

# Counseling and Family Therapy Scholarship Review

---

Manuscript 1049

---

## Bowen Informed Therapy Integrated with Gene Keys

Kristen Oliver M.A.

Follow this and additional works at: <https://epublications.regis.edu/cftsr>

 Part of the [Counselor Education Commons](#), [Marriage and Family Therapy and Counseling Commons](#), and the [Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy Commons](#)

---

## **Bowen Informed Therapy Integrated with Gene Keys**

KRISTEN OLIVER, M.A.

*Experience Change, Group Private Practice, Wheat Ridge, CO*

The mental health professions require innovation in order to advance theory and practice. This article presents reimagined therapeutic work that joins the metaphysical element of Gene Keys with the largely accepted theoretical approach of Bowen Family Systems Theory. We propose the integration of metaphysics as a way to facilitate higher levels of differentiation – particularly in clients who have an expanded worldview inclusive of metaphysics. The reader is asked to stretch their beliefs and perspective as they read through this paper.

**KEYWORDS:** Bowen Family System Theory, Gene Keys, Metaphysical, innovation

### **Proposed Integrative Innovation**

The need to innovate and revolutionize therapy is growing. Fewer people are seeking psychotherapy, and more are turning to intuitive teachers, psychics, mediums, etc. (Miller & Hubble, 2017). As more people seek out help from ESP practitioners, bodyworkers, astrologers, psychics, and intuitive healers, psychotherapy will need to adapt to include elements of deeper belief systems, different forms of healing, and more room for flexibility around interventions used with clients. Healing is being sought in forms outside of society-sanctioned healing which has become medicalized through evidence-based psychotherapies and medications. Vargas (2019) discusses the constraints on the flexibility clinicians experience when choosing which interventions to use with clients, as well as, discussing the stifling creative advancement the field of psychotherapy may be experiencing at the expense of professional identity. Beginning in the 1990's evidence-based practices have become the norm within the field as they allow for clear guidance and expectations to maximize client experience (Cook, Schwartz & Kaslow, 2017). However, Cook, Schwartz & Kaslow (2017) mention that evidence-based practices can be culturally mistuned, may not view patients as agents of change, and can be rigid in their approach to determining what is effective. We believe that while evidence-based practices hold an important role in the field, they also suffocate innovation because not all healing can be quantified or measured and the expectation to be able to do so, may halt advancement and innovation.

This paper is a contemplation of utilizing the groundwork that has been laid by theorists and introducing the idea of blending with theory the self-exploration tool of Gene Keys. The theory explored here specifically is Bowen Family Systems Theory (referred to as Bowen theory from here on) which is the first systemic approach to therapy developed in the 1940s and 1950s by Murray Bowen (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). This theory is not evidenced-based as a scale for quantifying its main change factor of differentiation has yet to be developed and can feel subjective across many areas of someone's life (Kerr, 2019).

Already holding a brief understanding of Bowen theory clarifies the context of this paper as an explanation of Bowen theory is not the main purpose here. The basics of Gene Keys will be explained in a high overview to allow for insight into how this tool may be integrated into therapeutic work. The focus of this paper is the exploration of how Bowen theory and Gene Keys might blend with the hopes of innovating the therapeutic landscape by demonstrating how integrating accepted therapeutic techniques with other healing methods can provide clients with a

richer experience. We believe that the more integrated we become as people, the more holistic an understanding we have of ourselves and others.

## Gene Keys

Rudd (2018) defines the concept of *Gene Keys* as an “inner journey whose purpose is to transform our core beliefs about ourselves, thus raising our lives onto a whole new level of awareness” (para. 1). It is an intimate process of exploring the self and reaching for a more authentic way of showing up in the world.

There are 64 Keys in total, which Rudd (2018) refers to as 64 human behavioral archetypes. Rudd goes on to explain that each Key has three levels of frequency, the Shadow, Gift, and Siddhi. The Shadow frequency is the pattern of victimhood. This is the starting point for most humans as Shadow frequencies are the vast undercurrent of human society. Rudd mentions that Shadow frequencies are rooted in a long-standing generational pass-down of fear and the need for survival. He shares that these maladaptive frequencies are the unconscious fears which dictate human behavior and are the collective underpinnings of human beings. Higher levels of awareness remain hidden by these Shadow frequencies until a light is shined through the paths of contemplation, concentration, and meditation (Rudd, 2015). As one works through these paths, they move toward an authentic self and gain awareness of how their Shadow frequencies influence their behavior. Contemplation of the differing Gene Keys leads to the development of an inner language that addresses these unconscious fears and helps you move through the paths to higher enlightenment through the Keys.

