

Theoretical Orientation Paper

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Introduction

The following Theoretical Orientation Paper is organized in three sections. In section 1, I will discuss: my life philosophy; my values; my culture, including my family background, race, gender, ethnicity; and my beliefs on how those around me in my work, family, etc. impact my personality. In section 2, I will discuss: the philosophical/theological underpinnings of the models that I am drawn to; the models of psychology that seem to fit best with who I am and who I see myself being as a counselor; what models do not fit; and specific skills or other aspects of the models that I would like to include in my personal model of counseling. In section 3, I will discuss: how I will integrate sport performance theory (SPT) into my chosen model of therapy, the associated challenges, the benefits, and what this will look like working with the population that I will work with on a day-to-day basis.

Section 1: Who am I?

My life philosophy is twofold, for one to make the world a better place by leading by example with kindness, love, acceptance, authenticity, generosity, openness, willingness to learn from others, an appreciation for growth and development, with each interaction that I have with each person that I am fortunate to encounter. I believe with more acceptance and appreciation for differences and what makes each person genuinely who they are, will help the world to be a much healthier place with far less toxicity and mental health issues.

Two, I want to make a difference for people with my strengths and abilities that I have to recognize people and understand and access them to empower them with their own strengths, abilities, and authenticity to achieve their full potential in every aspect of their life. I believe that we all have the potential to succeed respectively with the resources that we have within us with

the appropriate support and guidance. I wish to be a person that provides people with that support and guidance to access themselves and allow them to succeed and achieve all that they desire.

I feel very fortunate to come from a multicultural family. I am Lebanese, Mexican, Native American, Welsh, English, and French. My mom's side of the family is Lebanese and English. I grew up with many of the Lebanese family traditions, including the value of large family gatherings with 30 plus family members, aunts, uncles, cousins, parents, grandparents, and siblings, on every possible occasion: weekends, holidays, birthdays, or any opportunity to celebrate one another and the family with the most enriching, healthiest Lebanese foods (e.g., Tabhouli, Hummus, Falafels).

My maternal grandfather, (my Jiddoo-arabic for grandfather), was from Beirut, Lebanon. He immigrated to the United States when he was in his early 20s, to pursue a higher education. He always told everyone, who was blessed to encounter him in his 96 years on this earth, "The keys to life are family, exercise, and education!" He spoke 6 different languages fluently, acquired two PhDs in Biology and Physiology from the University of Alabama and during his master's program at Vanderbilt, he made numerous scientific discoveries and innumerable academic and scientific achievements, including discovering the presence of ergothioneine in biological tissues, which has since been determined to be a strong antioxidant with therapeutic value for certain health disorders and diseases.

My maternal grandmother, (my Ganny), who was of English descent from Cornwall, England, was a prolific writer, as she was directly related to Emily Bronte. She was a graduate from University of Alabama and was a passionate advocate for civil rights and equality, as she fought actively against racism and segregation in Birmingham, Alabama, during the late 50's and

60's. In addition, she earned a master's degree in nutrition from The University of Nevada in Reno and worked in rehabilitation counseling. She was also a mother to six exceptional people, who are now various types of Doctors, Authors, Professors, Teachers, Engineers, Lawyers, and the kindest, loving people, who I am proud to call my family, one of whom is my mother.

My mother is an athlete, academic, and the most present, giving, and loving mother. She is a graduate from University of California, Santa Barbara and the University of Alabama, where she earned a Master of Science, in Physical Therapy. In her 20s, she competed in equestrian sports, including competing in the Olympic trials where she won a bronze medal. After her Olympic endeavors, she pursued her Master's in Physical Therapy, to become a licensed, Physical Therapist (PT). After she became a licensed PT, she worked at John's Hopkins Hospital, where she was the Senior PT for the Neuroscience Division of Rehabilitation Medicine and in charge of rehabilitation for all neurology, neurosurgery, and psychiatry patients. After working at John's Hopkins, she took time to create a family with my dad, before starting her training and coaching business in Equestrian Sports, as horses were always her other passion. Her equestrian business was very successful and also allowed her to spend more time with my sister's and me when we were young.

