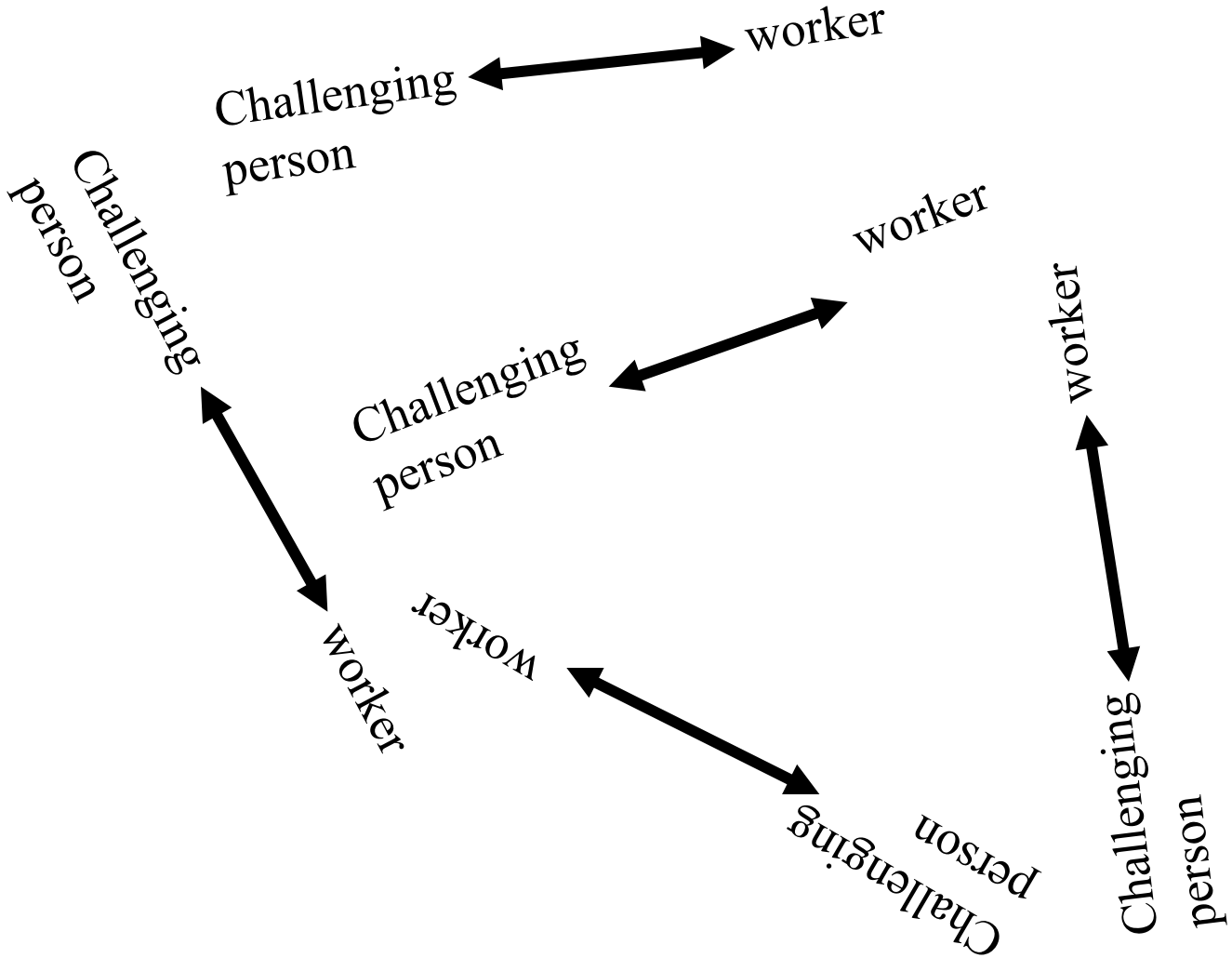


A Principal's Guide to Applying Concepts From Family Therapy: Systemic Strategies to Create Change

Brett McDermott

A night photograph of a city street with a bridge over a river, illuminated by streetlights and building lights, with reflections in the water.

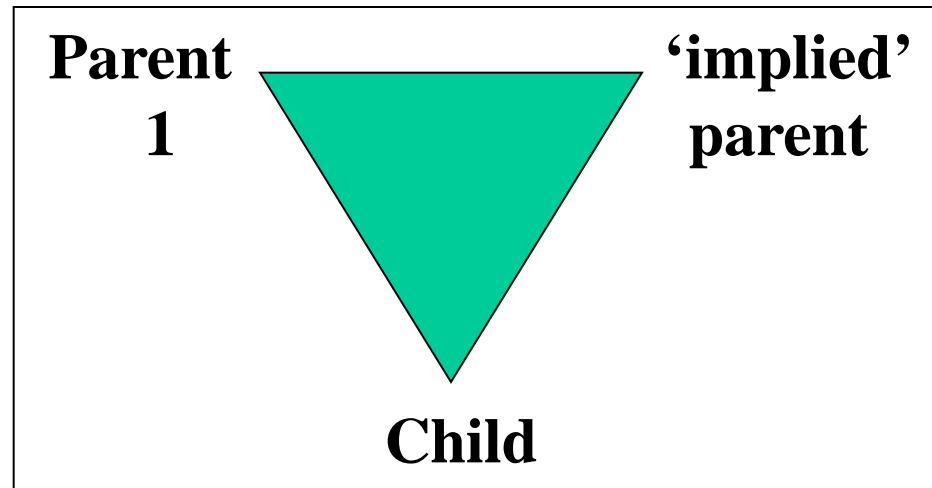
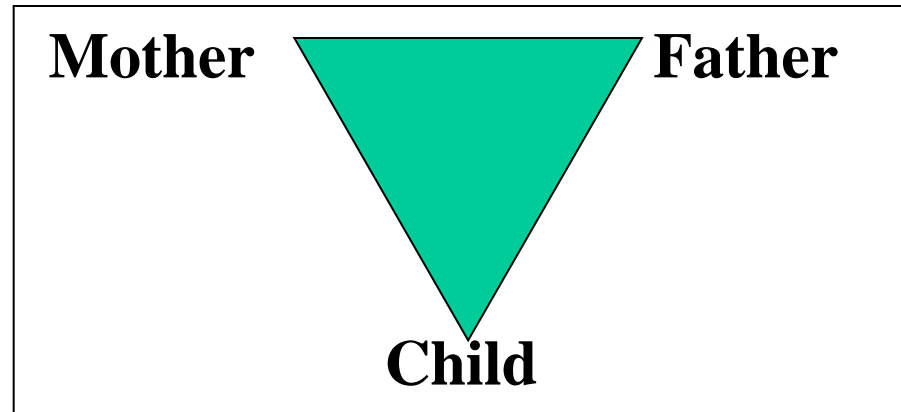
Relationship with a 'challenge'



