

Interview with Sydney Reed
Conducted by Andrea Schara

June 4th, 2013

For the Murray Bowen Archives Project of Leaders for Tomorrow at History of Science
Division of the National Library of Medicine

Schara: Today's June 4th, 2013, and this is Andrea Schara interviewing Sydney Reed. And Sydney, I've known you a long time. Way back in the seventies. And you were one of those special people who were early on involved with Dr. Bowen. And you've stuck with theory a really long time. Can we start by your telling a little bit about who you are, and how you met Dr. Bowen, and what the nature of your relationship with him was?

Reed: As it turned out, I was working at Chicago Read Mental Hospital, before I went to social work school in the seventies, when they were doing community mental health. And, our consultant was a psychiatrist in Wisconsin named Carl Whittaker.

Schara: Oh! How wonderful.

Reed: So, Bob and I, and two other people, had a family team and we would see families by ourselves, and -and try to figure out what was going on. And Carl was our consultant.

Schara: Bob Noone? Is the Bob.

Reed: Mmhmm. Is the Bob. Um, so at one point, just before I was about to go to social work school, Whittaker said, and I was ambivalent about school, I didn't know (inaudible), so he says, "I think you should read Murray Bowen." And somehow the notion that, the Anonymous Article was in Framo's book, and somehow I got ahold of Framo's book on research, that seminar, and I read Bowen's Anonymous Paper in there, and read Whittaker's comments. And, was just really taken by the Anonymous Article. I mean, it just seemed to speak about a dilemma. How can you be your own person, and be in contact with these people who wanted you to be somebody else? [laughter] You know, there was a way to do that! Yeah, and my own experiences that I would get distant and get lonely, and then when I'd get back over there, didn't- it didn't

Schara: [laughter]

Reed: -felt too enmeshed, too- so, that just really intrigued me. So, I was about to go to social work school, then I -somehow, so I did go to social work school, and I -and at social work school, asked a professor to do a reading course with me, on Bowen Theory. And he said yes, I'm sure he'd never heard of Bowen, but you know, that's fine. So I read, and I thought, "Well okay, I've got a quarter, I'll find all the triangles, detriangle, and differentiate a self."

Schara: [laughter]

Reed: Needless to say, I took an incomplete in the course. I listened to a tape,

Schara: [laughter]

Reed: from my mother, I asked my parents to make individual tapes, listened to a tape from my mother, on the sixth time, I heard her say, "Syd, I mean really." (Referring to) her- her oldest sister. And, it just blew my mind that it took me six times to even hear that, of course I was so anxious even to listen to the tape, I made (inaudible name) sit with me, hold my hand while I pressed the button, so I had some sense of kind of the anxiety I had, about confronting

Schara: [laughter] Oh no.

Reed: long-distance tape of voices, about who these people were. So I did that, and I gained a lot once I could hear. What was going on, and I wrote a paper, and -and somehow, I'm trying to think, probably workshops or what not- oh! (Jan Kramer) maybe was the consultant at my first job, knew that I was interested in Bowen Theory, invited me- or said that they -the Family Institute was bringing Bowen to town, so I should come to the conference and they invited me to the cocktail party afterwards.

So, went to the conference, Dr. Bowen was in great form, he was his curmugeon, nasty, bigoted, southerner self! It seemed to me! A man of his generation. And I called my husband and I said, "I'm not gonna go, this guy is just a jerk, and I just ugh, I don't even want to waste my time." My wise husband said, "Well, you know, you've been really impressed when you were -read what he had to say, you might just go and see." So, I went to the cocktail party, and I saw Dr. Bowen hug some people. And I said, "Who's that?" Former clients. Okay, that is interesting. So then I talked to him, and I said, "Well, do you have a training program?"

And he said, "You could come to Washington, I could give you two hours." "Two hours?!" "You'd be surprised what we could do in two hours." So he said, "You could bring your -bring your family diagram, and we could go..." So what- here was a conference coming up, I had friends in some kind of meeting, I had an excuse to go there, I had friends in D.C., and I stayed with them. And I had a two-hour interview with Dr. Bowen. Which I tape-recorded. When I listened to the tape, Dr. Bowen wasn't on it. And what I realized, is that [shouting] I was so anxious [whispering] and I thought Dr. Bowen probably talked like this. And the machine didn't even pick up his voice! But that was interesting.

Schara: [laughter]

Reed: [laughter] You know, I don't think I was ever in the presence of Dr. Bowen, that I didn't learn. Something. You know, you just couldn't help, because he kept challenging things [laughter] He kept being different. You'd hafta kinda figure out what in heck's that about? So, then,

Schara: [laughter]

Reed: I did that, and did my first visit home, to my family, by myself, and my grandmother happened to die the day I got there. So (that was-) Paternal. And, I had arrangements to visit with

Schara: Maternal or paternal? Paternal.

Reed: maternal relatives, because the intensity was mostly on my mother's side. But Dr. Bowen assured me that I was so fused, that- oh, this is what he said, he says, "Oh no, forget your parents. You're so fused, that I think the place to start would be with your mother's brothers' wives."

Schara: Okay.

Reed: Mother's brothers' wives. In, in the town next door. To where my parents lived, fifty miles away. My mother was the only sister, who lived in Montana, all the rest were brothers and sister-in-law. She ca- she was one of fourteen, actually, fifteen, one died about two weeks. So, she was one of fifteen, and right in the middle.

Schara: Wow, that is an amazing thing, just all in and of itself.

Unknown Interesting, that all the sisters moved away!

Reed: So- This-this is a professional -an interview, this is for a book!

Schara: (inaudible) book, but it's going to the National Library of Medicine, hopefully.

Reed: So, so- well, first step was to try to explain to my mother why she didn't have to pick me up at the airport, that other people would be doing this. I didn't get home very often, so just having to have enough self to disappoint my mother, was the first step. And then to, you know, make those arrangements with family, and when I was with my aunt, she told me that my grandmother had died that morning, she lived a block -about a block away, from my grandmother, and knew what was going on. So, so, I was in touch with both families kinda simultaneously, I mean I did go and do the duties with my- cause I had already made appointments to be with my mother's family. And, the next place I went I was sort of dreading- cause that uncle had been very- is this the kind of thing you want?

