

# [Family system theory essay](https://assignbuster.com/family-system-theory-essay/)

Family System Theory Introduction Murray Bowen’s family system theory was one of the first comprehensive theories of family system functioning. It was developed in 1974 and it believed the family can be defined as a set of interacting individuals who are related by blood, marriage, cohabitation, or adoption and who interdependently perform relevant functions through roles. Relevant functions of the family include values and practices placed on health system theory is used to explain patterns of living among the individuals who make up the family systems (Edelmen, 2006).

Describe the theoryIn system theory, behaviors and family members responses influence the family pattern and life. Meanings and values are vital components of the family system and provide motivation and energy. Every family has a unique culture, value, structure, and history. Values, which are described as the means of interpreting events and information, pass from one generation to the next. Values continually interact with the environment and change slowly over time. The family processes information and energy exchange with the environment through values, the values identify the meanings of the information for the family’s use.

Systems have boundaries that separate the family system from the rest of the environment and control the flow of information, energy and matter between the system and surrounding environment to maintain the system. This characteristic becomes the family’s psychic energy and internal manager, made up of interactions and relationship of members with one another and with those outside of the family system. The family is considered a unified whole rather than the sum of its parts-an integrated system of interdependent functions, structures, and relationships that acts as a single whole. Living systems are open systems. As a living system, the family must be open to a constant exchange of energy and information with the environment; the greater the openness of the family, the greater the changes can be. Change in one part or member of the family results in change in the family as a whole.

Change requires adaption of every member of the family as roles and functions take new meanings. After the family has made the changes it does not revert to its former state; the change is incorporated into the system (Edelman, 2006). Family system theory is a “ system that is changed by input from surrounding environment and, in turn, exert an influence on that environment. In layman’s terms, the family systems theory means that when change happens the family system is influenced by and is an influence on that environment.

The way interdependence is described is much like the idea of the family systems theory. This idea means the same as the theory, but it is the relationship between the family members, not the relationship between the environment and family members. Everything one person does relates to what the other person does. With the family I will study this case will be a very prominent concept. Many problems arise in a family and when that happens the members of the family (system) must depend on each other to get through it.

Thus, interdependence is a crucial component when examining the family systems theory (Brown, 1999). Feedback mechanisms are responses to an operation or behavior that provides information about that operation or behavior. These mechanism provide feedback to the family about their progress toward their goals and aspirations and also dictate whether the family is heading in the opposite direction of their goals. They are the mechanism that tell or show the reality of the situation.

They help show what is really happening in the family, what goals are still existing and realistic, what goals have changed, who’s roles are changing and where the family is going at that moment. A systems boundary is an arbitrary dividing line that defines the inside and outside of a given system. The system hierarchy defines the relationships among two or more system boundaries. The boundaries are usually the dictators of what will be part of their system. They dictate what will be an influential part of the family system and what the family system will give back.

The hierarchy is the deciding factor of what boundaries interact and what one do not (Bryannan, 2000). Each family and each relationship has inputs and outputs within it. Inputs are received and used by the system to perform its designated function or achieve it goal. Outputs are outcomes or by-products of the system’s activity that are returned to the environment. In other words, inputs are the impressions, experiences and interactions a family has ever day. Outputs are the results that are created from those experiences, impressions and interactions that are returned to the environment.

Every input directly impacts the output, thus making it very important to expose oneself to positive outputs (Bryannan, 2000). Rules of operation are very important in the function of a family system. Rules of operation are guidelines that prescribe what is expected, allowed, and prohibited in a given set of circumstance. The rules of operation dictate what should happen and what should not happen . They create structure within the system that all members are to follow.

Every single family has a different set of rules of operation, but every family at least has a small network of rules (Brown, 1999) Use the theory to assess a family The family that I am going to do my assessment on is the Rudolph family. This is a family that lives three houses down from my own parents home. The Rudolph family includes, Eddie, 36 (father), Liz, 32 (mother), and there two sons Brenden, 10 and Jaron, 8. The father Eddie was not at the interview because he had recently been incarcerated.

Liz, and her two sons, Brenden and Jaron were present along with Liz’s mother who they live with, Delmarie, 67 and her mentally impaired son Earnest Jr. , 39. The family home is a 4 bedroom single story home that is clean condition. Delmarie and her late husband Earnest Sr.

own their home and its in good repair and in a middle class neighborhood. Delmarie has no financial issues and her home is paid for in full. There is adequate sleeping arrangements for the family they have heat, clean water, and sanitation facilities. The family has running water in the kitchen and a refrigerator. They also have a washer and dryer. There are two smoke detectors in the home.

There are no signs of vermin present. The family, when asked feel that the home is comfortable and they have adequate space. The streets are well maintained and there is a very low incidence of violence crimes or theft. The family lives two blocks from the grade school the two sons attend. The family attends church in the community. And Delmarie is retired and Liz works at a steel factory.

The mother, Liz and her mother Delmarie philosophy of health is similar. They both believe health is living right and eating right. They believe their family is healthy both physically and mentally. The family does appear to practice this belief, because there health appears to be in fair condition.

Liz, has never been hospitalized except for the birth of her children and has only been sick with colds, and sinus infections. Delmarie has HTN, and takes medication for it. Earnest Jr. has DM, and is on medication for it.

He is also on Seroquel for his violent behaviors that he has occasional. Delmarie describes these behaviors, as very upsetting to the whole family. The family denies any psychological issues and have never had any family consulting or individual counseling. Brenden and Jaron are both healthy children and have never been hospitalized, and all of there immunizations are up to date.

No one in the family drinks, smokes or uses drugs. All members are within normal weight and they state they have food, and they eat 3 meals a day. The two children and Liz both exercise on a regular basis. Delmarie admits that she does not like to exercise. She states that she does not really have the time for it because she takes care of her son who needs a lot of supervision. Delmarie spends most of her time in the home since her husband died and she goes to church and visits family members that live near by.