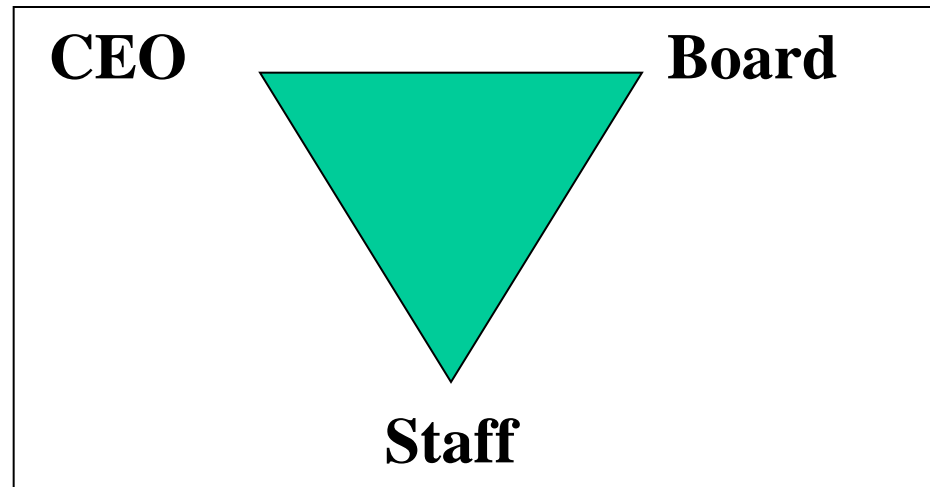
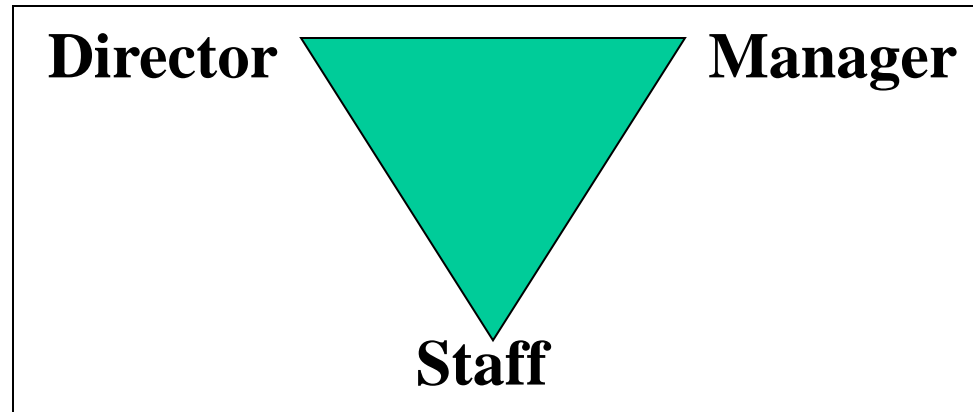
Descriptors:

- struggle,
- fight,
- grapple,
- tussle
- Spar
- etc, etc, etc.

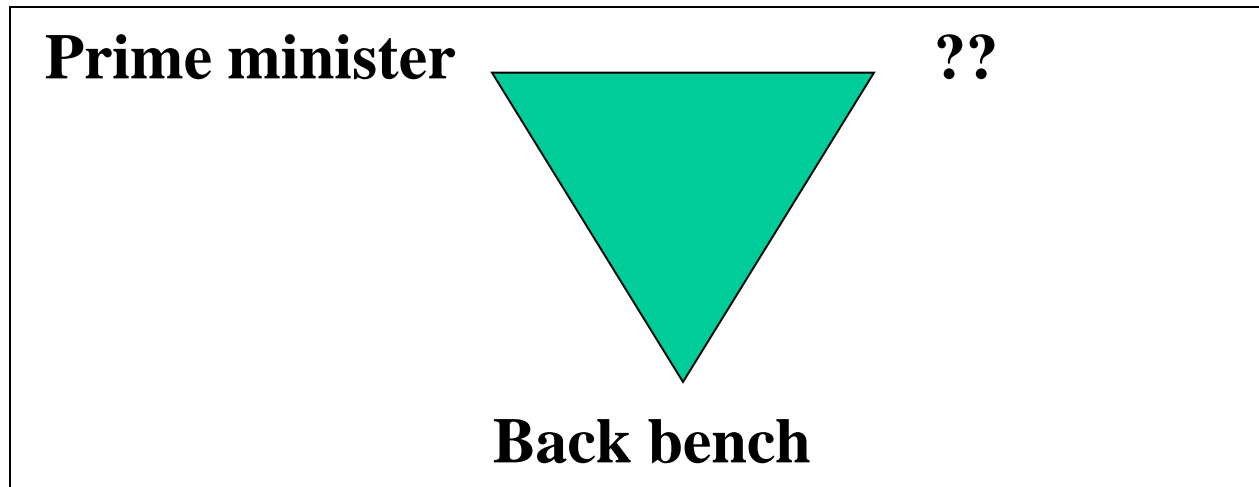
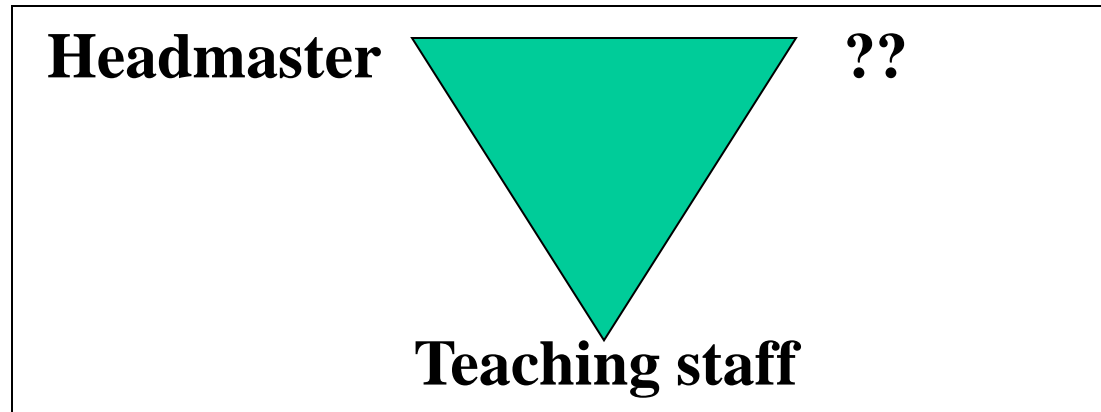
Systemic perspective: dyads are inherently unstable



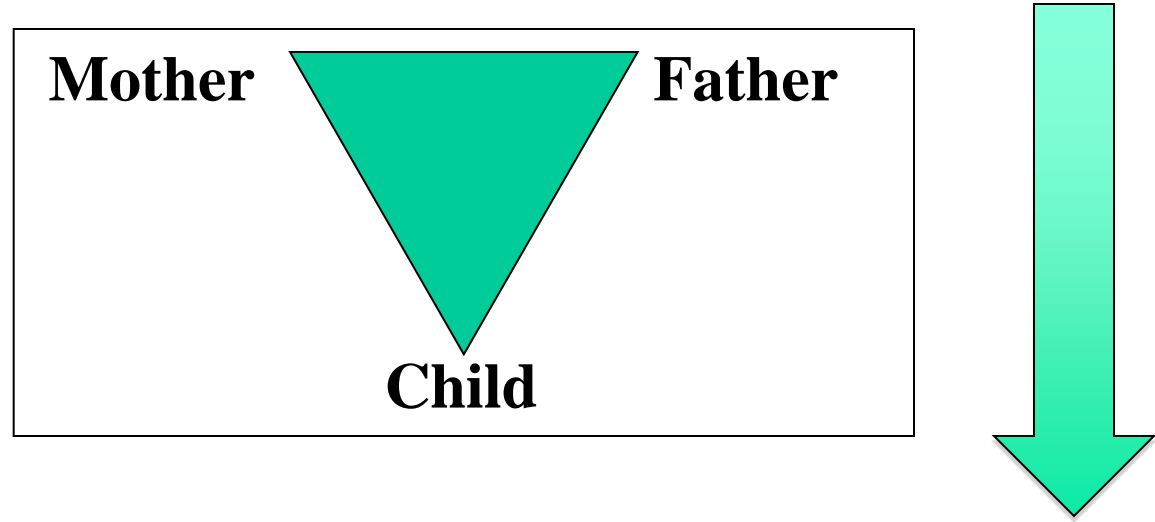
Stable triads: numerous examples in relationship based endeavours



