

Bowen's Theory: Case Study Review in the Light of Differentiation of Self

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ABSTRACT

The major purpose of this paper is to illustrate the theory, practice, and outcome of Bowen's Family Systems Theory. Murray Bowen's Family Systems Theory is considered by many to be the most thorough and thoughtful set of ideas that family therapy has created (Nichols & Schwartz, 1995). Murray Bowen is a founder of the family systems theory and one of the pioneers in family therapy. Bowen defined the term "differentiation of self" as a capacity to gain a balance between emotional and intellectual functioning without fusion. Bowen established this term in light of the family system theory and he believed selfdifferentiation is closely related to an individual's family life. Family system theory explains the causes of being undifferentiated in the concept of family relations, and it names some of the characteristics of the family that led to undifferentiation such as triangulation, marital conflict, sibling position, emotional cut off etc. A gap Bowen's therapy is the fact that this theory lacks specific techniques to directly address the family issues. The focus is primarily on increasing individual differentiation and the therapeutic techniques may not be as explicit or directive as in other approaches. Bowen structured his work around the weekly 60minutes session. He invited family members for interview and saw fragments of whole families and individuals. The interviews resolved around a calm discussion of the clients struggle and situation. The question and response sequence provides the structure of the session. Bowen found out that understanding one's family story can help to understand their psyche, human relationship systems and how they operate within their physical an emotional nature. Bowen thus recommends that in psychosocial therapeutic counseling, the individual should not be attended without an understanding of their family story. According to Murray Bowen, based on clinical observations and client selfreports, the effectiveness of Family Systems Theory rests not so much on empirical research but on clinical reports of positive treatment outcomes, the personal benefits experienced by the families that underwent this kind of treatment, and the elegance of Bowen's theory. He conducted more clinical observations of schizophrenic families than controlled experiments. Current evidence for the effectiveness of Bowen's theory reflects that one-third of the clients get no better or worse, one-third of the clients improve some- what, and one-third of the clients significantly improve (Nichols & Schwartz, 1995). This article involves emphasizing the formulation of Bowen theory and application to a case example of an individual who struggles with differentiation. First, this paper will review the development of Bowen's theory, then, it will illustrate Bowen's eight interlocking terms. Finally, this paper will present a clinical example, applying family systems therapy to an individual who struggles with differentiation and discusses the outcomes.

Key Words: Family Therapy, Family Systems Theory, Case Study, Differentiation of Self.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past several years, there has been some testing of the Bowen Family System Theory that suggests how the family as a system contributes to offspring's psychological adjustment (Anderson & Sabatelli, 1992; Bartle-Haring, 1997; Gavazzi & Sabatelli, 1990). According to this model, one of the most important ways in which the family creates an environment supporting the successful transition into adulthood of offspring is the degree to which parents help their children balance their need for individuality with their need to remain emotionally connected to the family (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989; Gavazzi, Anderson, & Sabatelli, 1993).

Murray Bowen is a founder of the family systems theory and one of the pioneers in family therapy. According to Hafner, he was working with schizophrenic patients, and also worked with their families, in particular their mothers (Haefner, 2014). He noticed that for these families, one of the key factors that generate anxiety is having distance in their family relationship. He thus, paid attention to entangled relationships in their families (Brown, 1999). From this perspective, Murray Bowen defined the term “differentiation of self” as a capacity to gain a balance between emotional and intellectual functioning without fusion (Bowen, 1966). Differentiation of self means separating personal feelings and thoughts from those of partners, friends, or other intimate networks. Doing so may sound simple, but this ability is not innate and rarely employed. For example, emotions like anger, lust, sadness, and jealousy can override thoughts and actions. The higher the level of differentiation, the higher the ability to acknowledge these feelings without becoming misguided by them. The differentiated individual can process and address these feelings while maintaining decision-making or problem-solving skills.

