

# Differentiation of Self: Past and Present

The Bowen Center for the Study of the Family

Monthly Professional Meeting

April 10, 2013

What is the question being addressed?



*"Never, ever, think outside the box."*

# Differentiation of Self

## concept

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- “psychological theory that postulated the human as a biological being.”
- Defines people according to the degree of **fusion** or **differentiation** between emotional and intellectual functioning.

## process

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- “Area that the human could change – cognition, perception, relationship programming, reasoning, interpreting, misinterpreting, reacting...”

# Psychological Formulation of Schizophrenia (context by Rakow)

- Bowen's effort to move Freudian theory to more scientific foundations based on the idea of the human as a biological being, part of all living things and not separate due to his brain functioning.
- "Differentiation" addressed how each individual transference was different based on the individual's capacity to feel and think. He inferred that the transference replicated the family relationships.

- 1995. Archives: “A Psychological Formulation of Schizophrenia.” [Family Systems 2\(1\):17-47.](#)

# VARIATION IN PATTERNS

- “We could see patterns even in ‘normal’ families, and in the staff, and in ourselves.” 471
- Shift away from schizophrenia to all levels of lesser problems and to people without clinical problems.

- Demands are not insatiable or unreasonable as a quality in patient; disappeared when therapist was able to get his position clear.
- Major obstacle is psychiatrist's mothering or rejecting attitude
- Motivation towards maturity can be blocked by well intentioned efforts
- Mother's own un-sureness of self causes her to psychologically "hold onto" the symbiotic oneness, which retards the child's psychological development



# Bowen's interest in biofeedback

- “The effort is made in the belief that schizophrenia is deeply involved in the primitive psychological processes that can shade into the somatic....”

# biofeedback

- 1979 Biofeedback Conference “Biofeedback as Bridge”
  - Grown up physically but not emotionally
  - Curious of how psychosis could move into physical symptoms and vice versa



# Fusion and Physiology, 1985

- My therapy would say that all of self is over there in one bag....we are able to modify just the psychological elements....That we can modify. But essentially that is where the theory is.
- Interview with Murray Bowen and Priscilla Friesen

# Dr. Lillian Rosenbaum

- Self-regulation
  - Method focused on as technique
  - Another way to think of it is as a methodology to managing reactivity (essential for differentiation of self)
- Linking the physiology with the nuances of relationship processes
- Contributed to theory of over/under functioning (physical symptoms)

# Biofeedback

- Psychological
  - Uses awareness and intention
  - Physiological self regulation is a skill that is practiced and is enlisted when needed.
  - Become more automatic just as methods of incorporating a broader perspective in family or seeing reciprocity in relationships

# Emotional System

Behavior  
Cognition  
Psychology  
Beliefs  
Feelings  
Perceptions  
Muscular Skeletal  
Physiology  
Electrical Activity of Brain  
Chemistry  
Genes

# Differentiation of Self

## concept

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- “psychological theory that postulated the human as a biological being.”