Stable triads: numerous examples in relationship based endeavours

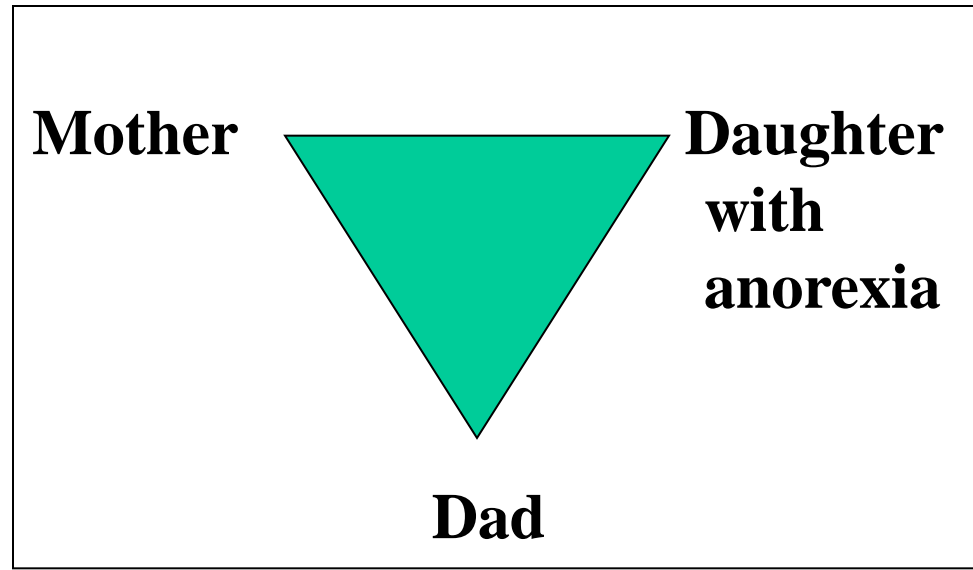


Natural systems have hierarchies



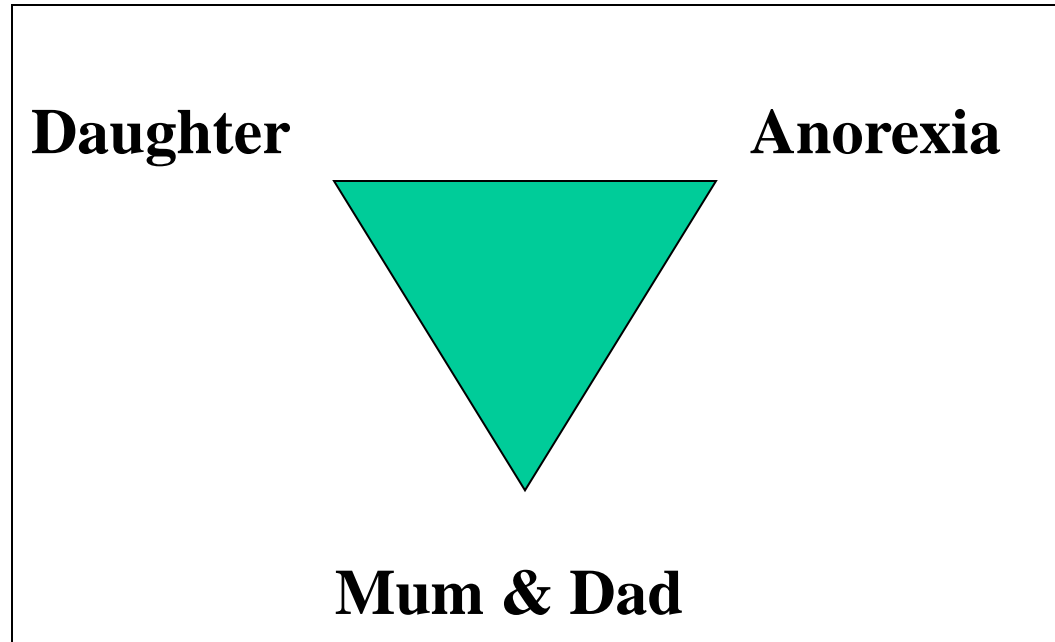
Inverted hierarchy.....

1.

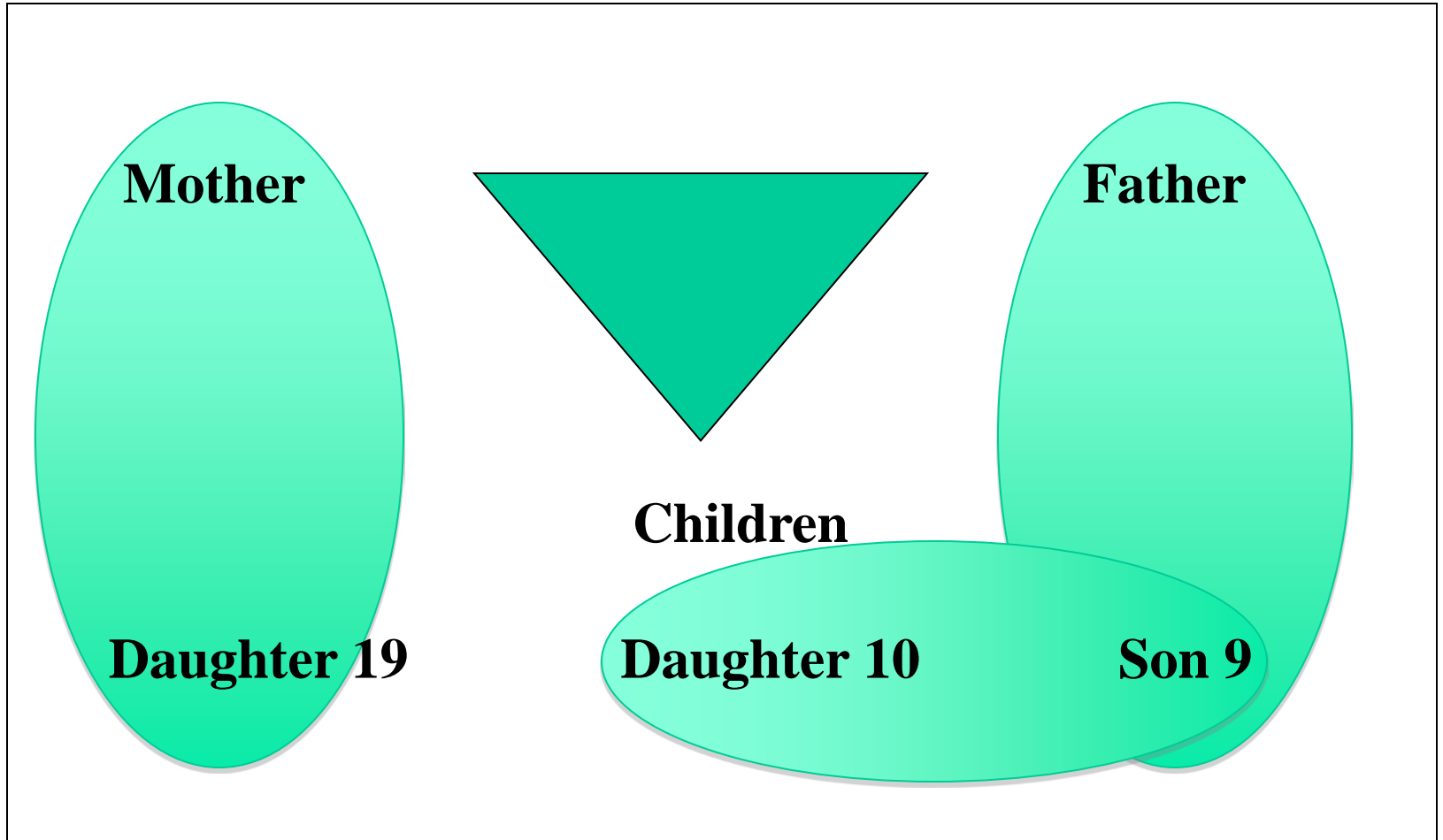


Inverted hierarchy.....

2.