Hidden within the Shadow frequency is where the Gift frequency lays. This frequency can be nurtured through any or all of the three paths mentioned. Rudd (2015) states that when there is continued contemplation and transformation of one’s Shadow frequencies, entire belief systems, and views of self can morph and life begins to flow with optimism. Rudd goes on to explain that part of the process of moving toward your Gift frequencies is to embrace your Shadows and in doing so, your frequencies start calling on other people to raise their awareness as well. Moving toward your Gift frequencies is explained as the expansion of your aura, in which higher frequencies penetrate the Shadows others hold within their auric field. Rudd states the aura is tied to DNA molecules which create an electromagnetic reception and transmission process. As one moves into their Gift frequency, their aura grows which attracts higher frequencies into their life.

The highest level of frequency obtainable is known as the Siddhi frequency, which means “divine gift” in Sanskrit (Rudd, 2015). There are very few human beings that will reach this frequency in any given lifetime. Rudd describes the Siddhi frequency as being the biological expression of the ultimate human state of enlightenment. Once the Siddhi is achieved, absorption can occur. Rudd states this is contemplation giving way to total absorption in which the body’s DNA begins to change and one’s aura can now feed off its electromagnetic field.

To access which Gene Keys each individual carries in their DNA, a hologenetic profile must be obtained using someone’s birthday, birth time, and location and can be created at [genekeys.com](http://genekeys.com) (Rudd, n.d.). The profile becomes your compass to help aid in how to best explore one’s personal Gene Keys. Rudd (n.d.) states there are 11 spheres in each profile, and these are the Gene Keys that makeup one’s DNA and the Keys of focus for contemplation and movement toward higher frequencies.

Gene Keys could be helpful in a therapeutic setting as we believe that part of therapeutic work is moving clients toward authenticity through the exploration of the messages they have

received about who they need to be versus who they are or want to be. Gene Keys is a tool to help individuals contemplate the familial and societal programming they have received and how they might best deprogram themselves. In their deprogramming, they are removing the narratives and expectations that have been placed on them by society and other people. They are decluttering all the stories they have told themselves and working to find some footing in how their energy and soul may best thrive in authenticity. This could look like someone believing they need to work in business because their parents have told them they do but they would rather be an artist and they are in conflict with themselves because of these expectations. This deprogramming and contemplation of something different allows for higher vibrational levels to be obtained which in turn, allows for more peace, presence, and personal growth.

This is a high overview of the basics of Gene Keys as it is an in-depth, rich and powerful system that could be flushed out more fully in a paper of its own focus. This paper is not that, however, it is important to have a small understanding of how Gene Keys works to allow for contemplating its usefulness in a therapeutic setting. This beginning overview of the Keys clarifies how Gene Keys works as well as how it might be used with clients for therapeutic advancement by helping clients gain an increased understanding of their unconscious fears and paths forward through their specific Keys.

### **Bowen Family Systems Theory and Gene Keys**

As mentioned above Bowen theory is a framework first developed in the 1940s and 1950s by Murray Bowen (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Murray Bowen was a psychiatrist that began noticing the influence and role families played in his clients experiencing schizophrenia. This theory focuses on viewing problems from a systemic viewpoint and is applicable to families, couples, and individuals. Bowen (1978), developed eight key concepts that make up the framework of the theory, and several of the concepts are salient and blend with the use of Gene Keys as a therapeutic tool. These concepts specifically will be briefly explored and a discussion of how they may aid in the use of Gene Keys in therapy.

Differentiation of self is the concept that most resonates with using Gene Keys from a theoretical lens. According to Kerr and Bowen (1988), when someone has less of a grasp on themselves, they have minimal capacity for autonomous functioning and are more impacted by others. They go on to share that, those with a low sense of self, rely heavily on the acceptance and approval of others to ease the anxiety and tension they feel. Additionally, Kerr and Bowen state that when someone has a higher level of differentiation, they have an increased ability to stay calm when faced with conflict, criticism, and rejection, which allows them to assess facts instead of relying on clouded emotional thinking. The concept of differentiation is a necessary development for individuals on their healing journey to ease the tension and anxiety that may plague their life experiences.

