

# Overview of Theories

THEORY OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR	FOCUS OF THEORY	MAIN CONCEPTS RE: HUMAN BEHAVIOR	SOME THEORISTS	SOME PRACTICE APPLICATIONS	SOME PRACTICE INTERVENTIONS
<p><b>SYSTEMS THEORY</b> Includes: <b>Ecological Systems</b></p> <p><i>[Systems Perspective]</i></p>	<p>How persons interact with their environment</p>	<p>*Persons are in continual transaction with their environment *Systems are interrelated parts or subsystems constituting an ordered whole *Each subsystem impacts all other parts and whole system *Systems can have closed or open boundaries *Systems tend toward equilibrium</p>	<p>Parsons Merton Germain Gitterman</p>	<p>*Useful for developing holistic view of persons-in-environment  *Enhances understanding of interactions between micro-meso-macro levels of organization  *Enriches contextual understanding of behavior</p>	<p>*Strengthen one part of the system or subsystem to impact the whole system  *Ecomaps &amp; genograms for understanding system dynamics  *Networking &amp; referrals to facilitate change</p>
<p>Includes: <b>Family Systems</b></p> <p><i>[Systems Perspective]</i></p>	<p>How the family system affects the individual and family functioning across the life-span</p>	<p>*Individual functioning shapes family functioning and family systems can create pathology within the individual  *Boundaries, roles, communication, family structure influence family functioning</p>	<p>Bowen Satir Minuchin Carter &amp; McGoldrick</p>	<p>*Useful for understanding family systems and life cycles over multiple generations</p>	<p>*Assessment of family development and life-cycle transitions  *Use of multi-generational genograms  *Use of family and parent coaching</p>
<p><b>BEHAVIORISM &amp; SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY</b></p> <p>Includes: <b>Cognitive theory, Behavioral theory, Social Learning theory</b></p> <p><i>[Social Behavioral Perspective]</i></p>	<p>How individuals develop cognitive functioning and learn through acting on their environment</p>	<p>*Imitation &amp; reaction to stimulation shape behavioral learning  *Knowledge is constructed through children physically and mentally acting on objects  *Intelligence is an evolutionary, biological adaptation to environment  *Cognitive structures enable adaptation &amp; organization</p>	<p>Pavlov Skinner Watson Piaget Bandura Beck</p>	<p>*Useful for enabling behavioral &amp; symptomatic change  *Useful for assessing individual cognitive functioning, group &amp; family interactions</p>	<p>*Behavioral interventions such as classical or operant conditioning, positive or negative reinforcement  *Time-limited, problem-focused interventions  *Cognitive reframing of automatic thoughts about presenting problems to facilitate change</p>

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<p><b>PSYCHODYNAMIC THEORY</b></p> <p><b>Includes:</b>  <b>Classical psycho-dynamic theory, Ego-psychology, Object-relations theory, Self-psychology</b></p> <p><i>[Psychodynamic Perspective]</i></p>	<p>How inner energies and external forces interact to impact emotional development</p>	<p>*Unconscious and conscious mental activity motivate human behavior</p> <p>*Ego functions mediate between individual and environment</p> <p>*Ego defense mechanisms protect individuals from becoming overwhelmed by unacceptable impulses and threats</p> <p>*Internalized experiences shape personality development and functioning</p> <p>*Healing occurs through attention to transferences and the treatment relationship</p>	<p>S. Freud  Adler  Jung  Horney  A. Freud  Kernberg  Kohut  Klein  Mahler  Bowlby</p>	<p>*Useful for understanding inner meanings &amp; intrapsychic processes</p> <p>*Useful for understanding motivation, adaptation, &amp; interpersonal relationships</p> <p>*Useful for assessing strengths &amp; ego functioning</p>	<p>Ego supportive treatment:</p> <p>*Clarification, education, &amp; support of adaptive functioning</p> <p>*Empathy &amp; attention to affects and emotions</p> <p>*Understanding of ego defense mechanisms &amp; underscoring of ego strengths</p> <p>*Establishing, building, &amp; using the treatment relationship to facilitate change</p>
<p><b>PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENTAL THEORY</b></p> <p><i>[Developmental Perspective]</i></p>	<p>How internal &amp; external forces shape life development, generally by life stages</p>	<p>*Human development occurs in defined &amp; qualitatively different stages that are sequential &amp; may be universal</p> <p>*Individual stages of development include specific tasks to be completed &amp; crises to be managed</p> <p>*Time &amp; social context shape &amp; individualize the meaning of life stages</p>	<p>Erikson</p>	<p>*Useful for understanding individual growth &amp; development across life cycle</p> <p>*Beneficial for assessing individual strengths &amp; deficits</p>	<p>*General assessment of developmental functioning that can be compared with chronological age of the client</p>