Bowen established this term in light of the family system theory and he believed self-differentiation is closely related to an individual’s family life. Bowen indicated that a person’s level of differentiation of self illustrates his capacity to distinguish feelings and thoughts under stressful situations (Skowron & Dendy, 2004). With these words, Bowen emphasized the importance of control over the emotional process and also underlined the importance of self-differentiation to regulate emotions. Differentiation of self also enables emotion regulation includes soothing one’s own anxiety and not feeling overwhelmed by anxiety of others (Schnarch, 1997). Family systems theory demonstrates that differentiation of self is very very important to longterm intimate relationships. In terms of close relationships, differentiation of self appears as maintaining a sense of self and being capable to take I positions (Skowron, 2000). Our level of differentiation is highly dependent on our family of origin. We are all born reliant on a caregiver and their emotional cues, nourishment, and state of mind as our sole means of sustenance. Therefore, we find ourselves in a state of “fusion” when entangling our emotions and reactions with others. Differentiation addresses maintaining autonomy in intimate relationships.

With this term, Bowen also addressed the value of being autonomous and emotionally mature, and the importance of maintaining independent thinking during emotional relationships (Skowron & Friedlander, 1998). According to Bowen poorly differentiated or undifferentiated individuals are surrounded by their feelings and they make their decision regarding their feeling (Bowen, 1976). They live relationship-oriented lives and focus on comfort and balance in their relationship. In their research, Skowron et al. (2009) found that undifferentiated people greatly struggle with interpersonal distress (Skowron, Stanley, & Shapiro, 2009). In the relationship, they seek to gain acceptance, approval, and emotional closeness, which results in fusion or enmeshed relationships (Bowen, 1976). Bowen (1976) stated that if individuals are not differentiated, their emotional system will dominate over their intellectual system. They will become emotionally reactive under stress and they will show less flexibility, less adaptation, and more emotional dependence to others (Bowen, 1976). According to Skowron (2000), less differentiated persons appear emotionally immature. Contrarily, Bowen (1976) explains that well-differentiated individuals make their decisions using their logical thoughts. In their emotional life, they can experience intimacy and achieve closeness without fusion. They are able to deal with conflict, rejection, and separation (Haefner, 2014). In addition to better coping skills with stress, they experience significantly fewer relationship problems compared to undifferentiated people (Skowron et al., 2009). In their study, Murdock and Gore (2004) emphasized that under similar levels of stressful situations, well-differentiated individuals showed less psychological dysfunction. Well-differentiated individuals experience domination of intellectual functioning on their emotional functioning and under stress situations; they show more flexibility, more adaptation, and more emotional independence (Bowen, 1976). Skowron and Dendy (2004) underlined the similarities between Bowlby’s attachment theory and Bowen’s theory by stating both theories focus on autonomous self while staying emotionally connected to parents. Studies indicate that the undifferentiated self primarily requires love, approval, and security, which means non-threatening and non-increasing anxiety (Peleg-Popko, 2002). According to Skowron (2000), differentiated persons are less likely to experience fear of abandonment in their relationships while less differentiated persons experience difficulty with closeness and separateness.

Bowen and others predicted that the level of differentiation is crucial for psychological well-being and healthy psychological development (Bowen, 1976; Skowron, Stanley & Shapiro, 2009). Skowron et al, conducted a

research on 87 males and 134 females giving a total of 221 participants and assessed their differentiation of self and psychological well-being. In their research, they found that the male respondents usually reported having adjustment problems related to lower emotional reactivity and developing a clear sense of self. In the same research, the female respondents usually reported self-regulation and interdependent relating problems. The findings of this research also supported that self-management skills and interdependent relatedness are key for women's wellbeing (Skowron et al, 2003). According to Jenkins et al, Bowen explained that undifferentiated people usually suffer from anxiety, dissatisfaction in marriage, and physical distress (Jenkins et al, 2005). In addition to that, Peleg-Popko in 2002 emphasized the relationship between low self-differentiation and high social anxiety and intensity of adolescent problems (Peleg-Popko 2002). The study by Jenkins et al, supported Bowen's idea by finding that levels of differentiation can anticipate adults' psychological adjustment. Bowen indicates that the level of differentiation also affects family member's functioning. Skowron supports this idea by indicating parents' level of self-differentiation can be predictive of their children's competence. Since parents who have a good differentiation can modulate their emotional arousal and cope with stress efficiently, their children show competence, learn self-regulation, and maintain resiliency in stress situations (Skowron, 2005). In the light of Murdock and Gore's study, family system theory explains the causes of being undifferentiated in the concept of family relations, and it names some of the characteristics of the family that led to undifferentiation (Murdock & Gore, 2004). These characteristics were listed as Bowen's eight interlocking concepts.