Schara: Yeah, it is. It shows, I think, just- the nature of your relationship with him and how you then kind of- began to use his

Reed: Then after two hours, I took off. [laughter] began to use it immediately! As it-

Schara: What I would call research. So that

Reed: Right.

Schara: you know, I had- one of the questions was you know, "What evidence do you have for the kind of research, that Bowen did, and that he encouraged other people to do, about

Reed: Right.

Schara: let's call, at least this part of it, "What is fusion, and how can I

Reed: So-

Schara: (start) a relationship with people this is more real, than so reactive, when I'm really stuck to them."

Reed: So, next place I -having lunch with my mom's sister-in-law, who's a second wife to my uncle, and she's telling me, and I can just remember stopping in the midst of chewing a tuna fish sandwich, and she told me, her- my grandmother was such a bitch, they lived with my grandmother that the only thing she could figure out was that she was gonna kill herself and her children, and had a plan to go to the (Rim) Rocks and drive over.

Schara: She herself had that plan? Because of the way Grandmother

Reed: Mmhmm.

Schara: -her mother-in-law- interacted with her? Is it her mother-in-law? Yeah. Wow.

Reed: Right. Her mother-in-law. My grandmother- I have no sense of this, I see my grandmother, who didn't speak much English, I was- she was kinda- call me "the golden girl," she was always kinda happy when I was around, I didn't know too much about it, okay, so there was that. And, um, -I thought

Schara: -What did you make of that, at that time?

Reed: There's a hell of a lot of anxiety here, that comes to the phone every time I pick it up.

Reed: To talk to my mother. My God, this is what is going on out here, that I don't have a clue about. Then go to the factory to pick up my uncle, who's really been hard on me as a teenager - 'ugly,' 'skinny,' all the usual things you tell a teenage girl. If you're that kinda uncle. And, he said, "Gosh you look good! It's so wonderful to see you, thank you so much for coming and having supper with us." Talk about wires untangling, that had been there, body image and all kinds of stuff for all those years, it wouldn't have happened in an office with a therapist, it happened

Schara: Wow.

Reed: in real life, with my uncle. To have some kind of shift.

Schara: Do you think that was because you talked to the aunt, and got the relationship-

Reed: Ah, so- Well, it had been fifteen years, and the fact that I was making an effort to see them,

Schara: Okay.

Reed: on- by myself, without my mother, fifteen -well, maybe, yeah, fifteen, probably. But the- it was a one on one. That's very special. To say, "I wanna come and see you." One on one. I don't even remember what we talked about that night. The next day, we go over to another aunt and uncle. Who, I had questions to ask. I got there, my -my uncle disappeared, and I was with my aunt. She had a headache, she sent me out to the cowbarn with my cousins, and there I was, currying huge (4H) cattle. And, so it really was a lesson, in terms of you know, this connection business is sorta complicated, it may have to do you're with these monster cows, and you're in horseshit, cow shit, up, you know, with boots on, and -and that's the first part. Just show up, and curry the 4H cows.

Then suppertime comes, and I try to ask my questions of my uncle, nothing. Nothing. Nothing. Nothing. I finally get the names of the horses and the dogs on the farm. That would be all he would talk about. Before that, actually, or no, gosh, no it-cause I did -so, no, okay. So then, then, so that was very interesting in and of itself. Made a connection with my -gave a neck rub to my aunt, cause- try to help her wiith her headache, and I'm thinking, "Geez. This is interesting, how do you do research, you know, so then being present at the funeral, and before the funeral, to watch the emotional process in this family of nine siblings, related to the- to the death of their mother who dropped dead of a heart attack, and the oldest sister was in Yellowstone Park. The youngest brother took off for Yellowstone Park to find her, and he did. And brought her home. Just pretty amazing, when you think about it. Yellowstone Park is a big park.

Schara: That's huge, and there's no cell phone.

Reed: Yeah, and there are no cell phones in those days, which was 1975.

Schara: 1975? That was the first year you knew Dr. Bowen, was 1975?

Reed: So, no, I think I met him in '74, then talked with him, would be '75

Schara: You think you met him '75?

Reed: -that trip was in '75, I think, because then, I was sitting there observing -well, I was observing the scapegoating process, of how people handled the shock of another's

death. And, what they did was focus on one guy who elected himself to be focused on, by saying, he wanted to buy all the flowers for the funeral. You know, so, watched that, with the emotional process, then I'm in the church, with my aunts and uncles who are local, my cousins who are local, and these aren't even the cousins from far away, because a lot -you know, in those days, you just didn't hop on a plane.

And there were 200 people. Sitting behind my -marching up the aisle, behind the casket, behind my grandfather. And I thought, "This is ridiculous, I mean I had been thinking for years that I wanted to say second child. Well, there's no argument. I mean, my son's said, "Shouldn't we be having a second child, so I can have a brother?" "To go through your death?" And I said, "Well, somehow this sense of family, hit me, and I came home and told my husband that it was time. I was going to have a second child, if he wanted to be the father, that would be convenient.

Schara: [laughter] Oh gosh! He had lots of choice, there.

Reed: But I'm- you know,

Schara: "You want to step into this piece of mud, or that piece of mud?"

Reed: But then in emotional process, I went off the pill, and we went away for a camping trip that weekend, and I -with these friends into a cabin, in which a woman had just died of lupus, I came home the next day, my face was just like this, and I went to the doctor at work, and he said, "I don't know, this looks like lupus."

Schara: Oh my God.

Reed: You know, lupus isn't contagious.

Schara: [laughter] No, it's definitely not.

Reed: And I knew that, but you know, having to manage that, finally got to a dermatologist,

Schara: Oh, good.

Reed: who said I had poison ivy. Which I had never had, before. But the dog was with us, and I was sorta sleeping with the dog, at one point, you know, on the back seat. But it just- that, the emotional process had to do with my whole body. And not just, um, not just what I was thinking, what I was going through.

Schara: So your dad was one of nine,

Reed: Mmhmm.

Schara: And your mom was one of, fifteen? Was your dad in the middle too? Four? okay.