My dad's side of the family is Mexican, Native American, French, and Welsh. I was fortunate to be surrounded by the values of love and family and appreciation for one another on both sides of my family. We had family traditions, where we would come together every summer, thanksgiving, and New Years to celebrate one another with 20 plus family members at every gathering.

My paternal grandfather was Welsh and French. He was a computer systems analyst and software engineer. He was a man who loved to learn, understand, and appreciate the intricacies of this world. He passed away when he was only 53, so I never had the fortune of meeting him. He married my grandmother, who was of Mexican and Native American heritage. She was one of my greatest inspirations. She was the most kind, loving, accepting, strong minded, hardworking, compassionate, leader, and extraordinary cook. She managed and owned her own restaurant for most of her life in southern California. She was also the most extraordinary mother to four exceptional humans, one of whom is my father. My grandmother had my dad when she was only 16. While that was not unusual for those times, she raised my dad and his three siblings, exceptionally well.

My dad and his siblings are some of the most loving, kind, accepting, intelligent, open-minded, and accomplished people that I am fortunate to call my family, some of whom are award-winning architects for sustainable building and remodeling, as well as business owners and CEOs of their own companies and institutions with a passion for philanthropy. My dad is a retired lawyer and executive who spent his entire career at Thomson Reuters for over 35 years. His career and time at Thomson Reuters led to our family living in Washington, DC; Baltimore, Maryland; Atlanta, Georgia; Chicago, Illinois; and finally, in Davis, California. Despite his role overseeing a multi-million-dollar business that involved regular travel throughout the United States and internationally, he ensured to make time to be a present and loving father, who never missed a soccer tournament, horse competition, basketball game, family occasion, birthday, you name it; my dad has always been present for my two exceptional sisters and me, while leading an incredible career.

My older sister is a singer, licensed physical therapist assistant, retired division 1 soccer player, and extraordinary mother to my beautiful, perfect niece. My younger sister is a basketball player, world traveler whenever possible, and graduate from University of Oregon in International Relations with a minor in French. She now works in the Athletic department at the University of Oregon for the football team, as their data analyst for the training and conditioning GPS devices that the players use and is a part of the concussion research team for the PAC 12.

I was raised to be a strong, independent female, who leads with love, empathy, compassion, understanding, integrity, and acceptance for all of the diversity that exists in this beautiful and diverse world. I attribute my love and acceptance for every person's uniqueness to the love, openness, and appreciation for one another's differences that I was fortunate to grow up with in my large and diverse family.

I am a very authentic person and I stand strongly in my values of love and compassion for people, integrity and loyalty in all of my actions, and I am very genuine and strong-willed in my beliefs, therefore I am not impressionable by many people. The people around me, my work, and my family impact me merely by inspiring me to be the best person that I can be for those around me. I want to continue to develop myself and grow as a person to best support the people that I am fortunate to work with and I want to be the most functional person that I can be for healthy relations with my family and all people that I am fortunate to encounter in my life.

Section 2: Personal Model of Counseling

The philosophical and theological underpinnings of the models that I am most drawn to are that of cognitive behavioral theory (CBT) and rational-emotive behavioral theory (REBT). I value the philosophy of engaging with the human experience and emotions from a more logical,

rational, and empirical framework with the understanding that there is certainly a time and a place for emotions (Prochaska & Norcross, 2014).

I value the idea of developing the tools to observe our experiences, increase our awareness of our inherent beliefs associated with different activating events, and having the agency to choose more constructive beliefs that support us, as our beliefs profoundly influence us (Prochaska & Norcross, 2014). I value the philosophy from CBT and REBT that focuses on empowering the individual to take agency over their process and believe in themselves to develop a more constructive mindset that supports them. I also value the philosophy of these models, as they recognize that there are no absolutes and there is value in pulling from other theoretical frameworks to most effectively support clients, especially if the processes from CBT or REBT are not working for the client (Prochaska & Norcross, 2014).