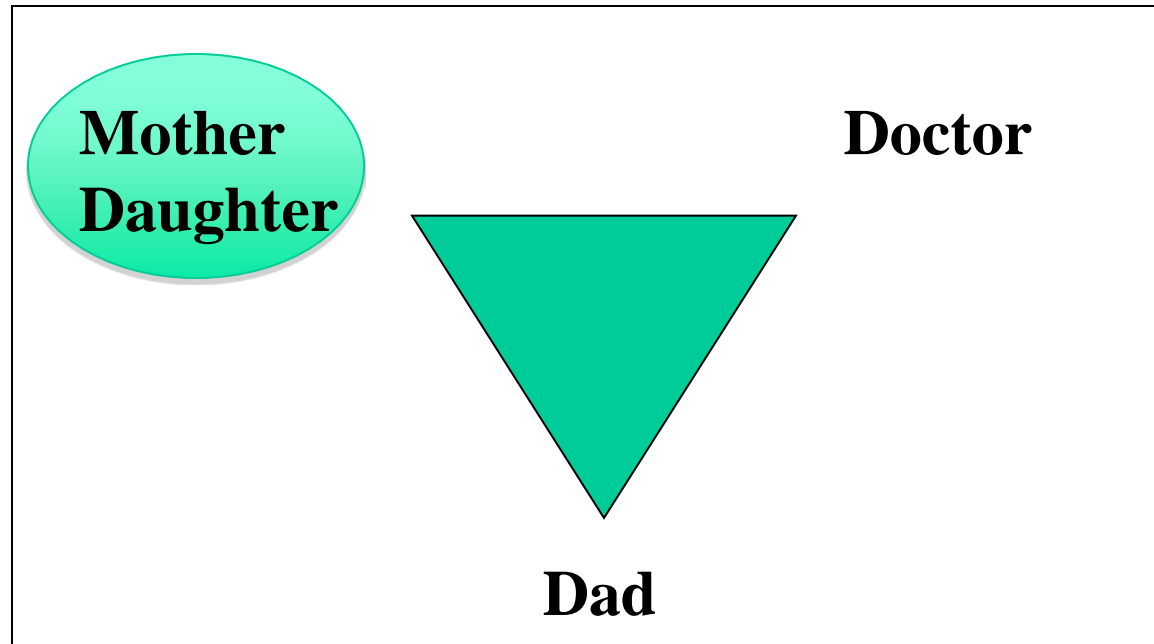


Natural systems have coalitions and alliances



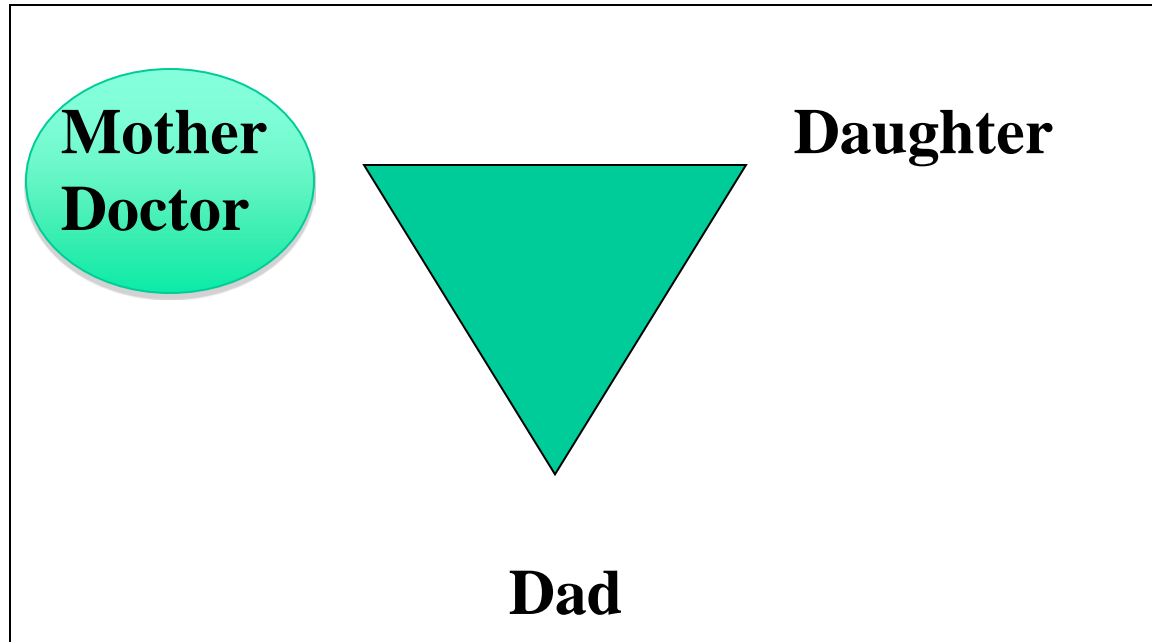
Unnatural alliances

Not good

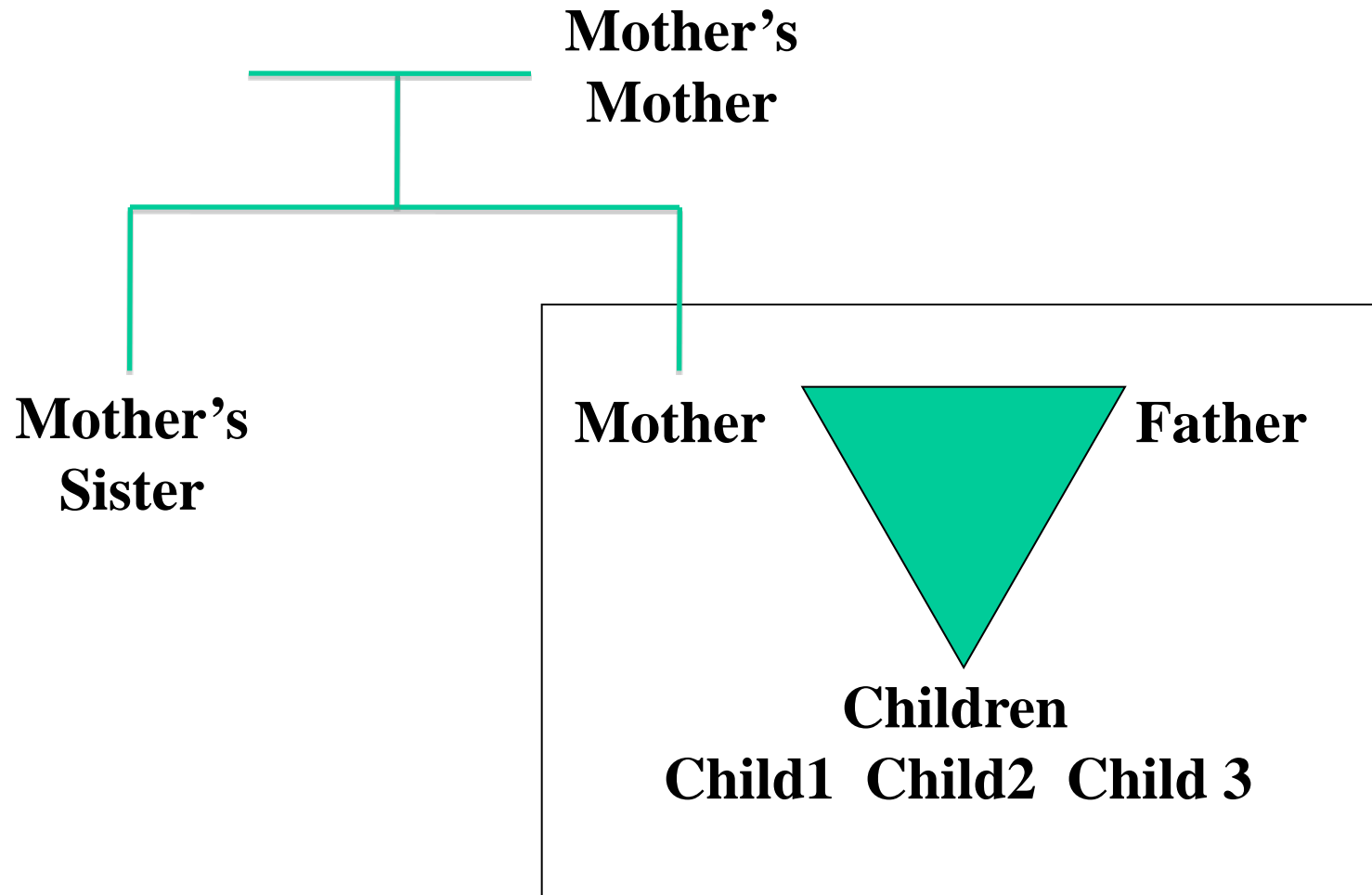


Unnatural alliances

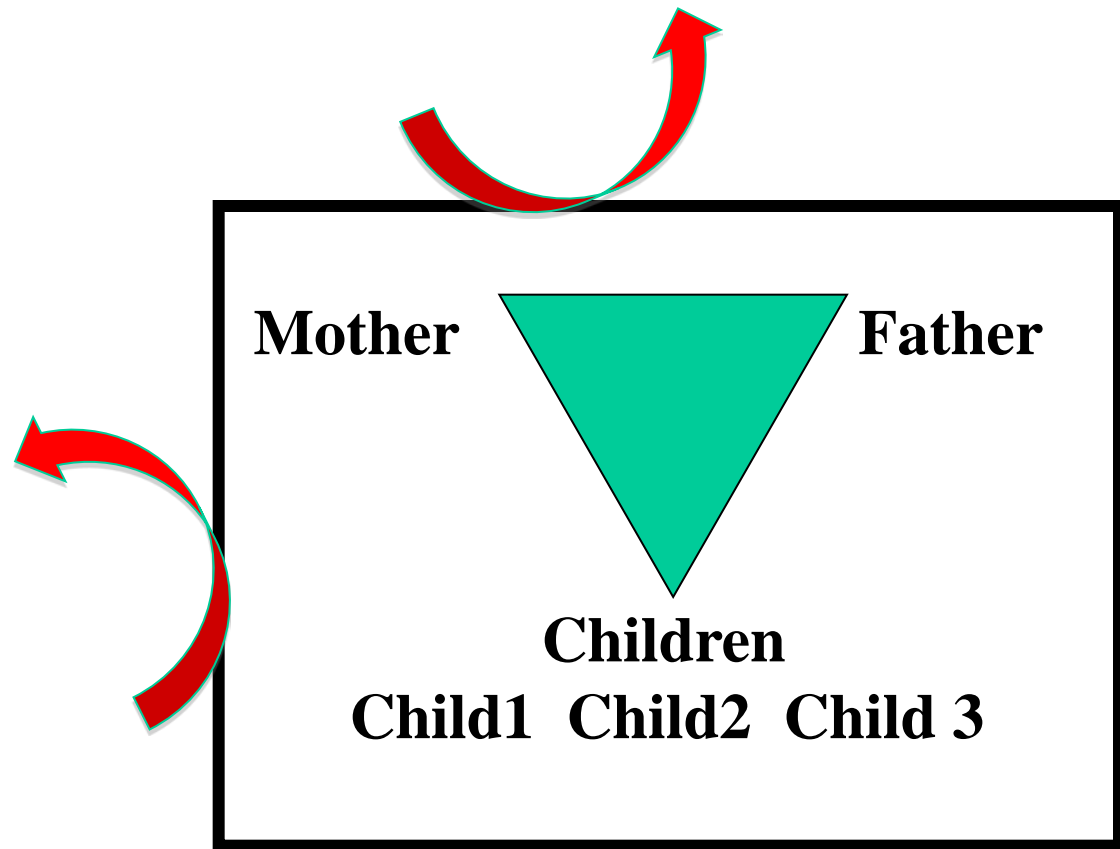
Really not
good!!



