

Randall T. Frost, MDiv. **Bowen Theory as a different paradigm for family research**



The presentation is based on a chapter I just completed for Robert Noone and Mignonette Keller's forthcoming book on family research." This presentation will suggest that a different paradigm, based on Murray Bowen's theory of the family as an emotional system, provides a way to surmount some of the problems researchers themselves have identified in the study of each of these four concepts.

In the study of human behavior, the dominant paradigm is the study of the individual. Constructs used to study concepts like resilience, coping, adaptation and self-esteem all largely study these phenomena as they manifest in the individual, even as some researchers recognize the limitations of the individual model. Research on each of these constructs has encountered similar impasses. These constructs serve as examples of some of the challenges of research based on the individual paradigm.

This presentation will suggest that a different paradigm, based on Murray Bowen's theory of the family as an emotional system, provides a way to surmount some of the problems researchers themselves have identified in the study of each of these four concepts. Bowen Theory itself, and especially its central concept of differentiation of self, will be explicated for its efficacy in guiding research on human behavior. Examples of research based on Bowen Theory will illustrate how a systems theory of the family could usher in a new era of research based on a systems paradigm of the family as an emotional unit.

3rd International Conference on Bowen Family Systems Theory