Differentiation of self blends well with the use of Gene Keys in session. This is because differentiation allows for someone to remain themselves when in a relationship with others, as well as, being connected (Kerr, 2019). The ability to function in high-stress environments and situations using one's intellectual system, instead of their emotional system, allows for reason, reflection, and long-term thinking which can help keep emotional reactivity at bay (Bowen, 1978). Gaining an understanding of personal Gene Keys also contributes to people moving out of their emotional system, or their Shadow, into their Gift. When someone understands which Keys they carry, they have insight into where their soft spots are and how they can evolve. This in turn aids in increasing

their levels of differentiation and helps them find a balance between the use of their emotional system and their intellectual one. Both differentiation and Gene Keys help move people toward authenticity, so they can understand societal and familial demands while remaining separated and uninvolved. A layer of differentiation is obtained through understanding personal Gene Keys.

As Bowen focuses on helping clients move toward systemic considerations (Bowen 1978), Gene Keys can be beneficial in helping clients do the same as the practice of Gene Keys expands thoughts and worldviews to a broader level than remaining internally focused (Rudd, 2015). Gene Keys can help individuals gain insight into themselves, while also gaining an understanding of the Shadows of those around them. If someone is willing to open their mind to the idea of metaphysical tools, they can propel their growth in self-actualization and operate more from their intellectual system versus their emotional system.

Bowen also explores the concept of pseudo-self and basic or solid self in his discussion of differentiation. Bowen (1978) explains the basic self as something that can change from within but is a non-negotiable in a relationship system. He goes on to say the pseudo-self is negotiable beliefs and principles acquired in relationship systems. Pseudo-self are the pieces people have picked up from relationships with others that then feel like identity pieces, however, these pieces of self can be altered based on relationships. These are beliefs and biases that have no basis in fact (Kerr, 2019). Within the context of Gene Keys, the client's solid self can be increased by understanding the genetic Keys that are relevant to them. This contributes to increasing their level of differentiation.

Another salient concept of Bowen theory is the Societal Emotional Process. This concept explores the ideas of differentiation but on a large scale. Kerr (2019) who was a student of Bowen and worked closely with him for decades states that when societies are experiencing increased anxiety, there is a regression in societal functioning. Kerr shared that the symptoms of societal regression can look like growth in crime and violence, as well as, polarization between racial and political groups, with a focus on rights over responsibility. This is the Shadow component of Gene Keys playing out on a grand scale. When society is displaying the least desirable traits of human nature, tension, fear, and anxiety take hold and influence individuals on a mass scale. Having increased levels of differentiation and an understanding of one's Shadows helps individuals avoid getting swept into the regression of society.

Everyone is affected by what is happening on a societal level because all individuals are connected through their community. Whether it be a neighborhood, state, country, or worldwide. We are all interlaced, and it can be difficult to separate oneself from what is happening in society. Kerr (2019) talks about how societal regression affects the functioning of differentiation more so than the level of differentiation. This is an important distinction as individuals can return to operating at their perspective levels of differentiation over the functioning level of society's differentiation. This allows for more autonomy and separation from the Shadows of society. In a clinical setting, exploring a client's Keys can help alleviate some of the societal anxiety and tension they could be carrying through understanding Shadows at a macro level. This can allow the client to take a more objective view of society which helps keep them from becoming entrenched in the collective regression.

A discussion about utilizing Bowen theory has to include a discussion around the core idea of counterbalancing life forces of individuality and togetherness. This idea refers to people yearning for togetherness, while also desperately wanting individuality and how these dynamics play out in relationships (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Chronic anxiety can ensue when there is an imbalance in these life forces which leads to dysfunction within people if levels of differentiation

are low. Albeit chronic anxiety can be present in those with high levels of differentiation, they have a better chance of diffusing this anxiety and addressing it (Kerr, 2019). The concept of chronic anxiety and the life forces of individuality and togetherness are fascinating concepts worth examining when working with Gene Keys in the therapeutic setting.