The CBT and REBT models of psychology are the best fit for who I am and who I see myself to be as a counselor. Consistent with Petko, et al., (2016), I am both a sensing/judging and thinking personality type and according to the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator scores, the more sensing/judging and thinking personality types are more likely to choose CBT. I am a very intuitive, perceptive, and sensitive person, but I operate from a very logical and empirical framework of thinking and processing. I contextualize every experience, observation, and encounter, and I never take anything at face value. Therefore, the REBT and CBT theoretical frameworks appear very compatible with my modality.

I value the cognitive therapeutic processes, specifically the processes of cognitive restructuring, where the client learns to question their experiences and not just take them at face value, as well as the hypothesis principle, where the client treats their thoughts as hypotheses to

prove and gathers evidence to support or disprove their hypotheses (Prochaska & Norcross, 2014). I value these therapeutic processes, as they provide the client with transferrable skills that can support them at any time. I also value the therapeutic process of distancing and the dis-attribution technique. These techniques provide the client with processes to develop the skills to learn to observe and respond to their experiences and the environment through choice and agency, versus just reacting to potentially dysfunctional beliefs that may cause them turmoil (Prochaska & Norcross, 2014).

I also value the role that the therapist plays in the cognitive therapeutic process. According to Prochaska & Norcross (2014), a cognitive therapist both supports and directs. A skilled cognitive therapist maintains the balance between being the expert directing the course of treatment and insisting that the client actively takes responsibility for the implementation of the treatment and, in turn, success of the treatment. As a result, the client becomes the expert on the application of each therapeutic principle and how that influences their functioning. I value the idea of empowering the client to take agency over his/her treatment which leads to empowerment in the individual with the opportunity to transfer that empowerment to other areas of his/her life.

While I recognize the value in all of the various models, the model that I believe that would not be compatible with me would be some of Gestalt's processes. I do not like the idea of coming at clients more overtly and causing them frustration or distress, regardless of the intention that is to help the client to become more conscious of their unconscious experiences (Prochaska & Norcross, 2014). That is incongruent with my personality. I feel how I affect people and the thought of intentionally frustrating and/or distressing someone to help them to

achieve more consciousness does not work for me, especially when I know that I can help them to achieve more consciousness with other processes with far less distress.

I plan to incorporate the ABCs model. I would like to help people to become aware of their beliefs (B) associated with activating (A) events that lead to various consequences (C) (Prochaska & Norcross, 2014), and help them to dispute (D) any negative beliefs (B) and develop more effective (E) belief (B) patterns that support them and give them more positive consequences (C) regardless of the activating events (A) (Prochaska & Norcross, 2014). I will also incorporate cognitive restructuring, as I value the idea of questioning our thoughts and looking at our thoughts and experiences from multiple perspectives and, ultimately identifying with more positive and constructive thoughts and beliefs (Prochaska & Norcross, 2014).

I will also include the hypothesis principle, as I value the idea of treating our thoughts as hypothesis to prove with the evidence that we gather (Prochaska & Norcross, 2014). In addition, I value and plan to incorporate the process of distancing, which can help clients to more objectively observe their experiences and distance themselves to more effectively apply the other processes, such as the hypothesis principle, cognitive restructuring, and/or the ABC model. I will also incorporate the interpersonal therapeutic processes of focusing on the individual's assets and strengths to support them (Prochaska & Norcross, 2014). In addition, I plan to include eye movement desensitization and reprocessing for individuals who may have experienced trauma, to support the CBT processes in restructuring past trauma (Prochaska & Norcross, 2014).

I will also incorporate mindfulness training techniques, as I value the present moment, nonjudgmental awareness, and the peace and empowerment that brings people to support them in life and performance (Cotterill, et al., 2017). Additionally, I will incorporate motivational

interviewing, as I value the process of involving the individual's own arguments for change and how that supports people in the change process and empowerment to take control of their lives (Prochaska & Norcross, 2014).