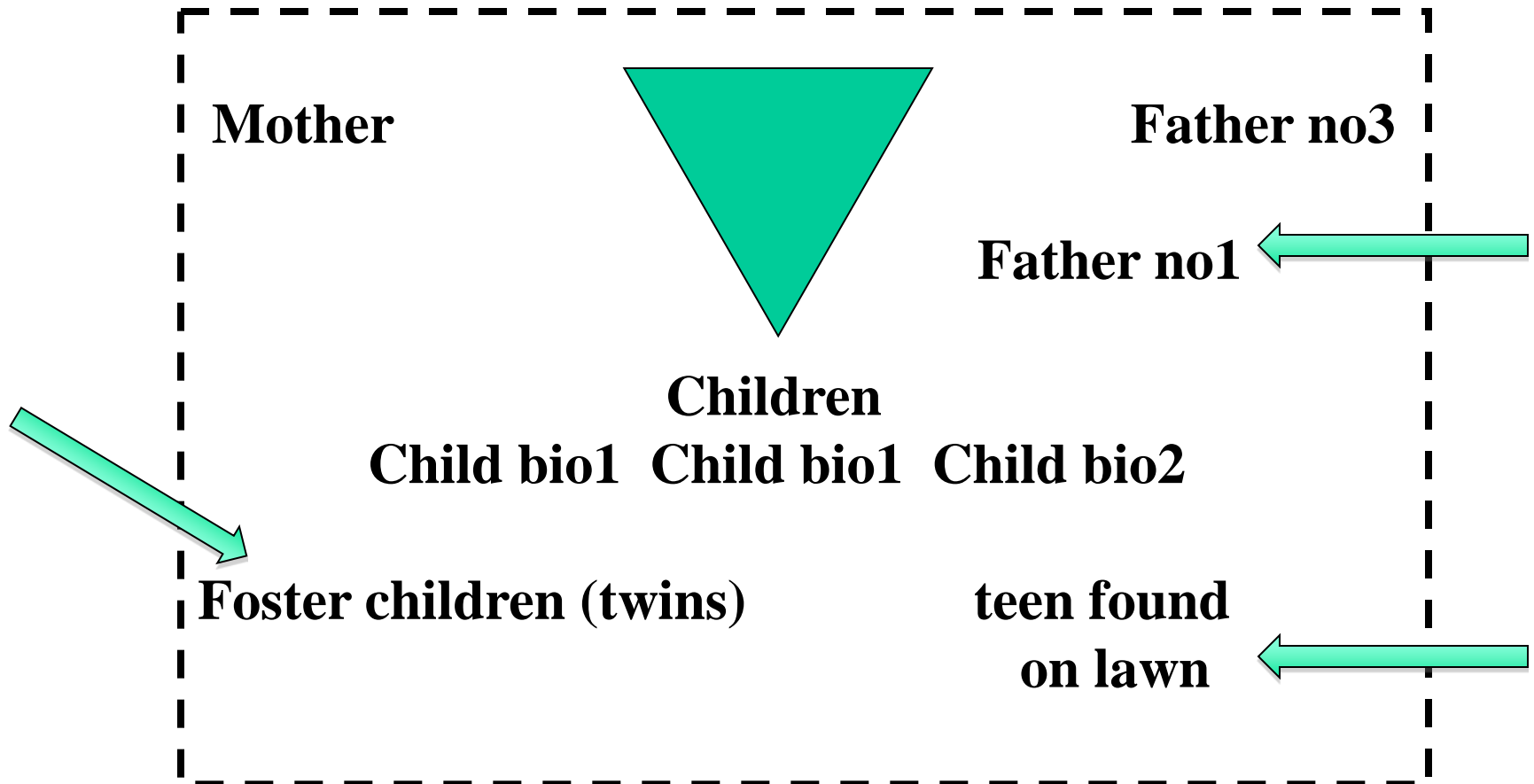
Natural systems have boundaries



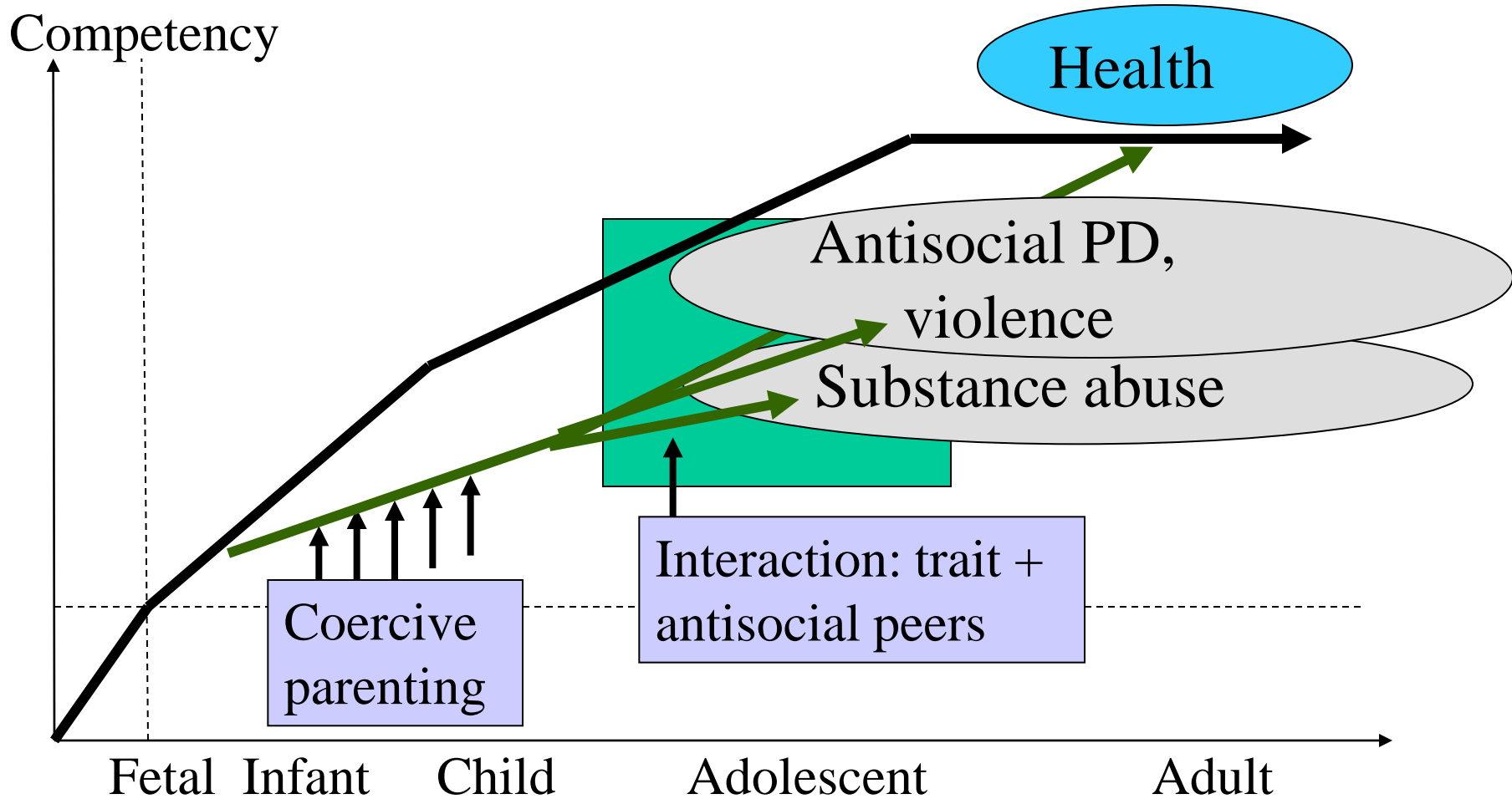
boundaries may be overly rigid



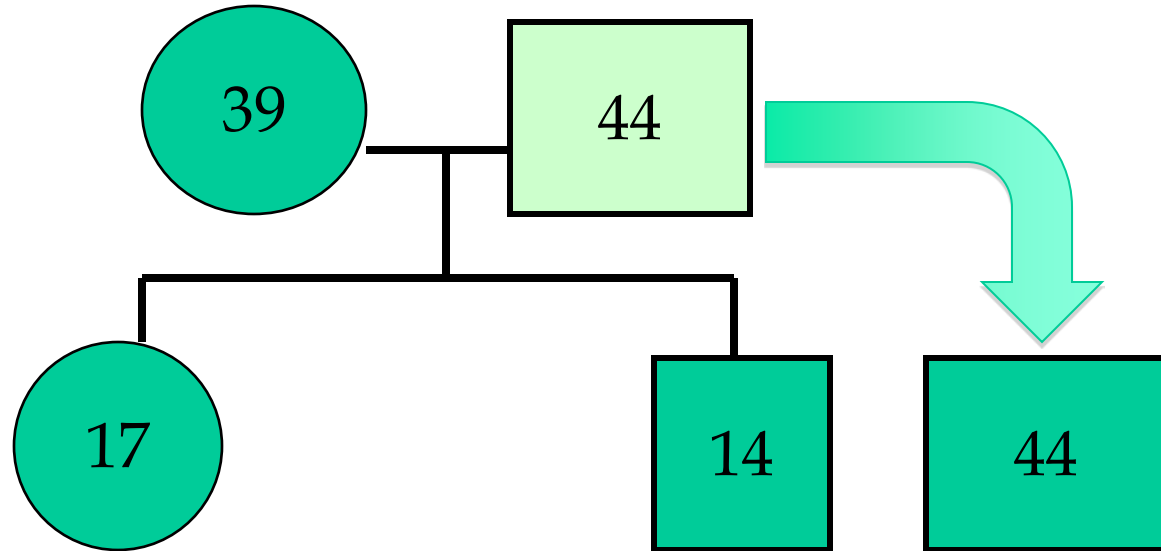
