Modeling the Family as an Emotional Unit

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I just returned from Flocks, Families, and Organizations in put on by [the Bowen Center](#) in Washington D.C. Dr. Iain Couzin was the guest speaker and he gave an amazing exposition of his research in collective intelligence in groups of locusts, crickets, and baboons. He was able to show how the group as a unit possesses an ability to intelligently solve problems using simple variables like proximity and direction that the individuals are not even aware of, and in fact have no attributes that suggest they are a part of an intelligent group when studied individually. He developed computer models based on these simple rules which gives weight to the validity of his theory of the regulation mechanisms of the group.

It occurred to me that developing a model for humans based on Bowen theory would also be possible. I had never thought about what goes into such a research model beyond having the values of the variables precisely defined. But some conversations with attendees revealed that it doesn't have to be that difficult in the beginning. You just start by writing a program which expresses the basic relationships between the variables, and then start down the long, long path of refining them through research. I probably don't have the patience for the second half of that description, but I do have the patience for the development of the model and some visualizations to accompany it.

The basic idea would be to show the members of an emotional unit with lines connecting them. I would love to be able to show togetherness and individuality as physical density and sparsity in the system as [I have experienced in Vipassana meditation as "gross sensations."](#) But this has technical challenges because the triangles flip so fast which may necessitate a member moving very quickly across the map. Maybe it's not important, and it can work so long as it's animated. Actually as I write this this sounds like a fantastic idea.

At any rate, this project is on the table. The [Family Diagram](#) is still top priority, but I am very excited to see what new ideas can come from building a model of the human family emotional unit.