Reed: He would have been four. And he, -but there were things like being at the funeral, my dad was pretty strong, silent type, didn't talk much, my mother talked non-stop. Okay, so I didn't really know my dad very well. And, then, um, they- "I have to go to the bathroom!" So, I go back into the church, just as the sons had brought the casket to the back, open casket, back to the back of the church, and are closing the lid. to go to the funeral. Cemetery. So the lid is closed, and my father goes [crying noise], not that much, but nobody else moved a muscle. And I thought, "Oh my God. My stone of a dad, if you put him in the context of his family,

Schara: Wow. [laughter] Something you hadn't seen.

Reed: looks emotional. So, so that was, it was an incredible trip, we went up to the -to the tourist cabins outside of Yellowstone where my uncle had tourist cabins, which was planned, and my- we were- taking about the death of my grandmother, my mother- my mother and her brother start crying, nothing had- dad's sitting here, and they're crying, what's this about? Well, it comes out, that my grandmother- my other grandmother had died and she died three years earlier, maybe- and during those three years, there's a family feud about the will. The German will leaves all the land -left all the land, to the boys. To farm. But then, he died in '45, and then in, you know, in the early 70s, you get the fact that this farmland is now practically downtown Billings, Montana. And it was worth a lot of money. So there's the people who have money, people haven't money, but what struck me is my mother was keeping this all quiet, because she was so ashamed.

Schara: Oh, kay.

Reed: Of the fact that the family was fighting. So, there again, well, what am I getting on the other end of the phone? You know? And how to understand that this is a lot more than just between me and my mother. You know, that whole thing. Then I had another interview with him, and I don't really even remember the impact of the second interview. Um, whereupon he decided that I should talk to Pat Meyers. And I had a couple sessions with Pat Meyers, I'm not quite sure why I didn't find them- I didn't get hooked in, to Pat Meyers. [laughter]

She was helpful in one thing, going to family reunion in '81, and it was about, you know, preparation for that, thinking about a question you could ask somebody all 105 of my relatives at once that would be there. And something you could tell them about yourself, as a way to make a connection. (inaudible) So there was some you know, useful things that came out of that. But I did start going to Georgetown then,

Schara: So that was what year, did you (say)?

Reed: yeah. Well, I'm just trying to remember if I went in '75, I'd have to double-check this.

Schara: That would be the Dan Papero group, you would have started with Dan.

Reed: No no, no, I never went to that. I never went to the training program for a long time,

Schara: Oh, never went to the postgrad? Oh, ok.

Reed: I was the last one, of -the Chicago people, to go,

Schara: "I'm not sure."

Reed: [laughter] I just like- I was gonna (inaudible) Yeah, well, I don't know. I experienced a lot of anxiety at Georgetown,

Schara: Yeah.

Reed: and I was not sure I wanted to be part of it. When -you know, the emotional process, with Dr. Bowen, well, then -then we started our little center, Carol took a flyer back and I'd said something that I'd studied with Dr. Bowen, and I'd said that on the basis of really four hours, which is really not actually accurate, Dr. Bowen got angry, we did have a meeting- I'm sorry I don't have a chronology, cause maybe -before that, there was a meeting up in -w- he was in Wisconsin, and so we went up there and we all went, and took him out for drinks. And, I mean I, I really sort of got into taking care of Dr. Bowen, I don't know. You know, there was a part of Dr. Bowen that seemed like he needed care too. Ah, there's other- other parts, but I certainly related to that part of him. Or at least he acted that way. He seemed kind of shy, and -and not very comfortable, I said, "Well maybe you'd like a drink. Can I get you a drink?"

Schara: [laughter]

Reed: So, but I said, "Oh Dr. Bowen, I think I really understand things pretty well, but I really don't get cut off."

Schara: [laughter]

Reed: The flyer went out, it may have been that, but I always wondered if he stopped speaking to me because he was angry at me because I'd sort of misrepresented you know, sort of- he (doesn't want)-

Schara: He never said anything directly to you, though?

Reed: No.

Schara: But you say he doesn't talk to you? You had him at your house, I came here, he seemed like he talked to you when I was here.

Reed: Yeah, well, we got -because I kept talking to him.

Schara: Well, maybe it was a test.

Reed: Because I had decided -well, I think it might have been. [laughter] At one point he said to me, "You know Sydney, you're a very -you're a very nice person." And I said, "Dr. Bowen,

Schara: [laughter]

Reed: I've always been a very nice person." Cause I mean, I just like- it was a mistake, I shouldn't have done it, but like, you know,

Schara: Di- yeah, so did he e-

Reed: don't hang me! We never talked about that.

Schara: Oh, you never talked about the brochure?

Reed: Right, no.

Schara: You just heard, roundabout, well- You guessed, okay.

Reed: I just guessed.

Schara: Then-

Reed: But then I also would often say, "Well how much is he doing this as a teaching thing,

Schara: Right, exactly.

Reed: or how much is this real?" And, so I never knew, and I thought, "Well, since you can't find -figure it out, what you know now about cut off, is that it's in the relationship and it's up to you whether it's going to really happen or not." A lot of it is up to you, so you can keep saying "Hello," and whatnot. And, then, Paula- Paulina McCullough, after the first time she met me, at Georgetown, invited me to come to Pittsburgh. To give a paper. And at that time, you -you got all the papers, and you were supposed to read them, and there was a critique and you sat around and talked about them, and Carolyn Moyhian was the presenter, but we were all at the meeting, and I took it very seriously.

I had detailed notes about everybody, I had questions on everybody's thing, I mean I really worked hard. I wrote a paper, right at this table, sitting right there, and Defining Self in Family and Profession, and so I was really very actively engaged. Carolyn told me later kind of like, that's the only meeting she's ever gone to that nobody ever followed up with her. Now, they didn't follow up with me either, but of course, who was I? But I think that- I think I took it very seriously, and I was just very active, in asking

questions. I mean the theory, at that time, it made a lot of sense to me, and I really did a lot of work on it on my own.