Bowen theory views chronic anxiety not as a psychiatric disorder but as a natural process in response to internal and external stressors (Kerr, 2019). Kerr and Bowen (1988), spoke about chronic anxiety increasing over time as relationships try to find a balance between individuality and togetherness. Kerr (2019) conceptualizes that chronic anxiety within a systemic framework can be viewed as a relational problem versus an individual problem. As a way of trying to manage chronic anxiety within a system, triangles are created. Bowen theory views triangles as a three-person emotional configuration in which a twosome with increasing anxiety finds a third to help disburse their anxiety (Bowen, 1978). Those with lower levels of differentiation are more easily pulled into triangles (Kerr, 2019).

Viewing oneself outside of a triangulation in an objective and systems thinking way takes great practice and intentionality. With the understanding and contemplation of Gene Keys, one may be able to increase objectivity and start to view dynamics playing out within their families and society at large, as well as the role they play in their respective triangles. This shift is because once Gene Keys is integrated into a way of thinking, it becomes easier to see the systems of Shadow's playing out across family members, strangers, and societal patterns, which helps increase personal objectivity in understanding there is something much larger at play, within a dynamic system of life (Rudd, 2015). This insight and shifting view can help move someone out of their Shadows and help them increase their differentiation to step outside the triangulation of chronic anxiety.

Gene Keys can help to see the larger picture, which helps people move toward systemic thinking, in turn helping them recognize and address the chronic anxiety and the triangles in their life. The need for individuality and togetherness can be balanced in understanding one's intended direction based on which Keys they carry, allowing them to obtain more individuality while seeking their need for togetherness in a way that limits the level of chronic anxiety experienced and remaining unaligned when there are opportunities for alignment in triangles.

### **Considerations**

How to introduce and facilitate the use of Gene Keys with clients is still developing. Consideration needs to be given to the type of client a therapist may initiate the use of Gene Keys. The ideal client for Gene Keys would be a client that is open to metaphysical elements, such as astrology, higher spiritual connection, tarot cards, and human design. These clients are already involved with metaphysical elements and may already be benefitting from them in terms of personal development. As Bauer & Durant (1997) remark, these are the type of people who may be religious believers but have little integration of religion for various reasons. Therefore, clients that discuss a higher power as the source or an all-knowing or something larger than them, but do not necessarily fall into religious affiliation might also be good clients to integrate the use of Gene Keys as the Keys help people connect with higher plains of consciousness. The use of Gene Keys in session should also be with clients that are in stable condition and have processed through deeper traumas as the introduction of Gene Keys might be unnerving or overwhelming for some clients in the beginning. Given that Gene Keys focuses heavily on interpersonal contemplation and the belief in a higher guiding force, one must be open to the benefits for it to be helpful.

Just as with Bowen theory in which the level of differentiation the therapist has plays an important role in utilizing Bowen theory (Kerr & Bowen, 1988), the therapist utilizing Gene Keys will need time to contemplate and relate to not only the Keys they carry but also their client's Keys. Mixing Gene Keys into working with clients asks that the therapist be explorative and open to philosophizing. Because Gene Keys is deeply contemplative the therapist may not be able to utilize this element with several clients at once and may need to work with a limited number of clients at a time during which Gene Keys is being explored.

There is also consideration around the therapist utilizing Gene Keys without explicit expression to the client. If the client provides their time and place of birth, their specific Gene Keys can offer the therapist significant insight into what the client may be bumping up against in terms of their Shadows. This may allow the therapist to be able to track where these Shadows are showing up for the client in their life. Some clients may like to know which Keys they carry, and others may not, as much as having the knowledge integrated into sessions by the therapist.

We think the configuration of clients seen is also something that requires thought. Integrating Gene Keys into family or couples therapy could help clients move toward systems thinking by understanding that there are larger things at work that play off each other. From a Bowen theory perspective, moving clients from cause-and-effect thinking toward systems thinking can help alleviate chronic anxiety held in relationships (Kerr, 2019). If each partner or family member is gaining insight into the others' Shadows, empathy and understanding might increase. We assume that if clients are working toward moving from their Shadow to their Gift in unison with someone else doing the same, they have increased chances of shifting to higher frequencies together and resolving past hurts, resentment, and disconnection. This would be due to support, understanding, and allotted space to shift and change within important relationships. These shifts, in general, may alter a client's maladaptive patterns and in turn, decrease chronic anxiety.