Or boundaries are pathologically porous



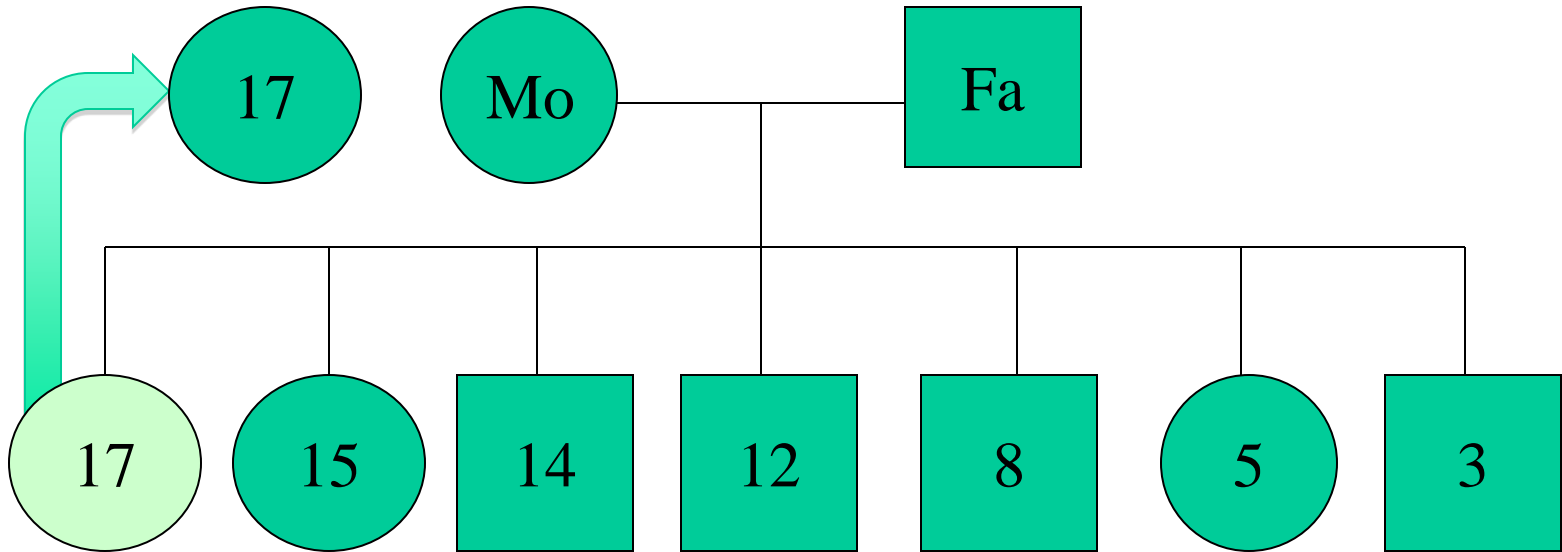
Systems are developmental & change over time e.g. boys with aggression