All members of the family have health insurance and go to the doctor for regular check ups. The family has two cars and both adults in the family drive. The cars are in good working condition. Jaron and Brenden have both been doing well in school.

They have various hobbies and are involved in after school programs. They both play flag football and Brenden runs track and Jaron also plays baseball. The family overall home and physical health seems to be fair. But, I question how the family is doing with some of the major changes that has taken place in their extended family over the last 2 years. Before the death of Delmarie’s husband, they spent a lot of time out in the community going bowling, football games and vacationing in Alabama and Tennessee (where they were both born and raised).

Eddie and Liz along with their two sons also spent a lot of time going out with family and friends. They also spent time alone going out to dinner and movies while the children were with a babysitter. Discuss how the theory guided the assessment processThe family system theory helped me guide the assessment of the family by looking at the changes that has occurred over the last two years with the family and there effects on each member. The death of Delmarie’s husband started the change in this family, before Earnest Sr. died it was just him, Delmarie and their son Earnest Sr. , living in the home.

After Earnest Sr. died, Delmarie states she got really depressed and couldn’t snap out of it. She became very withdrawn and would not come out of the house. She also stopped taking her medications for her hypertension and was hospitalized for chest pain. That is when Eddie, Liz and their two son’s Brenden and Jaron moved in with her.

They moved in to watch her to make sure she was taking care of herself and make sure she was not lonely after the death of her husband of 45 years. Things in the family was going fine until Eddie lost his job and started selling marijuana after he was unable to find a job. He was eventually arrested and is currently spending 11 months in jail for possession with intent to deliver. These two major changes have effected every member of this immediate family. And with these two major changes the family will never be the same again.

Delmarie and Liz both spend a lot of time talking about how good things use to be and how they wish they were that way again. The family system seems to be functioning but not completely due to the lost of their spouses. And with this family you can see where they once were involved in a lot of community activities and outings but now they limited there exchange of involvement with the greater environment. The family is somewhat limited and not open because of the changes that have happen over the last two years. They have not adapted to change in the family system.

Death and possible separation from love ones is a part of life and all members have to adapt and continue to function for the whole family to move forward. This is not happening fully with this family. Even, Jaron and Brenden have had problems with adaption by refusing to talk about there feelings about losing the only two male role models they have known in there life’s. The effects of grief and the unresolved feelings that this family has may not only effect there immediate family but could be passed on for generations. Identify strengths and weaknesses of the theory The two strengths of the family systems theory that I think are important to advance practice is that it is very simple, and easy to use.

The theory does not use complex terms or wording. It states simply that the system (family) is a whole and that anything that effects one member has an effect on all members. The second strength of this theory is that it builds on family relationships and show the family how important it is that they have good bonds with each other because with out them the whole family will suffer. And that is an important concept in to teach young children.

The one weakness of the family system theory that I do not like is that it does not leave a lot of room for individualism. A member can never be seen as one because all parts are supposed to be united as one in the system. And the second weakness is that it the theory leads to the belief that the system should be closed from outsiders and that the parts in the system should interact only within that system. In some families this could lead to isolation. Health promotion interventions for thefamilyIn this family of currently five people, Delmarie, Liz, Brenden, Jaron and Earnest Jr.

I would suggest for all of them family counseling. I think the family as a whole has unresolved grief and need both family and individual counseling. For the two children I think this would be especially important for because they have not been able to talk about losing there grandfather and their own father being in prison. Liz, feels her sons are embarrassed that there dad is in jail and that is why they do not what to talk about it because of that reason. And, the reason they do not want to talk about their grandfather is because its too sad for them. I explained to her that in both cases, lost and shame they need counseling to talk about these feeling.

Delmarie would also benefit from a grief support group, because she could talk about the loss of her husband and it would also get her out of the house to meet new people who share her same problem. Liz should spend more time going out with friends and family, and even go back to school to work on her education. Her two sons should continue their school work and after school activities. And Earnest Jr, should continue to go see his doctor and have his medication adjusted to prevent violent behaviors that disrupt the family. The family could also spend time together reflecting on the past but also looking at the promise the future holds for them. The family needs to understand that things will never go back to the way they were but life can still be good.

Conclusion The family system theory is easy to use and really shows the power that the family has as a working unit. It can really be helpful when a member of the family is faced with a crisis and the other members are there for support. The problem with the theory is that when one person in the family dies or has problems the whole unit is effected. And all parts of the system (family) are effected differently. When one member of the family can not adapt the whole family is effected and may suffer.

The family will never function the same again after this change and at times the change can be so drastic that the family unit become undone and the family comes apart and does not function any longer. The Rudolph family needs counseling and they need to deal with their feelings of grief and loss, and since they have not been able to do it with in the family unit then they need outside help. Seeing that they all have insurance counseling for the family should be easy to arrange if both of the adults agree to it. I strongly voiced my feelings about counseling and support groups for Delmarie, and Liz. The family will have to continue to adapt to change because in a few months Eddie will be come from jail and he will once again be out of work and in need of money to help support his family.

Will he be able to find a job or will he return to old habits and start selling drugs again. How he plans to deal with that will once again have a direct effect on everyone in this family. REFERENCES Brown, J. (1999).

Family system theory and practice. ANZJ, Fam Ther. , Vol 20, No. 2, pp. 94-103. Bryannan, L.

(2000). In Bowen Family System Theory [Web]. Retrieved Oct. 12, 2007, from http://homestar.

org/bryannan/family. html. Edelman, C. & Mandle, C (2006). Health promotion across the lifespan. (6th Ed).

Elsevier.