And I did that course, I started teaching, before I'd gone to Georgetown, I started teaching Bowen Theory and family of origin work, and -I'm trying to figure out what books we were using! What, you know,

Schara: Well, there was the -the Systems Therapy one, that Carolyn Moynihan and Jack edited of the symposium talks,

Reed: Yeah, I don't think we had that. I don't know if I gave a little lecture, in the beginning, about- from Bowen's

Schara: It really was only Dr. Bowen's book until Dan Papero-

Reed: -I don't know. Well, '78, wasn't Dr. Bowen's book in '78?

Schara: Or Mike Kerr? And, um, -see, yeah, '78 was his original book, and then-

Reed: Yeah, so I probably had his original book, and I probably asked the students to get that. And so I modeled it, you know, on that.

Schara: His mother died in '81.

Reed: And then, what year did his mother die? Yeah, so -I decided that, you know, I-I really wondered if that -despite his protestations, that-that didn't -wasn't such a bad thing, that his mother died- it wasn't traumatic thing, I just thought that had an impact on him, his mother's death.

Schara: Did you go to his- the mothers' funeral?

Reed: No, but then I announced to him I was going to join the training program.

Schara: Oh.

Reed: I mean, and that was an emotional decision based on some fantasy that it would be

Schara: [laughter]

Reed: helpful to Dr. Bowen if I was in the training program. [laughter] Which is the old triangle, with my mother and father, kind of thing, really.

Schara: I hear ya.

Reed: So then I- So, anyway, I thought it was time that I got there anyway. So I did go, and

Schara: That's an interesting one.

Reed: Kathleen (Yuengst) was my coach. And then, you know, just watching Dr. Bowen teach, was really something. You know, on the Belief Papers, I could only come up with four beliefs, and I'm working on them for about three or four years, because other people had gone through the training program sooner! And, you had to read them and I just couldn't read mine without crying, and "What in the hell are you crying for Sydney? Nobody gives a damn what you believe!"

Schara: Is that what Bowen said? [laughter]

Reed: And, um, so you know, he-he you know, he was- he could be a curmudgeon. Um,

Schara: Well, apparently you needed it, so [laughter]

Reed: Yep. So, um, anyway, I don't know what the nature of my relationship was. My (theory) is that I had great respect, for his thinking, and great respect for his teaching ability. And that I would learn so much, just watching him. And, and then the theory made just total sense. And then I think I had this emotional pull related to, ah, sort of, a disapproving but then I would hear through the grapevine that Dr. Bowen liked coming to Chicago, and you know, the first dinner you weren't part of, but it was at this table, and [laughter] I had set the (inaudible) wrong (inaudible), sounds so crazy.

What I wanted to thank him for his contribution to my life, and the way I would thank him, would be to-to give him a dinner party. So I made all of the dinner myself, had the conference, you heard that story (inaudible), we had candles here, and we sat around this table from midnight, we had a second layer there. You weren't there that year. And so, I knew that there was some interest he had, in Chicago. And then whenever he came, he would sort of set up triangles.

Schara: Mmhmm.

Reed: And I thought, "He's just trying to watch the rats." He'd tell me something, and he'd tell Bob something, and

Schara: [laughter] Yeah, that was so beautiful.

Reed: he'd get us all going. And, so I thought, "Okay, are we acting like rats? How do we think about this? What are we doing" Cause, you know, you had that sense, that he was trying to turn things upside down, just to see what people would do, or if they could learn from that, or break up the togetherness, and get people thinking, and so, I don't know, you know, there, um, my, when I presented my family, it was kind of a -part of the family over-values me, part of the family under-values me, and I can't figure out, I mean, so where am I? You know, this kind of thing. And so, so, you know, sorting through some of that stuff. And then, finding out that the people I thought didn't value me, valued

me. You know, at the funeral my aunt said, who I thought was most critical of me, said, those three boys she has, "You know, if I ever had a daughter, I wanted her to be just like you."

Schara: [laughter]

Reed: So this whole thing, about you know, you don't know people.

Schara: [laughter] Their perceptions or their

Reed: Or their perceptions, you-you assume, make a lot of assumptions, and all that. So that early work was really very powerful. And then, they- the -but before, it was very useful not to go to the training program, because I was really coming to figure it out for myself, I wasn't sure I could afford it, for one thing, and -and had little kids and all that, so but-but just this business of trying to figure it out for myself, the triangles with my husband, and just watching what went on there, in terms of the emotional process, and that was very useful.

Schara: Somewhere, Dr. Bowen wrote that -that you could -there's 100 on the scale of differentiation, and you could think about the transference, in the -the clients' relationship, with the coach, as- you could scale it like a -on the transference. The level in which people get involved in sort of an imaginary way with you, to work out their neurosis.

And then, and then you could think about how the coach, by not joining into the transference with them, can stand outside of it and challenge them. And see the- see the wish that the transference could work, to heal people, but that he was never going to get into that. With people, and he was al- he was going to find a way, if he could, to challenge them to sort of do it themselves, and that's- that's sort of what I got out of what you've said.

Reed: Well, I once heard him said that if somebody is going well on their own, stay out of their way and just let em go. You know, on their own work. Don't try to help them too much. [laughter] And so, I heard- I don't know when I heard that, but I just thought, "Well,

Schara: But he d- I mean, he smacked you a couple of times, you know, and so -I mean, there's a way that he used the relationship to interrupt things that people were getting into, whether it was crying, or whatever it was, you know, he-he would- he had a way of interrupting what I would call the transference. In which normally, the environment would- wouldn't challenge you.

Reed: Okay, yeah.

Schara: And you would go on with your thing. [laughter] And then he would challenge you, to sort of more of less let go of that stupid stuff, and move on with your life.

Reed: Yeah, "If you're looking for approval from me, forget it." [laughter] Yeah.

Schara: In a way. Yeah, so he had some way, to figure out what was transference, and what was a real relationship. In which you were well on your way to, you know, taking it up with getting to know your real dad, instead of him.

Reed: Right.

Schara: Maybe that would be-

Reed: Right. Yeah, until then you know, that did begin the process of getting to know my real dad, and that was that was very interesting in and of itself. Um, and, so I went to the training program for one year, and then-

Schara: What year was that?

Reed: I'm thinking it was '81. It was after his mother died.

Schara: After his mother died but before his surgery, before his- I think after his mother died then it wasn't that

Reed: It could have been '82.