Emma's family

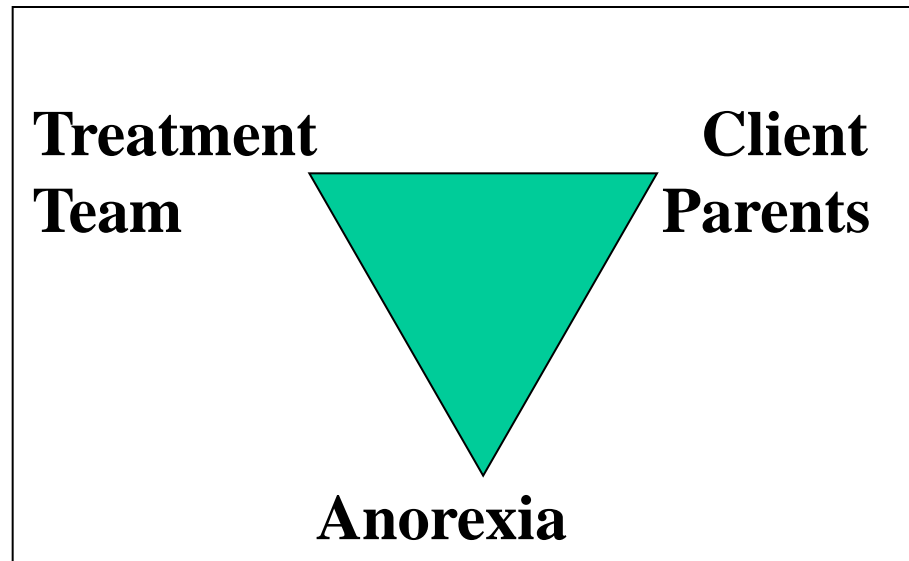


Kate's family



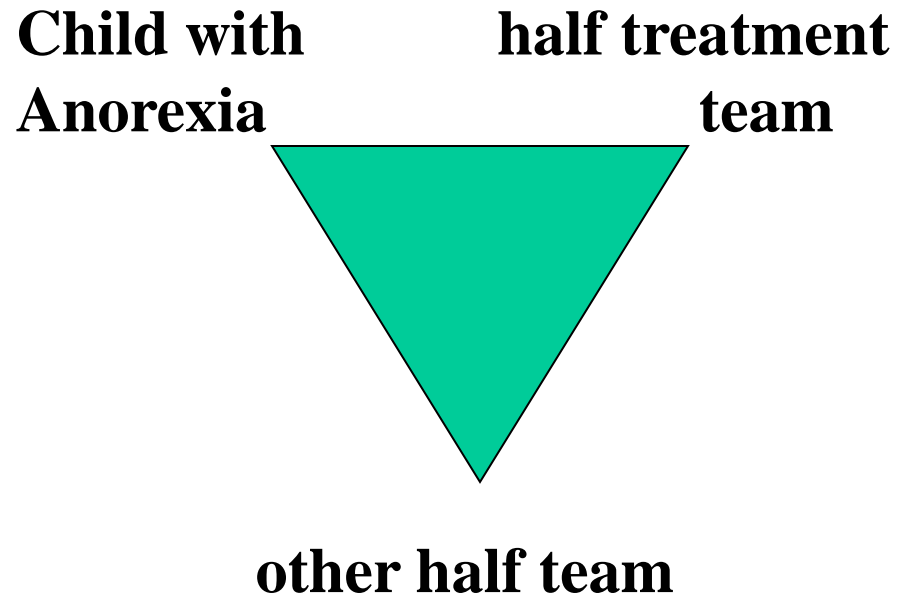
Grouping around a problem to good effect

Systemic thinking including 'triangulation' around issues useful on multiple levels.



Grouping around a problem with a bad outcome

Systemic thinking including 'triangulation' around issues useful on multiple levels.



Challenging individuals: Interagency Forum

N = 19, average age 15 years:

Families: alcohol abuse (29%), drug abuse (14%) and DV (21%).

Sibling difficulties: hx. school suspensions (21%), learning difficulties (21%).

Family hx: physical (50%), emotional (50%), sexual abuse (21%).

Average 3 mental health diagnoses. 50% Disruptive behaviour disorders.

Major functional impairment in several domains; many (44%) experienced “gross” impairment.

Average no. **schools** attended 5, 3 more than 11 schools.

84% suspended: average 2.4 suspensions, 9 children excluded.

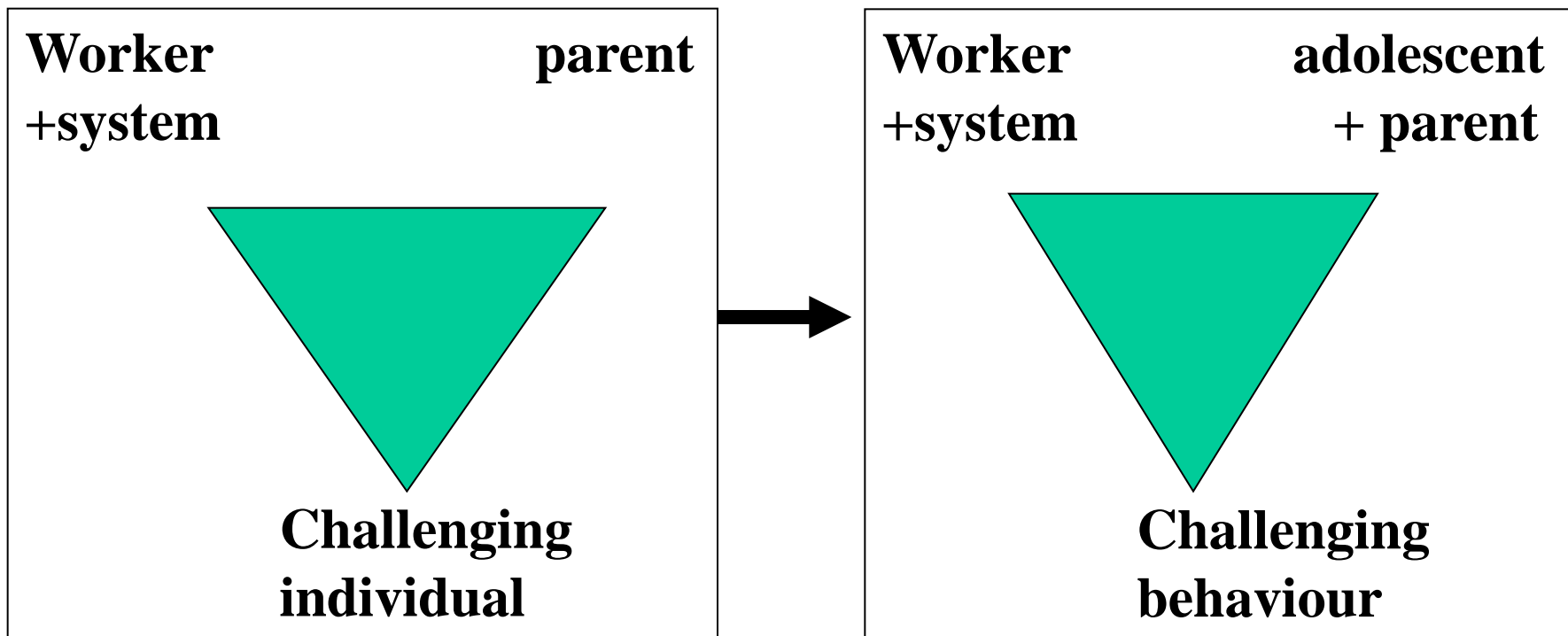
Supported **accommodation** (36%), other placements frequent (14%)

50% 11 or more residential placements, 28% 16 placements.