## process

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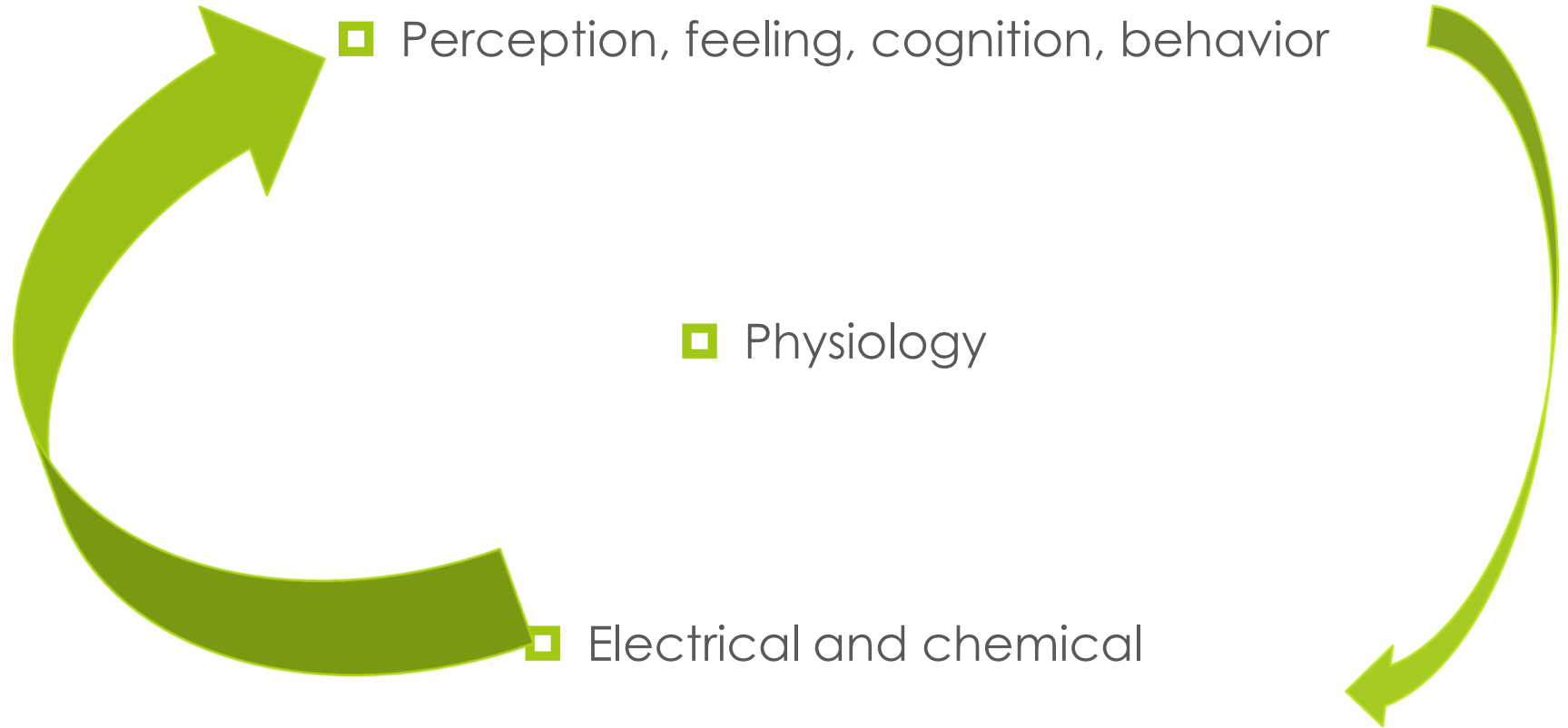
- “Area that the human could change – cognition, perception, relationship programming, reasoning, interpreting, misinterpreting, reacting...”
- Methodology
  - Develop a research project
  - Extended family (1 to 1)
  - Bridging cutoff
  - Detriangling
  - **Self-regulation Biofeedback**



# Neurofeedback

- 1994
- Central Nervous System
  - the part of the nervous system which in vertebrates consists of the brain and spinal cord, to which sensory impulses are transmitted and from which motor impulses pass out, and which **coordinates the activity of the entire nervous system**

# Level of Communication systems governed by relationships



# Question

- What is the neurofeedback measuring from a family systems perspective?
- How does neurofeedback relate to a “psychological theory that postulated the human as a biological being?”



**PASS Access**

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**XXXXXX Map**

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Power Transfer  
Quality  
Stability  
More

# Differentiation of Self

## Conceptual

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- Variation of central nervous system based in responsiveness to the relationship system
- Emotional architecture of brain occurs automatically moment to moment in person's physiology, psychology and brain

## Process

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- Below awareness
- involves a person's effort to change, or interrupt, the deeply embedded inflexible relationship patterns that are shaped by the multigenerational family process.