Schara: terrible long, I don't know if it was a year, before-

Reed: Yeah, it was right around there. Right, (after his mother)

Schara: before he had the -the aneurysm, and -and I don't know how much of that was related to his mother's death. But it was also- I think it at that time

Reed: Yeah.

Schara: he was getting kinda frustrated with the Family Center, as you said, as an anxious place. When I went there, and I had my first staff meeting, Dr. Bowen said, he said, "Come in my office." So (I went in), and he said, "What do you think about the faculty?" And I said, "Well Dr. Bowen, I honestly -it's a lot of people standing around looking for you to tie their shoes." [laughter]

Reed: Uh huh, uh huh!

Schara: And then he told me the story about this little old lady who had a lot of children, and they didn't do what he told them to do, or she, and one of them went out there where he wasn't supposed to go into the sand pit, and he was going down in the sandpit, and screaming and yelling. So the mother goes out there, gets a 2 x 4,

lays it out in the sand, goes out there, he's almost up to his mouth, you know, with the sand, and he puts his foot on top of em and squishes him down, and mother turns around and says, "One less mouth to feed."

Reed: [laughter] He's-

Schara: That's why I said, "Dr. Bowen, I guess that means you're not going to help me." [laughter] But there was a lot of anxiety and dependency and worry about him. And, how to manage yourself with him, because he was a -a curmudgeon, and he could yell at people and he yelled at me. And, -he yelled at a lot of people.

Reed: He yelled at a lot of people.

Schara: But I- I'm not saying that he always did it in their best interests, either. But- so he- but he was a guy that you had to- you

Reed: You couldn't figure out! You had to think, "Now, is he doing this for me, or did he just lose control

Schara: Oh, "What am I going to do?" Yeah.

Reed: or is he just pissed, or what?" And, you had to think about it, and then- if you couldn't figure it out, you're still left with

Schara: "What am I going to do?" And so that was

Reed: "What am I going to do?" Yeah.

Schara: -you know, I don't know if all of this is really kinda about the research aspects of Bowen Theory. But I- I don't know that I- I think the insights, that's what I'm hoping to get out of these interviews, is looking at the insights people got into how he challenged people to grow. And what the main characteristics of this -as you call it, "We're all rats." And, what was his research about? I think you kinda hit on it, that it was more about the fusion process,

Reed: Well then, you know, it came out that Carol had heard about this AFTA thing, and then so, I said, "Well Dr. Bowen, I'd like to be part of that AFTA thing." I hadn't even been to the training program. And he said, "Alright. Yeah." He said, "That'll be good, it'll make the Kramers wonder what's going on, if I bring these other Bowen people in." At one point, actually, I just didn't have- I still didn't have the confidence, but so Jan knew that I was really interested in this stuff, and I said, "You know, do you think we could do a family of origin group together?"

Whereupon she did one by herself, which when, you know, sort of became her career. So I take some responsibility for that. I also take responsibility for (Framo's) and (Michael's) book on death, cause I said, "Well I'm really seriously thinking that there should be a book from a family point of view on death, cause Dr. Bowen had a lot of

sense." The next thing I knew, they were writing one! [laughter] It was a good idea! And they may have done it anyway, but I get- I began to see, that you know, that I probably could do things by myself. And,

Schara: You're an oldest, right?

Reed: Yeah. And so,

Schara: Would fusion lead you to doubt that you could do things by yourself? I mean, as an oldest, you why would you even have doubts about it?

Reed: Because my mother didn't like her older -older sister all the time. She was pretty ambivalent about her,

Schara: [laughter]

Reed: And, and I hadn't even been to the training program! [laughter] You know? So what credentials did I have? And then I thought, "You know, if I could just present this material and help people be thoughtful about it, you know, I think that I can do that." And nobody else -I didn't even know Jan was doing it, at the time. And so I started doing, you know, those groups, and really felt that I- that was the, um, most rewarding kind of teaching, for me. And those groups still continue to this day, and it's- I mean, not each individual group, but

Schara: So cool.

Reed: some people from the very original groups are involved. And, but that it became a real important way, and then the clergy thing came along, after Freeman's book, and - and clergy said, "I can't get this from the book, could you teach a course?" And so I ended up, you know, doing some other stuff like that. So,

Schara: So this is all on the topic of research, getting out of the fusion with your family and the kind of fear of the criticism of not doing it right, and then finding your own way, and being comfortable with that, and more sure of yourself as you were able, I think, to change the way you related to people in your own family. And to see them differently, you could kind of see yourself differently, and What does this have to do with [laughter] this crazy question, of the main contribution that Bowen made to western scientific view? Although it's a leap, I really -think he moved quite a way, from cause and effect thinking about human behavior, which is where almost everybody is.

Reed: That's right.

Schara: The medical model. "Something's wrong with you, and we're going to diagnose you." To- and no one's really been able to do this well, but to

Reed: Oh, yeah.

Schara: think about how would you characterize and scale a family, in-in a way that you could easily talk to your clients about?

Reed: So, the whole notion, when I was working on my own, and I'd get into cause-and-effect thinking and blame, which, pretty easy to go there, the notion of systems thinking, that it a problem continues through time, everyone is playing a part in keeping it going. And then, "Well okay then, what part do I have?" Well then you had to kind of watch the systems, see how it operated, to figure out what your part of it was. And sometimes you could do that, and sometimes you couldn't. But it certainly, interrupted the cause-and-effect thinking and you had to observe to try to figure out what you thought was the emotional process, that was going on.

Schara: Do you think you're good at describing what emotional process is? I mean, that's what I'm wondering. Is there an easy way, to describe, "Okay, emotional process is you're caught in a fusion here, maybe 20-30% of your thinking is self-focused and about [laughter] you know, 60 or 70% of your thinking is other-focused, and therefore the anxiety gets spread through the system, and when more of it comes back to focusing on self, then less would be focused on others.

Maybe there's- maybe there's some simple ways of looking at family emotional process, "Okay, you're you know, somebody's died in your family, how will that shift the relationships, will people get more cut off, will they get more connected, how do they handle themselves in nodal events, what are the-" -so I think for Bowen Theory to change Western scientific look at human behavior, you would have to have some kind of a grid that looks at the relationship system. And understands the relationship system.