LEE, ENGLISH, DORRIES, BEECH, MCDERMOTT, 2004

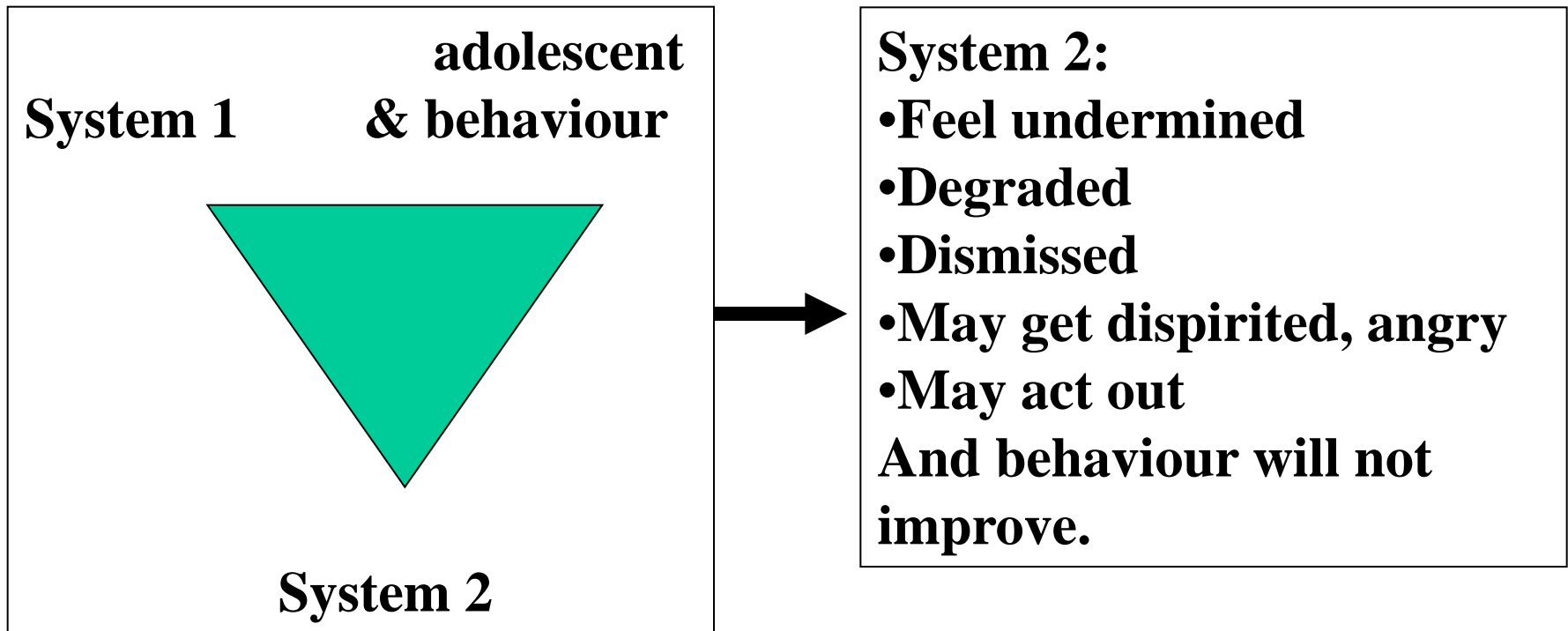
Triangulation and large systems

Develop effective coalitions
against the problem
behaviour



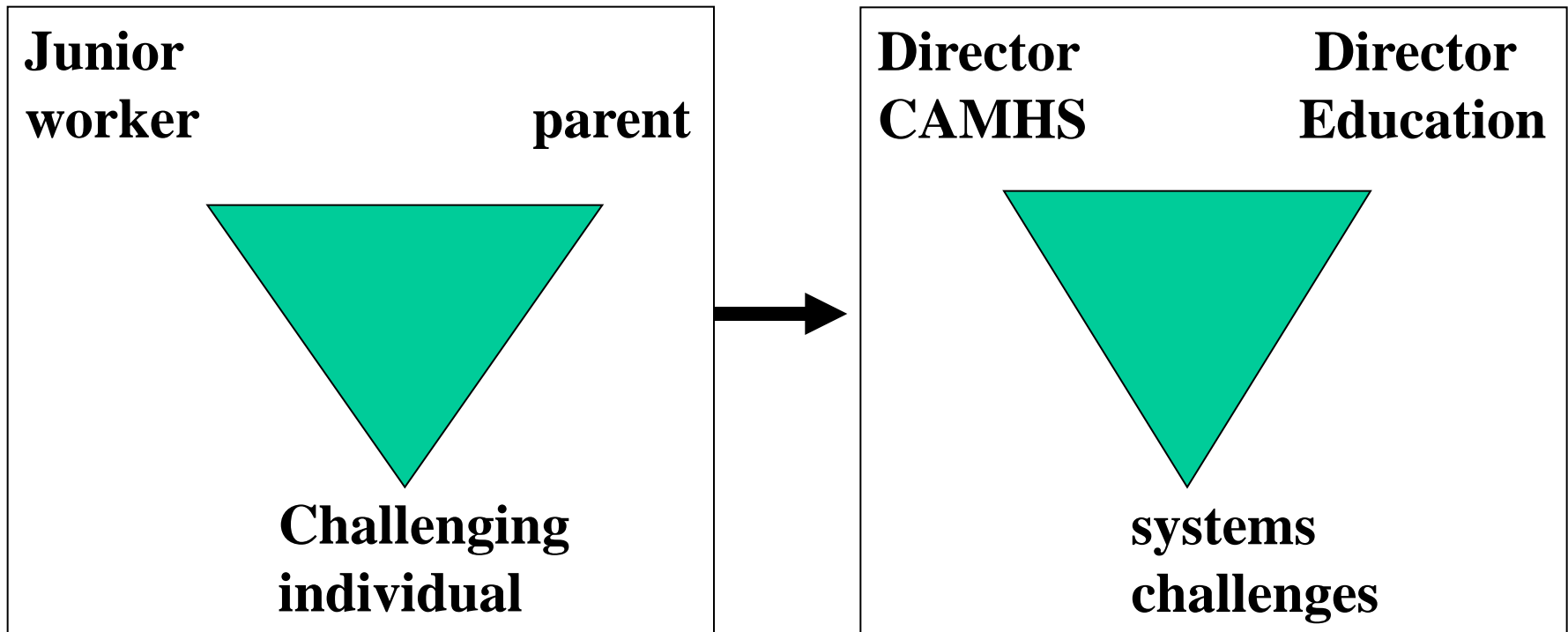
Very, very dodgy

No coalition against the
problem behaviour and no
progress



Systems & seniority

May need to bring in senior decision makers and make 'extraordinary' responses.



Summary

- * Individual ‘scraps’ with challenges can be very unstable, so too dyads.
- * A three point system often very stable and can be described by:
 - Hierarchy
 - Coalitions and alliances
 - Boundaries
 - Developmental aspects
- * Analysis and understanding of systems are a boon to effectively creating change and/or promoting stability.