar: shakes head
 8 89 to say I'm ↑sorry=ri:ght?=
 9 90 Min: =yea:h. (0.6) so you have- (.)
 10 91 both of you have a problem. (1.3)
 11 92 °both of you have a problem because°
 12 93 (1.3) you need, (1.0) a mom that can
 13 94 give you, (0.8) that can be a mom,
 14 95 (.) who is not apologizing.
 15 96 (1.1)
 16 97 Min: an (0.5) <you don't fee:l>
 17 98 you have the <ri:ght sometimes,>
 18 99 (1.7) to be ↑it. (1.2) car- (.)
 19 100 uh u:h, (0.4) Marcy's mom? (.)
 20 101 **it's- it's an interesting thing.**
 21 102 (1.1)
 22 103 Min: w- why don't you feel that
 23 104 you have the right, .hh to demand.
 24 105 (3.5)
 25 106 Min: >you know after all
 26 107 you are the< mom. =you're,
 27 108 (0.7)
 28 109 S: well that's ↑CO:ming. (.)
 29 110 it's ↑coming.
 30 111 (0.3)
 31 112 S: °i:- it's° I didn't have it
 32 113 when I was °drinkin:, an it-° .hh
 33 114 it's [taken more ti:me to c]ome
 34 115 Min: [that's that's right.]

31 After having heard both sides, Minuchin begins in
 32 line 90 to summarize the family's dilemma: Marcy
 33 needs a parental figure who does not apologize
 34 for exercising her entitled authority but Suzanne
 35 does not feel entitled to take up this authoritative
 36 position. Then, in line 101, Minuchin frames the
 37 dilemma as a puzzle ('it's- it's an interesting thing'),
 38 which does a range of epistemic work: it implies
 39 that Minuchin does not have special insight into
 40 why this problem occurs; it suggests that further
 41 reflection and exploration may allow the family to
 42 'solve the puzzle'; and it operates as a *fishing device*
 43 (Pomerantz 1980), because it targets the family
 44 members' personal epistemic domains to which
 45 they have greater rights and access.

46 **But** after a silence in line 102, Minuchin directly
 47 pursues a response from Suzanne by asking a
 48 *why* question. When Suzanne again refrains from
 49 responding, Minuchin resumes by pointing out
 50 the legitimacy of Suzanne's rights ('after all you

are the< mom'). Thereafter, Suzanne responds by 1
 indicating that she is beginning to take up these 2
 rights, thus implying that she is willing to adopt 3
 the moral family structure that Minuchin endorses. 4

4.2.3. Contesting viewpoints that undermine the mother's authority

When family members produce utterances that
 undermine the mother's parental authority,
 Minuchin tends to respond with disaffiliation
 through overt disagreement. This is shown in
 Extract 7.

Extract 7: 49:51

01 Min: yeah but you're (.) you're ↑very
 02 lovely people. .hh a- both of you.
 03 (0.6) °you know, a:nd uh,° (0.4)
 04 uh- uh,
 05 (0.3)
 06 S: ↑well I-
 07 (0.3)
 08 Min: maybe, [maybe th-]
 09 S: [for that reason,]
 10 S: I see, (.) she's very beautiful.
 11 (0.3) wh- what I see in myself
 12 and I be↑lieve she will, (0.3)
 13 get o:n with life and be ↑oka:y
 14 but, (0.4) I really ↑love her.
 15 (1.2)
 16 S: >an I want her te< go.= and
 17 get the right help that she ↑nee:ds.
 18 [(in time)]
 19 Min: [**no: no, no no**] °no.° (0.6)
 20 min: *adjusts in his seat to face*
 21 **no ↑you're wrong there.**
 22 min: *Suzanne and Marcy more directly*
 23 (1.1)
 24 Min: **the- (0.3) ri:ght↑ (0.3)**
 25 **help that she needs is you.**
 26 (1.7)
 27 S: >well I'm ↑there.<

In line 09, Suzanne responds to Minuchin's pos- 40
 itive assessment of the family with an upgraded 41
 appraisal of her daughter ('she's very beautiful.) 42
 and then goes on to avow her deep affection for 43
 Marcy. She then, in line 16, however, reveals her 44
 wish that Marcy receive 'the right help that she 45
 ↑nee:ds,' which suggests that Marcy should get 46
 support from someone else and not her mother. 47
 The implication is that Suzanne does not have the 48
 appropriate competence and authority to execute 49
 her role as parent adequately. 50

1 In line 13, Minuchin directly contradicts
 2 Suzanne, adding that *she* is the most suitable
 3 person to help Marcy. Thus, in this brief moment
 4 in which Suzanne seems to let her entitlements
 5 to take on the role of having parental authority
 6 and responsibilities slip away from her, Minuchin
 7 immediately blocks further slippage by strongly
 8 endorsing Suzanne's ability to care for her family.
 9 Suzanne's response in line 27 both re-affirms
 10 her readiness to assume parental responsibilities
 11 and also functions as an offer for Marcy to allow
 12 Suzanne to parent her.