Reed: Well, partly when you- that grid, the starting grid is the family diagram.

Schara: Yeah.

Reed: That has all that information. And you can start making connections and asking questions, about those nodal events, so you're starting to get at what could be happening, and get people observing at that, and people having thoughts about it, the notion of breaking up the fusion between thinking and feeling, (between) in clinical practices is a very interesting one, I mean I have- (had) clients to say "Would you - would you stop talking factually about my husband? It's interfering with my ability to hate him."

Schara: [laughter]

Reed: You know? Well, there it is, and -and trying to get people also to think about, you know, "I didn't know the brain worked that way! You mean the brain has thoughts and it has feelings? And they're not the same, and they're different, and they operate" -so, Understanding the fusion inside the head, went a long way for people to figure out that fusion inside the head, influences the fusion in the relationship, which influ- influ - influences the fusion internally, which you know, that whole

Schara: Feedback loop.

Reed: feedback loop there, and -boy, for some people, that was like, giving them the key to -now, there are people who don't pick it up! But, you know there are people for whom that just makes a huge difference, to understand that way of understanding emotional process.

Schara: That it's a relationship issue, not -it's partly inside the person, but the inside of the person is a reflection of how the outside world has treated them, and how they've responded to that. So the sensitivity to the relationships then ends up in some kind of internal mind map, or model, of how the world is. And if we were to shipped from the problem is in the person, to the problem lives in the relationship and infects the person, [laughter] that would be a real contribution to the scientific worldview. It would be like a our Darwinian or an evolutionary look at human behavior.

Let's see, what other questions have we skipped -what time is it now, we've got about ten minutes probably [tape crackle] -well, we've kind of covered, "Is there anything about your family that spawned your interest in Bowen Theory?" We haven't covered the last two, which is "Have you developed ideas that would extend or refine the theory?" And you- "Have you evidence that would further prove the theory, we- kinda skirted around that, a couple of times.

Reed: Um, you know, I suppose the efforts I've made in papers over the years, and when we had a symposium every year, you know, I had to give a paper every year. Was an attempt to look at conventional thinking and contrast it off and, ah, with Bowen Theory. Or conventional thinking that was not systems thinking, but was supportive, of systems thinking, that recently I did this observational blindness thing, in February.

For a meeting, and used Kahneman's Thinking Fast and Slow, well the first- the first chapter of his whole book, is about what happens -the first section is about that whole trickiness of the fusion inside the brain, he doesn't really put it out into relationships as such. But later in the paper I tried to extend his thinking, Nobel Peace-Laureate, here, thinking, in contrast it also, well you probably know the history you know, in the 70s, early 70s, when he got that Nobel Prize, economics thought all thinking was rational. Of course your son-in-law, you got on that, too.

Schara: Yeah, all decision-making is rational. We are totally informed. [laughter]

Reed: And he said, "Well, actually, no!" [laughter] You know, I mean, I mean that was revolutionary for him, to kinda get a handle on that, but Bowen had been saying that for years. That you know, no actually, we're closer to the lower forms of life. And the cognitive isn't as important as we think it is. You know? That emotional process is being- being fed and driven by -by the underlying emotional system.

Schara: But he -he had some research out to look at the way in which consumers make decisions and how- what influences them. And some of the research is pretty funny, like if you play French music, they buy more French wine.

Reed: Well, that one, you know, where they're telling people to observe the basketball players, and they have a- somebody come across in a gorilla suit,

Schara: I know! Well they have a new one on that, which you can see on YouTube, which is really amazing. So, I watched that with my son-in-law. (Michael Mobeson). He did it to see if I could -and I already knew that there was going to be a monkey there. You know, and I did actually proudly see the monkey. When I was told to watch the kids in the black shirt, throwing the basketball in the net. And then, this time though, what happens is the monkey comes into the middle and one of the players leaves. So, the wall colors change. So three different things happen. And I did not see the other two things, because I already knew what I was going to see

Reed: Oh, and that's what you saw.

Schara: And that's- so then I saw that, but I didn't see the other two things.

Reed: Right.

Schara: So, it's amazing how our observational blindness is you might possibly be able to see what's there, if you're reas- but once you've seen what's there, you might stop looking for the other things. And that's why I

Reed: Mmhmm, that's a good point

Schara: ask these questions, like "What did you think you could contribute from what you've seen, like I think maybe, you know, Priscilla could contribute more about anxiety, and about the usefulness of techniques like neuro-feedback, to enable the brain to be more integrated. Cause she's been observing that world, for a long, long time. So there probably are areas, that --where other observations will come out, especially maybe about anxiety. Maybe about perception, that could free us from the fusion [laughter] that we're locked into, partially because of our perceptions.

Reed: What- yeah, yeah. I'm struck by, um, people in the family of origin group and these one (inaudible) continue privately on some sessions, and then she's going to join our training program, and she says, "Well, when I watch you do that," and she has a - she has a way -you know, I'm not so aware of what I'm doing. She's aware of what I'm doing.

And she says, "Mostly I just sort of think I understand it, but what -what did you mean when you did that? Why did you ask that? You know, and so, when you have people that aren't trained in Bowen Theory, and they're observing well, just like (Banano) asking you, about what you were doing. You know, he'd never seen that before, what was that?"

Schara: [laughter] I was describing what was going on, he said. "I've never seen a therapy like that, where you just describe what's going on in the relationship." Immediately.

Reed: So, so, you know, I don't know if any -I was struck by that, last time she came in, I thought, "Well gee, I don't- you know, would there be any usefulness in asking students what they've seen. Would that make any contribution?" I don't know.

Schara: Yes, because I think that's the corr- I think that's right, I think that's a lot of what Bowen did in the Anonymous Paper, to circle all the way back to the beginning, of this interview, in which you talked about the importance of that, he- he saw what was going on, and he described it through reversals. You know, he said to his brother, "Well, why don't you just work a little harder? And then people won't be so anxious." And the brother's like, "The hell? Why are you criticizing me? Crazy guy." And- but he told people the opposite, and his sister said, "Well I know what you're up to, big brother." And, he said, "Well, I'm going to tell mother that you put me up to it." [laughter]

And all this stuff, that he yeah, that he saw and could make a comment on, that left people just gasping, because we cannot see what we're doing. So that's one of the major things, it's- and of course when you ask people for feedback, as to what they think you're doing. They can ask you, like this woman was pretty open, she said you know, "Well could you explain to me what you were doing?" But, are you just going to make up a silly story, of are you gonna -would it make a difference if you just used that opportunity to challenge them? To think? Or, does it- is it useful, and when is it useful, to

Reed: To think.