Eight interlocking concepts

In the light of Bowen's belief, the tools to observe self to make changes are: differentiation of self (core concept), triangles, nuclear family emotional system, family projection process, emotional cut-off, multigenerational transmission process, sibling position, and emotional process in society. It is important to explain them to obtain a better understanding regarding theory.

Triangle (Triangulation)

According to Bowen, triangulation is an emotional structure of three people, which is also the smallest stable relationship system in the family. A triangle is a relatively stable group with shifting emotional forces. The most uncomfortable participant in a dyad, or two-person system, predictably draws a third person into the twosome when sufficient stress occurs in that two-person relationship. When tension in the relationship of two family member increases, triangulation starts by bringing in a third person in a relationship in order to lower anxiety (Haefner, 2014). Bowen illustrated the most common triangle as the father-mother-child (third person) triangle and the triangulated person. The most vulnerable person of the family is usually the first child or the youngest child (Bowen, 1976). Under calm conditions it is difficult to identify triangles but they emerge clearly under stress. Triangles are linked closely with Bowen's concept of differentiation, in that the greater the degree of fusion in a relationship, the more heightened is the pull to preserve emotional stability by forming a triangle.

Nuclear family emotional system

The inner core of a family, the two-generation group of parents and children is the most intense emotionally interdependent part of a family. This degree of intensity exists in any nuclear family in any society. One family system has several nuclear families in its broader network. In nuclear systems where there is no clear differentiation of self between spouses, surplus anxiety must be absorbed. This system emphasizes that a family responds to stress, which is also transferred from past generations to future generations. In Bowen's theory, this shows itself in one of three ways: as marital conflict, dysfunction in one spouse, or impairment of one or more children (Bowen, 1976). Bowen explains this concept as this: An individual, who developed his differentiation in his family of origin, chooses a spouse who has the same levels of differentiation. Couples with a low level of differentiation become more intense in emotional fusion and they have greater problems. In this relationship, one spouse obtains the dominant role and becomes a decision maker, while the other is pushed to the adaptive role. When the dominant one gains self, the adaptive one loses self. More differentiated spouses usually show less fusion while less differentiated spouses experience more fusion, which leads to anxiety for couples. In order to deal with anxiety, couples become emotionally distant towards each other

(Bowen, 1976). According to Bowen, marital conflict is originated undifferentiation and this conflict generates powerful tension between couples. During the “make up” period, this emotional energy appears as closeness. During the conflict period, it becomes anger. Marital conflict determines the relationship cycle between couple such as: closeness, conflict, distance, making up, and closeness (Bowen, 1976). Dysfunction in one spouse appears as a product of an intense level of undifferentiation in the marriage. Due to the fact that one of the partners becomes adaptive in these types of marriages, he or she loses themselves and becomes absorbed by their dominant partner. In addition to losing his or her functioning, an adaptive spouse also loses their ability to make a decision for him or herself and they become totally dependent. When anxiety increases in the relationship, it triggers a dysfunction in the adaptive spouse, such as physical problems, emotional problems, or social problems that may develop into chronic illnesses. These illnesses reinforce absorbing the undifferentiation. Dysfunctional spouses might be compensated by the over functioning of their partner and this inhibits the idea of divorce (Bowen, 1976). Impairment of one or more children implies parents’ projection of anxiety to children by excessively worrying about their attitudes, health, or their future (Bowen, 1976). Bowen states that impairment of a child is actually a projection of undifferentiation and this process will prevent the child’s self-differentiation (Bowen, 1976).

Family projection process

The family projection process explains the process of emotional impairment of one or more children. The undifferentiation of fusion of parents can be projected to the most dependent child in a family. In the beginning, projection is usually only towards one child. However, if the level of undifferentiation is very high, the other children may be involved (Bowen, 1976). The selection of a child is usually related to their mother’s stress during their birth, the sibling position (the first child and the youngest child), the sex (being the only child of that sex), and their emotional closeness with parents (Bowen, 1976). Bowen states that the most familiar example of this is a mother’s overprotective behaviors to her child in order to reduce her anxiety (Cook, 2007). When the mother feels anxious, the child also starts to feel anxious. Nonetheless, this anxiety was perceived by the child from his parents and the child receives overprotective care from the mother. This projection process causes emotional fusion in the relationship, which may also lead to dysfunction for the child (Bowen, 1966).