13 14 4.3. Summary 15

16 The first part of the analysis revealed the different
 17 strategies in which an SFT therapist demonstrates
 18 deontic authority by directing the family members'
 19 interactional conduct. These practices index SFT
 20 principles of enactment, in this case used to bring
 21 a mother and her daughter into dialogue with
 22 each other. By observing these family interactions,
 23 Minuchin was able to witness how familial roles
 24 are constructed and how the mother may find it
 25 difficult to take up a position of (and account for
 26 her) parental authority or how the child is unable
 27 to recognize that the mother should have these
 28 entitlements. The second part of the analysis
 29 showed that it is during these kinds of moments of
 30 disaffiliation between the mother and the daugh-
 31 ter that Minuchin was able respond by affiliating
 32 with viewpoints supporting the mother's authority
 33 and disaffiliating with ones that do not offer such
 34 support.

35 36 37 5. Discussion and conclusion 38

39 Family therapy involves talk about family-related
 40 problems, and this focus brings in moral frame-
 41 works that implicate blame and accountability
 42 (Buttny 2004). Further, being referred to family
 43 therapy may generate a view that parents are at
 44 fault, making them accountable for the difficul-
 45 ties occurring in the family (O'Reilly and Lester
 46 2016). Although it has been shown that parents
 47 often do accounting work that positions them-
 48 selves as good parents and that places blame
 49 on children (O'Reilly 2014), our focus has been
 50 on a parent who tends to blame herself and has

difficulties in taking up positions of parental
 authority.

We have taken a discursive view in which family
 members come to therapy by co-constructing their
 relationships in the presence of a therapist. The
 therapist, as witness, is thus able to formulate gen-
 erative hypotheses about what is problematic about
 the relationship through the family members'
 created enactments, and hence actively intervene
 by affiliating with views that endorse role rela-
 tions and hierarchies grounded in SFT principles.
 Through the lens of CA, we have shown how an
 SFT therapist, working interactively with a mother
 and a daughter, effects changes in role relations.

Early on in the session, Minuchin acted to
 direct and shape the family members' interactional
 conduct. In doing so, he modified the affordances
 of participation in such a way that the mother and
 the daughter would be more inclined to interact
with each other to negotiate delicate and distress-
 ing topics, rather than simply talking about the
 other's behavior to the therapist. By facilitating
 these enactments, Minuchin was in a strong
 position to respond to, and thus shape, the family
 members' conduct. He would draw from epistemic
 resources to adopt a position of not knowing to
 foster further discussion and exploration of the
 mother's rights and responsibilities. But he would
 also contest claims that positioned the mother as
 having low parental authority. Throughout the
 session, Minuchin would flexibly affiliate (i.e., join)
 with each of the family members, not only to build
 up an empathic relationship with them, but also
 to endorse family member talk that indexed, from
 an SFT perspective, productive mother–daughter
 role relations.

We used a CA perspective to provide a system-
 atic examination of family therapy as an unfolding
 praxis in an institutional context. CA is able to
 address the gap in knowledge of how theoretic-
 ally informed interventions dynamically unfold
 in clinical practice, and how these interventions
 work towards inducing changes in the relational
 matrix of the family. With CA, we can show how
 important therapeutic constructs such as alli-
 ance, role relations and authority are realized and
 managed from one interactional moment to the
 next. In exploring change, we drew from Couture's
 (2006, 2007) CA-informed work that explored how
 forward movement may be achieved discursively to

1 unblock conversational impasses. In our study, the
 2 mother seemed unable to take up her entitlement
 3 to exercise parental authority and the child did
 4 not endorse her mother in this role of authority.
 5 The therapist’s discursive practices functioned to
 6 balance the epistemic rights and privileges of both
 7 the mother and the daughter, by getting them to
 8 focus on these relational issues and address each
 9 other directly in their talk, and also by inviting
 10 them to consider the other’s viewpoint and to gain
 11 a systemic and mutual perspective on what is beset-
 12 ting the family. In conclusion, we argue that the CA
 13 perspective provides clinically useful insights for
 14 understanding how change may be accomplished
 15 in family therapy interactions.

18 **Acknowledgement**

20 This research is supported by the Social Sciences
 21 and Humanities Research Council of Canada
 22 (435-2012-0302). Salvador Minuchin kindly agreed
 23 to the use of his name in reporting the results of
 24 this analysis, and the SFU Research Ethics Board
 25 (REB) gave us ethical approval.

28 **Notes**

- 30 1. By ‘moral order’ we refer to parents taking an
 31 agentic role through which they are accountable
 32 in guiding and protecting their children, and to
 33 children having age-appropriate privileges and
 34 responsibilities.
 35 2. All names (except that of Dr Minuchin) and
 36 information that might identify the participants
 37 have been altered to protect the anonymity of
 38 the individuals involved.
 39 3. These nonverbal features have been shown
 40 to often co-occur with client distress displays
 41 (Muntigl 2020).

44 **Appendix: Transcription notation**

- 46 [starting point of overlapping speech
 47] endpoint of overlapping speech
 48 (1.5) silence measured in seconds
 49 (.) silences less than 0.2 secs
 50 : prolongation of sound

- () transcriber’s guess 1
 - speech cut off in the middle of the word 2
 ° ° spoken quietly 3
 ___ emphasis 4
 .hhh audible inhalation 5
 hhh audible exhalation 6
 (h) laugh particle (or outbreath) inserted
 within a word 7
 heh laugh particle 9
 ↓ falling intonation at end of utterance 10
 ↑ rising intonation at end of utterance 11
 . continuing intonation at end of utterance 12
 ? rising intonation at end of utterance 13
 , continuing intonation at end of utterance 14
 ((cough)) audible non-speech sounds 15
Italics nonverbal behavior (actor indicated in
 left hand column) 16

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