Schara: tell them what- what you really were up to? You know.

Reed: Sometimes I don't know what I was up to.

Schara: And sometimes you might not know. And sometimes, upon reflection, know what you were responding to. I don't know. But I remember, when I -I don't know if you remember this tape I did with (Goodrin), who was my nanny, and she -anyway, she had been with my family since my mother was four, this time. My mother had died, my grandmothers had died, everybody died, so I went back to Norway, where she had retired. Because she was as close to me as a mother.

You know, she was paid to be a mother, so, but she was emotionally involved with all of us, for help me raise my children, my mother, my two brothers, and myself, so she was with our family from 1922 to 1978. and so when I went back there, she -I just decided I was gonna do nothing but separate out a self. I was never gonna agree with one darn thing that anybody said about anything. [laughter] And I would find some way to be different. And I put the video camera out there, and I just taped my conversation with her. It's about a 12 minute tape, it's on YouTube.

Reed: Oh, it is! Oh, I would like to see that.

Schara: So, I'll send it to you. And, she, like a miracle, just got better. She- she went in just several days, from being this completely kind of crazy person who had no idea who I was or why I had come, to remembering all about me and the family, and being able to kinda look after herself and smile, and make eye contact, and it was, as my friend Ryuko Ishikawa'd say, "That was a miri-cle [sic]. A miri-cle!" You know, to see somebody's functioning come up, when you're- instead of helping her, she'd say, "Can you get my a milk carton," and I would get her a glass bowl. [laughter]

And she finally got so upset with me, she went and did it herself. But, Dr. Bowen really liked that tape. And he wanted me to explain to the audience when it was showed at the last conference he -he was there for, the Aging Conference, he wanted me to explain, he sat up there, in the audience, like a little elf, just looking at me, waiting for me to say what I did and what I thought about, what I did.

But I think he -and I didn't do it, I sort of refused, to be baited, into that. And just let- let people make of it what they could. Because I kinda took the position I wasn't exactly sure this is what I did, and how it all happened, that she became more of a self, I wasn't exactly sure and I left it that way. And -but I am pretty sure, to this day, that the process of differentiation or separating a self, enables people to function at better levels. And, but it's hard to get the courage to say all that.

Reed: Mmhmm.

Schara: So, that's one of the -one of the reasons is, I wanted to give everybody sort of who knew Bowen, a chance to say "This is what I did, and this is what I think it means, to-to the greater world, and to my life in particular." Which I think, you know, it's amazing the people who've stuck with this, and what they've gotten out of it.

Reed: You know, what happens for me in those groups, is that I cannot worry about the transference or any of that. But that I can be relaxed, and I can be challenging, and I can be funny. And that there's something about that combination that has to do with getting out a bit. Um, Reversals don't come real easily, every now and then, I can [laughter] sort of flip something, but I can- I cannot connect in the normal, you know, not give the normal response.

Schara: What do you think about the difficulty of detriangling? Speaking of challenges, and reversals, and the difficulty of getting out of these darn triangles. [silence] I mean, if I had to categorize and Bowen's contribution to the Western scientific world view, I mean, I'd say emotional cut off is an amazing discovery.

Reed: Yes. Well, what I was going to say, was the way Mike once described a triangle,

Schara: Huge, and triangles is gotta be next.

Reed: that this would be a triangle. [drawing something] And, if you're trying to get out of it, you just let it through. Flow through you. So, you're just- you're in it, cause to fool yourself, when you're- when you draw it like this, it looks like you're out of it. And that

you're going to just keep it there, but you're never out of it. I mean, it's- the triangle's there, so how do you function in that and you know, it has to do with trying to acknowledge that you're in it. And, not be too reactive to that stuff. But you could say, not pick this side or that side.

Schara: Yeah. I remember one Dr. Bowen did to me, that one woman came up who was my client, and said, Dr. Bowen, Andrea's just so much fun, and she's you know, I really enjoy working with her, blah blah blah, tell your family, and Bowen looks at her and says, you know, "Just listen to everything Andrea says, and see where it gets you." [laughter] And he walked away. But he often did these kind of, detriangling things. In which he would kind of use -I don't say that that is a a sort of a reversal, but it's got a weird ting- you know, ting, a weird

Reed: Right, yeah, it's not quite what you expect to come at you.

Schara: yeah, and it's- yeah, and it leaves you, with the energy. so I don't know if it exactly flows through him, it seems more like he lets it flow between you and the other person. [laughter] He- he leaves you with it. He leaves you with it. And then he walks right out.

Reed: He leaves you with it!

Schara: Yeah, free at last! [claps] I don't know, but I do think triangles is a huge, ah, deal.

Reed: Yeah, well cut off, I think you're right. That cut off thing is a huge deal.

Schara: Cut off is a huge deal, and something that is unknown to conventional psychiatry. And, I think triangles are totally unknown and may be the area

Reed: Right.

Schara: that we will have the greatest leaps forward. I don't know. But it's possible, especially in society, this whole side-taking, the blaming, and I remember when the Boston bombing happened, the uncle gets on TV and said, "Losers!" [laughter] It's- you know, that intensity of that "-That mother was such a horrible person and we wanted nothing to do with them!" So you get these, you know, intense projection, cut off, and people feel on his side.

Reed: yeah.

Schara: On his side. Cut -cut off mental health, we're not giving any more dollars for mental health! [laughter] Those people don't deserve it. But that's sort of the way society runs. And,

Reed: Well do you see impact, that all these conferences with scientists, are doing, to those other scientific fields? Do you have an-

Schara: I don't know whether it- you know, I think again, you get the- you're going to get the top 10%, maybe, of people like who's going to really stick with it. Maybe Mark Flynn, maybe -maybe Sue, maybe Barbara Schmutz,

Reed: (Sumi)

Schara: um, Su-Sumi is such a kind and generous guy. He never really got it, exactly what systems means. But, you know, it's really hard, I think, unless somebody does it in their own family, which you've described very beautifully here, that unless it's part of how you are engaged in getting a self, I'm -I just don't know that you can -when you read Bowen's book, if you're so inclined, you read that stuff and you know he's talking about emotional process.

