

Family theory paper essay sample

[Life, Relationships](#)



Attempting to understand family life can be done through many different perspectives. The most central theory in the study of family sciences is the Family Systems Theory. The perspective of Family Systems Theory can be summarized through the phrase “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts”. Family Systems Theory attempts to understand the series of connections between the individual parts of a family and how these interactions and connections affect the family as a whole. A family system is made up of the connections between individuals in a family. Family systems interactions with outside systems determine the openness and permeability of the boundaries surrounding a family system. The goals of a family system affect the behaviors and patterns that become the family structure. Subsystems within the family interact with each other and affect the relationships between individuals.

Of course family units are not static and therefore the rules, traditions, and day-to-day behavior of a family system must constantly be changing in order to keep the course of reaching their goals in equilibrium. Family systems are united in their desire to achieve goals formed from a [unified] family paradigm or ideal. In this paper I will use family systems theory to interpret how my own family goals motivate the structures and processes that make up our family system. Family Systems Theory allows me to understand my family's processes as working towards the family goals to have fun, create togetherness, work together towards accomplishment, and be spiritually strong.

Having fun together through recreational activities and a focus on humor influenced the processes of my own family. The rituals and behaviors that

made up our family structure were greatly determined by this goal. Family activities encouraging fun or humor came to have significant meaning as they were repeated on a more regular basis. The way sibling subsystems interacted and treated each other were influenced by our desire to have humor in our home. Teasing and playful banter were not only common but also encouraged through laughter and parental participation. The subsystems in our family were often dyadic between siblings, where two individuals created a relationship that was impermeable to outer subsystems. Fun and playful activities created by my parents would involve interaction between all of the children and increase the permeability between the dyadic subsystems, allowing us to become closer as a whole family.

My family system was very open to outside systems of information or individuals in regards to having fun together. Outside systems like TV sitcoms or extended family were allowed to interact with our family system as a way for us to better achieve our goal of having a fun or humorous time together. Decisions to create certain routines were motivated by the desire to achieve the goal of fun. One summer my family set aside every Friday to spend the whole day together in a fun family activity. Our daily family structure was affected, as we had to clear our schedule to make time for a fun activity each week. The parent to child subsystem was strengthened as we came to know each other better and spend more time together in these fun activities. The boundaries that separated the parental subsystem from the children were made more permeable and interaction and connections flowed more easily. The family goal of trying to have humor and fun together

influenced the behaviors and interactions of our family processes in our system.

Creating a spiritually strong family was another goal that impacted every aspect of our family processes. The underlying paradigm focusing on religious behaviors is an example of a second order process that drove first order processes of setting explicit goals to improve spirituality. My parents organized family structures in communication routines that revolved around spiritual discussion and setting specific, quantifiable goals. Such structures included daily family scripture study, participating in church activities, and regular conversations about spiritual topics. The united effort to teach correct religious principles to children strengthened the parental subsystem between my mother and father. Our family system's boundaries were semi-permeable in their allowance of religious ideals to enter our family system.

The outer system of the LDS Church was allowed the flow of information and religious beliefs into our family system, but to most other belief systems or worldly ideals my family system's boundaries were strict and rigid. The family ritual of attending church each Sunday became another part of our family structure that held special meaning to our family. Our family system found its identity in being strong members of the church. When personal, financial, or spiritual trials hit my family, sometimes our structure or daily habits had to be adjusted, but maintaining the family goal to grow spiritually was what enabled us to once again find equilibrium. Spiritual strength as a family goal influenced the structure and interactions between subsystems that shaped my family system.

Our family goal to create togetherness revolved around learning to love and support each other and foster healthy communication in our family. This family goal was never directly spoken of, but instead was established through setting explicit goals such as having no contention in our home or holding regular family councils where we could communicate openly about concerns or questions. Sunday family walks and father's interviews were rituals that contributed to the structure of our family. In these rituals, the subsystem between parent and child was strengthened. The boundary that often separated children from the parents was made permeable as open communication was made more natural.

The strong sense of trust and reliance between parent child relationships created a stronger connection between the family as a whole and strengthened the boundaries surrounding my family. When the dyadic subsystems within the children began to pull away from other subsystems, explicit family goals were set to be more loving and supportive of each other. ' Bless His Heart' bracelets were created to serve as a reminder of an explicit family goal to be more loving in the way we treated each other. Because we all wanted to be loving and supportive of each other, our family structure included attending each other's performances and striving for low levels of contention in our home. The goal to create strong family togetherness motivated the formation of structures and subsystems that encouraged love and support through healthy communication in our home.

As I have reflected back on my family life, I've been able to see that the underlying paradigm of accomplishment and working hard influenced the

operations and processes that became my family system. Teaching the kids how to work hard drove how my parents interacted with and disciplined us as children. The family structure, evident in our behaviors and interactions, revolved around learning how to be successful in accomplishing tasks. Chore charts were created as a way to motivate and regulate the amount of work accomplished by each of the members of the family. Sharing the workload in these everyday tasks and weekly clean up projects dissolved rigid boundaries

separating the subsystems within the family and allowed for more flow in between them as we interacted and shared in responsibilities. Although we often set goals involving tasks that would teach us how to work hard, the expectation of accomplishment was never openly discussed, but simply an implicit goal.

The source of this goal or family paradigm was from outer systems, mainly my grandparents. Having been raised in the great depression, my grandparents learned the importance of hard work and instilled that ideal in my parents. Their example reemphasized the goal that my family already held, that hard work was an important part of life. Accomplishment and hard work motivated much of the day-to-day interactions and functions that shaped my family system. Analyzing my family through the perspective of family systems theory has allowed for me to gain a better understanding of what makes my family what it is today. The ideals behind my family's goals and paradigms did not come as a surprise or revelation to me, but seeing how much of an impact they had on the actual structure of my family made me realize how much we truly identify with those goals.

I always knew that we were a close family, but analyzing the interactions between subsystems has shown how loving and supportive we have always been of each other. Every moment spent with my family has been filled with laughter and happy memories. Some of my most satisfying experiences I have had in life are due to the influence that my parents had in teaching me how to work and motivating me to accomplish hard things. My testimony in the gospel is due to the strong sense of spirituality that was always present in our family. Family Systems Theory helped me better understand the reason my family behaves the way we do and the connections that mold our unique family system.