Emotional cut-off

This concept, describes the separation and isolation from the family of origin in order to escape from conflict. Bowen states that running away from family of origin is a sign of emotional dependence, which also causes vulnerability (Bowen, 1976). Struggling to manage emotional problems with family members displays itself as a cutoff, which is the origin of unresolved attachment (Haefner, 2014). Having an unresolved emotional attachment to their parents is a major issue for the differentiation of self. Bowen believes that when poorly differentiated individuals experience intense anxiety in the family, they are inclined to cut off emotional contacts within the family (Skowron & Friedlander, 1998). Emotional cut-offs also precipitate increased anxiety in surrounding relationships. Symptomatic behavior is most prevalent in families where there are many emotional cut-offs. Parents who have eliminated cut-offs with their parents are less likely to experience cut-offs with their children. Although much effort and courage is needed to contact a person who has been cut off in a family, self can be strengthened by reestablishing such relationships. Emotional cutoffs are usually transferred from the past generation to future generations, and they repeat (Cook, 2007). When there is cutoff with the past, it is likely to also have marital conflict, withdrawal, and emotional cutoff with the children. For this reason, having family cutoff with the previous generation leads to dysfunction in the family and poorly differentiated people (Bowen, 1976). In their study, Jenkins et al in 20025, supported Bowen’s idea by stating that emotional cutoffs are in anticipation of psychological problems (Jenkins et al, 2005). The family projection process continues through multiple generations (Haefner, 2014).

Multigenerational transmission

In multigenerational transmission process, emphasis is laid on the transfer of the conflict to other generations via family projection process. As it was mentioned before, after the impairment of a child, the child cannot

differentiate themselves from the parents and shows dysfunction. Consequently, he or she carries their undifferentiation to other generations by leading their children to be undifferentiated (Bowen, 1976).

Bowen's focus on at least three generations of a family when dealing with a presenting symptom is certainly a trademark of his theory. The attention to family patterns over time is not just an evaluative tool, but an intervention that helps family members get sufficient distance from their current struggle with symptoms to see how they might change their own part in the transmission of anxiety over the generations.

As McGoldrick writes in applying Bowenian concepts: By learning about your family and its history and getting to know what made family members tick, how they related, and where they got stuck, you can consider your own role, not simply as victim or reactor to your experiences but as an active player in interactions that repeat themselves.

Sibling position

Walter Toman in 1972 generalized profiles of expected behavior from observations of different sibling positions. The probability of this typical sibling behavior occurring appears to depend largely on the level of anxiety in the family (Toman, 1972). Bowen emphasizes that sibling position behavior can also be greatly influenced by family projection. Bowen adopted Toman's concept of sibling position and described the term as "significant characteristics of birth order in the family." This concept was substantial to explain the selection of a child during the family projection process. Bowen assumed the first child is usually chosen to be triangulated and they are the least differentiated person of the family, while the youngest child is usually the opposite (Bowen, 1976).

Emotional Process in Society.

Emotional process in society represents a combination of the forces of togetherness (fusion) and individuation (differentiation). Any society manifests emotional process as a combination of these two forces. The level of anxiety in society influences how the emotional process is expressed. Emotional process in society has an impact on each family. The pervasiveness of particular patterns of family dependency also intensifies or de-intensifies the general level of emotional process in society. Emotional process in society may be progressively adaptive or regressively maladaptive within the context of evolutionary change. Societal regression illustrates the link between family system and society. Bowen believes that emotional problems in the family are similar to emotional problems in society. Where anxiety exists, intellectual functioning stops and emotional decisions appear to reduce anxiety in both systems (Bowen, 1976). This dysfunction might also be repetitive and not only can be observed in a family, but it also appears in society. All in all, the anxiety causes regression to previous levels of functioning in both systems (Bowen, 1976).

After reviewing of Bowen's theory, it is imperative to employ it on a case study. The following case study was considered, showing striking similarities to characteristics of the theory and interventions.