### **Conclusion**

One of the core variables of Bowen is to move an individual toward differentiation and systems thinking (Bowen, 1978), and Gene Keys is a tool to help gain an understanding of societal systems and individual roles within those systems (Rudd, 2015). Both Gene Keys and Bowen theory have many points in common as everyone carries Gene Keys in the same way that everyone carries emotional programming and processing from a Bowen theory perspective. Moving toward an understanding of Gene Keys allows for not only the increasing of self, but it also helps take a perspective that is more zoomed out. Allowing for an understanding of how each part of a system, or Key, affects others and everyone is responding to each other through larger emotional processes. Systemically humans are all tied together and responding to each other's Shadows.

Bowen theory is said to be "an attempt at moving toward a science of human behavior" (Kerr, 2019 pg. 63). While Bowen theory relies on functional facts, or things that can be observed, Bowen discussed the possibility of the concept of a system rooted in supernatural phenomena such as ESP, spiritualism, black magic and voodoo (Kerr, 2019). Bowen shared that these functional facts reside in people believing in said supernatural phenomena and that these phenomena affect people (Kerr, 2019). Integrating something like Gene Keys into the therapeutic setting, if the client is open to a more metaphysical perspective, can have profound effects on what the clients view as fact.

With people gravitating toward intuitive advisors, psychics, bodyworkers and those claiming to have special powers over mental health practitioners, the field of psychotherapy is

being called to advance (Miller & Hubble, 2017). The need for evolution and innovation within the psychotherapy field grows in order to retain clients buy-in and attract clients that may vibrate more with metaphysical elements over talk therapy. This paper is the contemplation of what it might look like to blend accepted theory with a metaphysical element and how these two may have more in common than initially meets the eye. It explores how Gene Keys can be brought into the therapeutic setting to help clients raise their energetic frequency for added clarity and understanding.

Bowen theory works to increase levels of differentiation (Bowen, 1978) which we feel equates to levels of authenticity. Gene Keys is a deeply personal journey one can undertake to nurture authenticity. It has the potential to provide great contemplation and insight for clients through an increased understanding of self. There is a rich profundity to be found in the blending of Bowen and Gene Keys as both are pathways to authenticity.

### References

- Bauer, M., & Durant, J. (1997). Belief in astrology: a social-psychological analysis. *Culture and Cosmos: A Journal of the History of Astrology and Cultural astronomy*, 1(1), 55-71. <https://doi.org/10.46472/CC.0101.0211>
- Bowen, M. (1978). *Family Therapy in Clinical Practice*. Jason Aronson, Inc.
- Cook, S. C., Schwartz, A. C., & Kaslow, N. J. (2017). Evidence-based psychotherapy: Advantages and challenges. *Neurotherapeutics*, 14(3), 537–545. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13311-017-0549-4>
- Kerr, M. E. (2019). *Bowen Theory's secrets: Revealing the hidden life of families*. W.W. Norton & Company Inc.
- Kerr, M. E., & Bowen, M. (1988). *Family evaluation: An approach based on Bowen theory*. W.W. Norton.
- Miller, S., & Hubble. (2017 March/April). *How psychotherapy lost its magic; The art of healing in an age of science*, in the Psychotherapy periodical. Retrieved December 10, 2021, from <https://www.psychotherapynetworker.org/magazine/article/1077/how-psychotherapy-lost-its-magick>
- Rudd, R. (2015). The Language of Light. In *Gene Keys: Embracing your higher purpose* (3rd ed., pp. 27–34). introduction, Watkins.
- Rudd, R. (2018). *Gene Keys – a simple introduction*. Gene Keys. Retrieved November 22, 2021, from <https://genekeys.com/articles/gene-keys-a-simple-introduction/>.
- Rudd, R. (n.d.). *How to read your Profile*. Gene Keys. Retrieved November 22, 2021, from <https://genekeys.com/how-to-read-your-profile/#1479282632413-58a30672-511e>.
- Vargas, H. L. (2019). Enhancing Therapist Courage and Clinical Acuity for Advancing Clinical Practice. *The Journal of Family Psychotherapy*, 30(N), 141–152. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08975353.2019.1608413>