And he's talking about what happens to you. And he's talking about what you can't do. Yet. In your own family. To get out. And, people that stick with it seem to be the ones, for whatever reason, and I don't know if you have a idea what the reason would be, that in your family, you really were motivated to stick with it.

Reed: [silence] Well, [silence] ah, I was here, everybody else is out someplace, and I really saw the importance of staying connected. And if you're gonna stay connected, you've got to (inaudible) everybody. In that sense.

Schara: So the motivation was-

Reed: Well, the motivation really was to just try to pull my own functioning up, it seemed like that was a way to do it. Made sense.

Schara: Yeah, sure does. So you're -would you, without Bowen Theory, let's say, would you have an idea of what would have happened? Do you? Would (Doug)?

Reed: No idea. No.

Schara: It's hard. Laura Havstad and I used to joke, we'd say, all the people who stuck with Bowen Theory had the most difficult problems. [laughter] And I said, "Well that's not true, they were people, so and so and so and so in my group, had a way worse problem than I had! And they didn't stick with it." [laughter] So, I don't think that the criteria could be that you had the worst problem, but that you had some ability to- observe the problem, without (me) maybe.

Reed: Well- For the problem, but it also then was a career path,

Schara: Yeah.

Reed: that necessitates staying connected to Bowen Theory.

Schara: Mmhmm.

Reed: Because, we've sort of center here. And, that had been a goal, that Bob and I talked about before we even ca- were introduced to Bowen. You know, he ended up going to the first training program. Which,

Schara: Mmhmm, yeah.

Reed: but, there was this- there was this- there was such excitement about family, in the early 70s. On some levels, it was starting. And systems thinking was revolutionary. And, um, and you know, one of the things I tried to do, I had a little bit of a crazy period just before I went into the training program, where I had a -had this manic episode. And, I went to the hospital, and I said, "I think I'm going to kill myself, could you just keep me here in a dark

Schara: [laughter]

Reed: room?" I thought, maybe if I could cut off all stimulation- they brought a social worker into the room, who knew me, and she said, I didn't really know her that well, and she said, "Sydney, what are you doing here?" And I said, she said, "Oh, you need a vacation." Whereupon she took a vacation.

Schara: [laughter]

Reed: She said, "God, if this could happen to Sydney," and so they sent me without medication to Wisconsin with my husband. And, um, then I decided that I need to differentiate a self, between Carl Whitaker and Dr. Bowen. So I wrote some crazy letters out there, when I was in this pretty manic state.

Schara: Where were you staying out there?

Reed: Oh, I was here. We just went up there for three, four days. But I was here, it took me -took me about three weeks to crash. And, in that manic time, I did write those letters.

Schara: [laughter]

Reed: I don't have a copy, cause I wasn't into (doing that) -but, um, then I thought, "Well okay, the thing to do would be to- they have a conference, I- I don't think I -I may have proposed that, in the letter, and so then there was an exchange between Whittaker and Bowen. About, well, Dr. Bowen said, "I think you should have her. You met her first." And I just couldn't- and, Dr. Whittaker said, "Well, actually, I think she-" cause he told me, to work with Bowen- nobody wanted me!

And, ah, so Dr. Bowen said he was willing to do the conference. And Carl Whittaker said no, it would just be a competition, and it would be putting one up against

the other, and that doesn't make any sense. He backed out. So I said, "Dr. Bowen, well, Dr. Whittaker's backed out." "Okay. Well I can come." And, he's -he said, "Well I've just been in San- you know- Phoenix, and, you know, I don't know, they were four thousand people there, and so I don't know- like, what are you talking about, with a conference?"

Schara: This was at the Milton Erickson?

Reed: Yeah, I said, "Dr. Bowen, you made me crazy once before, up in Green Bay, with this- sort of the start of this, he told me to "take care of Chicago". I mean, it was all part of this. All part of the mix, and I said, "And I'm not going there, if we have 40 people, we're lucky."

Schara: [laughter] Yeah, kay.

Reed: If you wanna come, we can't guarantee any more than 40, and it all- there was -that was a- that was a -so, there were ways in w- I mean, my relationship with Dr. Bowen was also you know, respectful, but also I -I also felt like if he was going to challenge people, you could challenge him back.

Schara: Right. So true.

Reed: You know? And to get in a non-challenging position just made no sense. He put the- he put the rules out, okay, if he put em out, let's play by them. You know? And

Schara: [laughter]

Reed: And which sort of- which put you a little bit more in a open relationship. A little bit more, you know, so, so there were all those time. I don't know, I

Schara: Yeah, so I mean really, he

Reed: it's just bringing up all kinds of ideas.

Schara: I guess, you know, he had a totally different way of thinking about things, and as he says pretty early on in his book, I realized that my -my friends in psychiatry, Carl Whittaker, and Nat Ackerman, and -they had their own views, they had their own mission. And they couldn't see what I saw.

Reed: Actually, in- in Framo's book, on the discussion, and -Whittaker says, "I'd like to be your brother." And Bowen says, "Ackerman's my brother." And then he later said, he thought the only person who really began to get any of it was Whittaker.

Schara: (He can't be-) Right.

Reed: And so to me, I mean I had seen Whittaker, and it was like Bowen Theory in practice! I just watched Whittaker in some ways, and I saw Bowen Theory. And then

Whittaker didn't have a theory, and, you know, but it seemed to me I learned about triangles from Whittaker. And then I heard Bowen talk about him. I saw- I saw Carl getting out of triangles, I saw him coming at people off and enable, and all that kind of stuff, it didn't have any real way to hang it together. You know, now there were people who, who went on and did more work with him, and came up with this experiential- [doorbell rings] That's Stephanie. Notion.

Schara: Well, we'll- we'll end this, for - or maybe put a summary, I don't know. Pause. One hour, nine minutes.