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<p><b>TRANSPERSONAL THEORY</b></p> <p><i>[Developmental Perspective; built upon Humanistic Perspective]</i></p>	<p>How the spiritual and religious aspects of human existence can be understood</p> <p>How spiritual development builds upon and goes beyond biopsychosocial development</p>	<p>*Focuses on meaning, connection, and purpose</p> <p>*Some people achieve developmental level beyond the <i>personal</i> (ego-based) level into <i>transpersonal</i> (beyond self or ego) levels of consciousness and functioning.</p> <p>*There is an inherent tendency to express innate potentials for love, creativity, and spirituality</p> <p>*There is a difference between psychopathological phenomena and spiritual growth experiences</p>	<p>Maslow Jung Fowler Wilber Washburn</p>	<p>*Provides nonsectarian frame for understanding spiritual aspects of human experience</p> <p>*Describes developmental process beyond self actualization</p> <p>*Provides guidelines for clinical discussions of spiritual or transcendent experiences</p> <p>*Stresses the importance of spiritual and religious support systems for life meaning and well-being</p>	<p>*Assess and understand client's spiritual &amp; faith development</p> <p>*Ethically and appropriately utilize spiritually-derived interventions</p> <p>*Understand and support clients' spiritual and religious beliefs, practices, and support systems</p>
<p><b>SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY</b></p> <p><i>[Rational Choice Perspective]</i></p>	<p>How persons minimize costs and maximize rewards through social exchange</p>	<p>*Antecedents, consequences, personal expectations, and interpretation shape and maintain behavior in the present</p> <p>*Self-interest determines social exchange</p> <p>*Unequal resources determine power inequities and reciprocity is essential</p> <p>*Six propositions: --Success proposition --Stimulus proposition --Value proposition --Deprivation-satiation --proposition --Aggression-approval proposition --Rationality proposition</p>	<p>Homan Thibault Kelley Blau</p>	<p>*Useful for assessing and understanding power inequities and distributed justice</p> <p>*Basis for cost-benefit analysis</p>	<p>*Assess resources and power inequities at the meso-macro level</p> <p>*Facilitate group and community interaction</p> <p>*Maximize costs, minimize rewards in the macro environment</p>

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<p><b>SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM</b></p> <p><i>[Social Constructionist Perspective]</i></p>	<p>How sociocultural and historical contexts shape individuals and the creation of knowledge</p> <p>How individuals create themselves</p>	<p>*All experience is subjective and human beings recreate themselves through an ongoing, never static process</p> <p>*Knowledge is created through an interplay of multiple social and historical forces</p> <p>*Social interaction is grounded in language, customs, cultural and historical contexts</p> <p>*All phenomenon, including the sciences, must be approached with doubt in order to understand how people construct reality</p> <p>*Humans are self-interpreting beings</p>	<p>Foucault Berger Luckmann Gergen</p>	<p>*Enhances understanding of individual and cultural connection</p> <p>*Useful for understanding non-dominant and oppressed groups in a non-marginalized manner</p>	<p>*Listen for cultured narratives</p> <p>*Approach practice with a stance of “not knowing”</p> <p>*View practice as “mutual interchange” because relationships have “mutual influence”</p> <p>*Recognize how individuals and groups construct their identities through an ongoing, fluid process</p>
<p><b>SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM</b></p> <p><i>[Social Constructionist Perspective]</i></p>	<p>How the “self” is influenced and shaped by social processes and the capacity to symbolize</p>	<p>*Human action is caused by complex interaction between and within individuals</p> <p>*Dynamic social activities take place among persons and we act according to how we define our situation</p> <p>*We act in the present, not the past</p> <p>*Individuals are actors on the stage and take on roles, interacting with the environment</p>	<p>Charon Mead Goffman</p>	<p>*Enhances understanding of the relationship between the individual and society and the “self” as a social process</p> <p>*Provides framework for individual, group, and societal assessment</p> <p>*Provides alternative view of deviance and psychopathology</p>	<p>*Formulate assessment and intervene through understanding roles assumed by individuals and groups through individual and society interaction</p> <p>*Focus on diminishment of the sense of stigma for individuals, families, groups, and communities</p>

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<b>CONFLICT THEORY</b> <i>[Conflict Perspective]</i>	How power structures & power disparities impact people's lives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*All societies perpetuate some forms of oppression &amp; injustice and structural inequity</li> <li>*Power is unequally divided &amp; some groups dominate others</li> <li>*Social order is based on manipulation and control by dominant groups</li> <li>*Social change is driven by conflict, with periods of change interrupting periods of stability</li> <li>*Life is characterized by conflict not consensus</li> </ul>	Marx Marcuse Habermas  Feminist theorists and GLBT theorists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Informs policy and may guide macro-level practice</li> <li>*Useful in formulating assessments involving oppression and client vulnerability</li> <li>*Enhances understanding of conflict between persons, ideas, groups, classes, &amp; larger social structures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Listen for evidence of oppression within individuals, groups, and communities</li> <li>*Pay attention to the role of conflict leading to client vulnerability</li> <li>*Organize to alter power relationships</li> <li>*Recognize that dominant and subordinate groups compete for resources</li> </ul>
<b>CONTINGENCY THEORY</b> <i>[Systems Perspective]</i>	How individuals & groups gain power, access to resources, & control over their lives, often through collective action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Groups are open, dynamic systems with both change and conflict present</li> <li>*Groups are stratified, with different and unequal levels of power and control</li> <li>*High discrimination and low privilege equals low opportunity</li> <li>*Oppression occurs when upward mobility is systematically denied</li> <li>*The social context must be critiqued and deconstructed</li> <li>*Assumptions for analyzing organizations:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>--there is no best way to manage organizations</li> <li>--there must be a match between the environment and internal resources</li> <li>--the design of the organization must fit with the environment</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Weber Scott Lawrence Lorsch March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Useful in macro practice through providing framework for community work on behalf of the powerless and stigmatized</li> <li>*Provides assessment for identifying power blocks contributing to powerlessness</li> <li>*Provides understanding of the objective &amp; subjective dimensions of empowerment</li> <li>*Useful in administering programs by requiring a review of the organizational-environmental fit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Explain &amp; map the direction &amp; role of collective action</li> <li>*Assess power blocks</li> <li>*Build individual &amp; community strengths</li> <li>*Support upward mobility of oppressed groups</li> <li>*Empower oppressed &amp; vulnerable populations through collective action</li> <li>*Assess internal and external resources to make structural and process decisions within a organization</li> </ul>