In addition, I will make sure that I develop the skills and competence to be a multiculturally competent practitioner. I will make sure that I develop the processes to understand how to competently apply culturally relative processes for respective cultures, culturally transferrable skills to effectively support individuals from various cultures and be able to culturally adapt to each respective culture that I am fortunate to work with in the field (Prochaska & Norcross, 2014). I will also increase my awareness of microaggressions that I may be unaware of currently, as well as ensure that I develop the knowledge base to competently support the LGBTQ populations (Prochaska & Norcross, 2014).

Section 3: Sport Performance Integration

I will integrate sport performance theory (SPT) into my chosen model of therapy fairly easily. SPT and my chosen models of therapy operate under a similar framework and complement one another. According to Turner (2016), REBT is one of the most effective forms of psychological therapy for treating depression, social and generalized anxiety, and eating disorders and many sport performance practitioners are trained in REBT and CBT techniques. REBT is an effective technique for supporting athletes in performance, as REBT processes minimize catastrophic thinking, overgeneralizations, and perfectionism, by challenging counterproductive beliefs that can interfere with performance (Turner, 2016). According to Turner (2016), REBT theory provides athletes with more constructive beliefs that help resolve

anxiety and foster resilience that ultimately supports athletes in the challenging performance environments.

Additionally, SPT takes a present moment focus towards achieving the optimal mindset for performance, through various relaxation techniques, mindfulness training techniques, concentration techniques, imagery, as well as positive self-talk. According to Turner & Bennett (2018), the present moment focus, of CBT and REBT, is valuable in the sporting context, as it is conducive to making changes in the here and now to move forward quickly and successfully in any given sport. Turner & Bennett (2018) define REBT “as a short-term, structured, active and collaborative therapy well-suited to the immediate and busy pace of many sport and exercise contexts” (p. 5).

REBTs ABC model effectively addresses potentially irrational beliefs in athlete’s, such as perfectionism, catastrophizing, and/or making overgeneralizations that can impede performance with the associated anxiety by helping them to develop more flexible and rational beliefs about their experiences (Turner & Bennett, 2018). The ABC model helps athletes to alter their beliefs (B) associated with various activating events (A) to change the consequences (C), through disputing (D) any irrational beliefs and developing more effective (E) belief patterns, to establish greater resilience (Turner & Bennett, 2018). REBT is a well-established, evidence-based approach that provides athletes with the skills to develop more rational beliefs that support their performance. (Turner & Bennett, 2018).

On a day-to-day basis, considering the population that I will work with, this will look like helping athletes to develop greater awareness of their beliefs (B) around their performance or activating (A) events and the associated consequences (C) of those beliefs (B). Followed by

helping them move through the ABC model and helping them to dispute (D) any irrational beliefs (B) and to develop more effective (E) belief (B) patterns that support their performance (Prochaska & Norcross, 2014).

The athletes will also incorporate the hypothesis principle and the process of distancing to objectively view their experiences to gather evidence around their irrational beliefs (B) to more effectively dispute (D) them. Meanwhile they will incorporate a strengths-based mindset and use positive self-talk to support more positive and rational beliefs (B) about them and any activating events (A), to have more positive consequences (C), and ultimately develop more resilience to support them in the challenging sporting context (Prochaska & Norcross, 2014; Turner & Bennett, 2018; Turner, 2016).

The challenges that I may encounter while applying these various theories and models may include having athletes question the processes, which I will resolve by providing them with examples and self-disclosure of my own experiences with the success of these processes (Prochaska & Norcross, 2014). The benefits of applying these various theories and models include: the athletes will develop more supportive, constructive, and rational beliefs, as well as transferrable skills that will support their performance and life outside of sports.

The theoretical orientation paper helped me: recognize how my family background and culture have influenced how I operate in the world and identify my core values, beliefs, and experiences that have influenced my life philosophy and, in turn, impacted the counseling theory that I identify with primarily. I have a greater understanding of the theoretical underpinnings and counseling models that I will apply in my own personal counseling model to most effectively support the various populations that I am fortunate to work with in the field. Additionally, I

found a theoretical framework that is compatible with the SPT framework. Both CBT and REBT and the SPT value the present moment focus, in the here and now, and developing more positive and constructive beliefs that support athletes in developing the optimal mindset and appropriate beliefs to support resilience and performance.

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