CLINICAL PRACTICE: THE ROLE OF THE THERAPIST

The role of the therapist is to connect with a family without becoming emotionally reactive. Emphasis is given to the therapist maintaining a 'differentiated' stance. This means that the therapist is not drawn into an over responsible / under responsible reciprocity in attempts to be helpful. A therapist position of calm and interested investigation is important, so that the family begins to learn about itself as an emotional system. Bowen instructs therapists to move out of a healing or helping position, where families passively wait for a cure, 'to getting the family into position to accept responsibility for its own change' (Bowen, 1978). Bowen warns of the problems of therapists losing sight of their part in the system of interactions, where they may be inducted into a mediating role in a triangle with the family. Hence there is a high priority given to understanding and making changes within the therapist's own family of origin. In training, the emphasis is on the trainees' level of differentiation, and not on therapeutic technique. The therapist's resolution of family of origin issues is reflected in the: ...ability to be in emotional contact with a difficult, emotionally charged problem and not feel

compelled to preach about what others should do, not rush in to fix the problem and not pretend to be detached by emotionally insulating oneself (Kerr and Bowen, 1988).

The therapist is active in directing the therapeutic conversation. Enactments are halted so as to prevent the escalation of clients' anxiety. Clients are asked to talk directly to the therapist so that other family members can "listen and 'really hear' without reacting emotionally, for the first time in their lives together" (Bowen, 1978). Bowen himself would avoid couple interaction in the room and concentrate on interviewing one spouse in the presence of the other. Bowen clearly avoided asking for emotional responses, which he saw as less likely to lead to differentiation of self, preferring mostly to ask for 'thoughts', 'reactions' and 'impressions' (Bowen, 1978). He called this activity 'externalizing the thinking of each client in the presence of the other'.

Case study

Lynn is a 38-year-old English speaking Cameroonian woman who came to therapy and counseling because of the difficulties she has in her love relationship. She sought out to work on her communication with her partner, her constant crying, her heartbreak, and her denial of self. She has never sought psychological and or psychosocial help. She has no history of mental health problems. Lynn is not married and has no kids. She and her partner live in different houses and have been together in the relationship for 1 year and six months. Lynn was been referred to counselling by her General Practitioner whom she has been seeing for a number of minor physical ailments and early signs of depression.

Lynn was raised in a family of six that consisted of a mother, father, sister, and two brothers. She was the youngest child of the family. She reported that her mother and father spent all their lives silent towards each other. Because she was the youngest kid and her older siblings left the home before her. Lynn stated that at the beginning of her parents' marriage, her father cheated on her mother with another woman countless times and her mother never forgave him. Even though her mother did not forgive her father, they stayed in the marriage until her father died. Lynn said she was involved in her parents' relationship too much. She reported that her mother always talked about her father in a negative way and this caused Lynn to hate her dad for all of her adolescent years.

Lynn also said she had never known her paternal grandparents she has seen her maternal grandmother only a couple of times in her life. Her mother was not in contact with her siblings either, and this caused Lynn to have a distant relationship with her cousins.

Lynn now lives in a different city from her mother. She talks to her mother every day and visits her frequently. She described their relationship as very close. When Lynn had a problem with her partner, she could talk to her mother about it. However, Lynn reported that this time she did not tell her anything about her partner's attitude reason being that her mother could get upset. She said that if her mother learns of this, she will call him and yell at him, and this can cause more tension in her relationship.

According to Lynn, she did whatever her partner asked for, however one day her partner called in and wanted some space from Lynn. Even though Lynn and her partner did not break up, when she came to therapy and counseling, she was consistently sobbing. She was overly concerned with what she should do to get her partner back and what her partner thinks about her. Also, she was frequently seeking approval. Lynn mentioned that her boyfriend has many sexy women friends in his circle and those women frequently sent posts to him. She also said that her boyfriend sometimes asks her to send nude pictures of her and she does. However, recently he asked Lynn to send him a nude picture of her and another person together and this made Lynn uncomfortable.

After a series of sessions with Lynn and Taking a close look at Lynn's life and her family of origin, it is worthy to note that this case study illustrates some similar characteristics of Bowen's description of low level differentiated self. In light of Bowen's definition of interlocking terms of family system theory, it can be assumed that Lynn struggles with the differentiation of self. Being a part of triangulation, her emotional reactivity, emotional cutoffs, her deep relationship with her mother, and her bonding with her partner supports the idea of the low level of differentiation.

Owing to the fact that Lynn took sides with her mother over her father's attitude can be asserted as triangulation. According to Bowen's definition, the youngest child is at risk to be triangulated during marital conflict, which supports the possibility of her engagement in a triangle (Bowen, 1976).