# Differentiation of Self

## Conceptual

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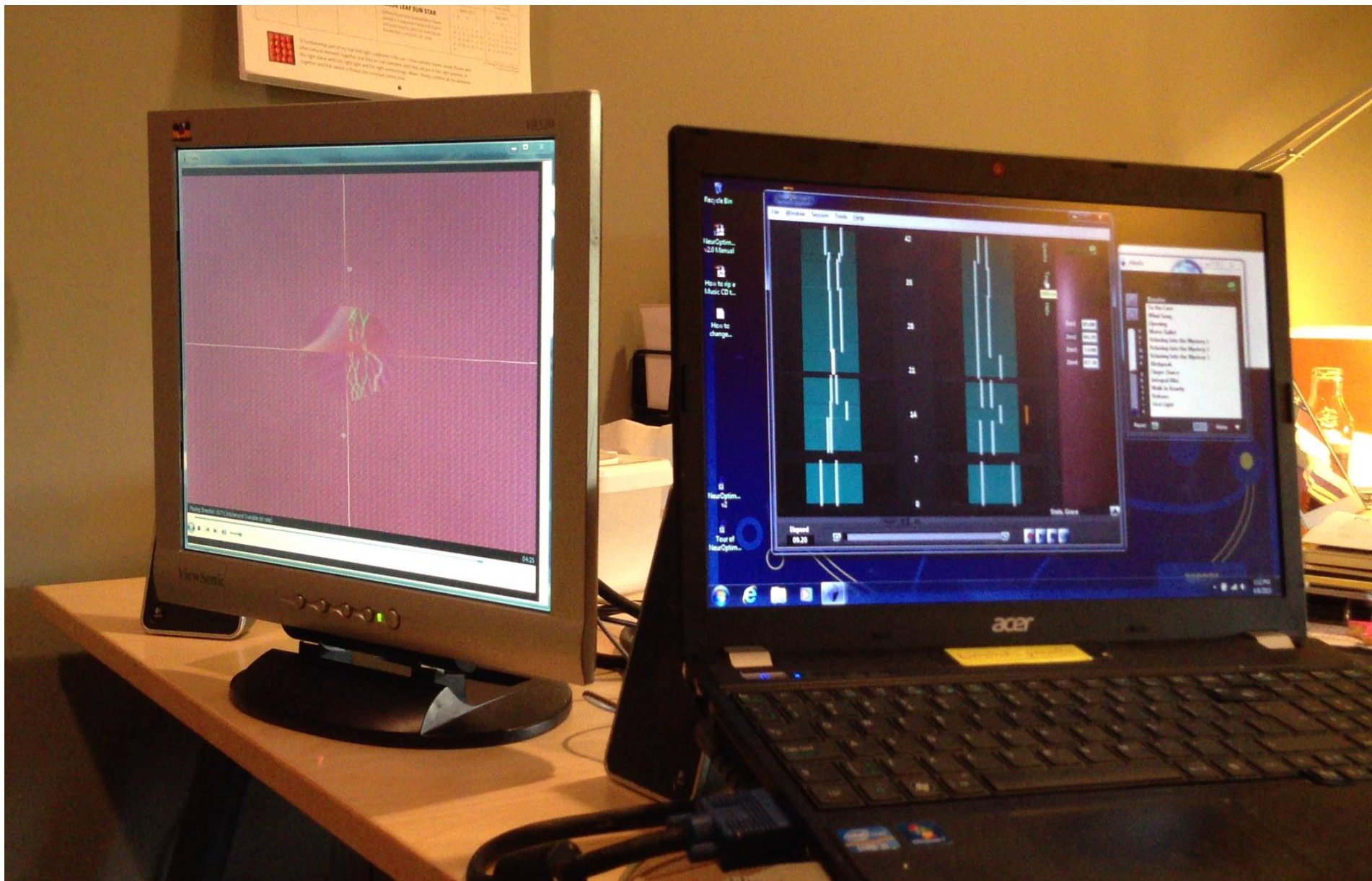
- Exists on multiple levels simultaneously
- Represents life time of responsiveness to life's challenges and accumulation of adaptations from previous generations.
- Reactivity in brain correspond with levels of differentiation

## Process

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- Neurofeedback interrupts chronic reactivity patterns in the brain
- Changes in this platform impact levels of perception, thinking, psychology and behavior.





# Chronic Anxiety

- the sustained patterned reactivity that is reflected in less flexible recovery in the physiology and more rigid threat-based perceptions that lead to more inflexible behavior in relationships



# "The Biochemistry of Love"

Science and Society, 2013

■ "The modern cortex struggles to interpret the primal messages (of love), and weaves a narrative around incoming visceral experiences, potentially reacting to that narrative rather than reality."

■ Sue Carter and Stephen Porges