The other significant factor that addresses a low level of differentiation is Lynn's tendency to make emotional decisions. For example when Lynn planned to celebrate her 37th birthday she decided to invite her mother. Her mother however changed the plans and Lynn had to celebrate the birthday somewhere else and when she never wanted. When I asked the reason why, she said if she didn't respect her mother's plans she would feel guilty and sad each time she spoke with her mother.. This demonstrates that her mother can affect her decisions and Lynn feels guilty when she disregards her feelings.

Emotional cutoff is another crucial factor in Amy's life that reinforces a low level of differentiation. This characteristic was also transferred from her mother's family to Lynn's cut-offs with her mother's siblings and cousins, and it supports the idea of low level of differentiation. Bowen also emphasizes that running away from a family of origin is another sign of emotionally dependence and necessity of closeness.

At any stage of life, one of the best forums for growing up is in reconnecting with our original family and forging a more mature relationship with each family member. If we can learn to be in contact with our parents and siblings without falling back into any old ways of managing family anxiety such as distancing, blaming or rescuing, we can make some genuine progress towards maturity.

When Lynn's boyfriend wanted space from her, Lynn showed emotional reactivity by crying. She also mentioned that instead of giving him space, she called her boyfriend many times crying. While she shows more emotionally dependence on her partner, she continued reacting emotionally, which illustrates the major characteristic of a poorly differentiated person.

DISCUSSION

According to McGoldrick and Carter, family systems theory encourages using a multigenerational genogram to gather information about the family's history (McGoldrick and Carter, 2001). Identifying the relationship patterns in previous generations was helpful for Lynn to gain insight.

Bowen stated that the emotional health of an individual cannot be separated from the family (Bowen, 1976). Using this knowledge about family system theory, Lynn and her family could potentially benefit from family therapy focused on systemic approach. From this perspective, even though it is important to involve as many family members as possible to increase the level of self-differentiation, Lynn is only able to attend individual therapy.

McGoldrick and Carter emphasized the techniques for family therapy with one person by explaining that system interactions, fusion, differentiation, triangles, distancing and cut-off are the areas which need to be intervened (McGoldrick and Carter, 2001). They said that detriangulation (withdrawing from a family member or therapist, so as not to be drawn into alliances of one person against another), opening up a close system, and taking an I positions are the most effective techniques to use in therapy.

Since Lynn was not aware of the transfer of patterns (such as cutoffs and distrust) from past generations to future generations, it was valuable for her to see the relationship patterns in the family.

In the light of de-triangulation, Lynn before her father passed away, they developed a better relationship and made up for those years. Here, there was no work possible about de-triangulation. Lynn still shows emotional sensitivity about this topic since he father passed away. However, in therapy, talking about that triangulation's effects and how she realized she was in triangulation was beneficial. Bowen indicated that having family cutoff with the previous generation leads to dysfunction in the family. For this reason, reopening the emotional cutoff and reconnecting with family members is crucial for Lynn to resolve the emotional conflict. Lynn has never experienced conflict between her mother's siblings, contacting her cousins and re-opening that emotional

cutoffs can also benefit her self-differentiation. Even though Lynn has not taken any step to make a connection with her maternal relatives, she is comfortable with this idea.

CONCLUSION

Finally, by reinforcing, taking I positions, and maintaining independent thinking, the fusion in Lynn's relationships can be prevented. During therapy, work focused on differentiating Lynn's feelings from her partner's opinions. In the beginning, she tended to talk about her partner too much. When she was making comments about her partner's opinions about herself, she was asked, "This is what he thinks, what do you think?" This helped Lynn to start independently thinking. Now, Lynn has started to spend time on her own opinions and started to talk about herself in therapy. As a result, these methods and therapy might help her self-differentiation, her empowerment, and also prevent transference of the same patterns to her next generation.

In giving an overview of Bowen's model, this paper risks oversimplifying its in-depth formulation of family process. My aim has been to summarise Bowen's core concepts and to give a flavour of how these influence the focus of therapy. One needs to be mindful however, of potential pitfalls when using a family of origin model. Bowen's focus on the distant to solve the proximate may take families on therapeutic paths which go beyond their request for the shortest possible road to symptom relief. Without recent significant socio-political additions, Bowen's theory decontextualises relationship patterns that are powerfully informed by gender, ethnicity and class.

This paper only focused on Bowen's theory, however, benefiting from other aspects and techniques certainly can contribute therapy.

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