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Editor’s Comments
Larry Litwack

This issue marks the end of the 21st year of publication for the International Journal of Reality Therapy. The journey has been both a learning and a growth experience. This issue continues to demonstrate the influence of the ideas of RT/CT in other countries as you note that the first six articles represent contributors from New Zealand, Canada, Cyprus, Slovenia, and Australia. The articles include both theory and data-based material. It is hoped that this trend will continue.

Since Fall of 1984, the journal has been based at Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts. The University has been consistently supportive in co-sponsoring the publication of the Journal, assisting in storage and mailing. I have been grateful for the University backing. As of Fall 2002, the Journal will be moving to the Midwest as I relocate to Highland Park, Illinois. It is hoped that I will be able to establish a relationship with a college/university in the greater Chicago area to begin co-sponsorship for the Journal.

As part of the move, I am also getting rid of a number of copies of back issues of the Journal. If any reader wishes, I would be happy to send one or more cases of back issues (I will be glad to mix issues in each case to reflect at least 4-5 different issues) to anyone willing to pick up the shipping costs. There are usually around 50 Journal copies in a case. If interested, please let me know as soon as possible as I begin to make arrangements for the move.
Caring, sharing and daring
(Application of Choice Theory and Adult Learning Theory in Tertiary Education)

Ksenija Napan

The author is a lecturer at UNITEC, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Department of Community Studies in Auckland, New Zealand. She has been involved in WGI since 1987 and is a Basic Week Instructor.

ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on application of Choice theory, Adult learning theory and experiential learning in the Bachelor of Social Practice program at Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, UNITEC, Auckland, New Zealand. The process will be presented and discussed with special focus on effectiveness of the use of learning contracts and self-evaluation in development of competent social practitioners.

Introduction

This work was influenced by many people, especially my students, but I just have to mention here three famous teachers, William Glasser, Malcolm Knowles and Leo Buscaglia. William Glasser taught me a practical problem solving skill and a theory which looked simple enough that it can be taught to a five year old and still complex and deep enough that one can spend a lifetime exploring it in depth. Malcolm Knowles gave me the gift of respect for adult learners and a practical tool of learning contracts – which I find so useful for empowerment and clarity of roles in the teaching/learning process. Leo Buscaglia reminded me how important is a gift of love in action while we teach. They all helped me bring awareness ideas that I always deeply believed in. They also helped me focus my thoughts and put these ideas in practice. One of my outcomes was to share these gifts with my students hoping that they will be able to use them in their future practice.

In conducting the Professional Practice course, which is compulsory for all students who enrolled in the Bachelor of Social Practice program, I was guided with three basic questions which provide a framework for this paper:

What do we want? (my students who want to become social practitioners and I as a teacher in a tertiary setting)?

What is our common goal?

What are we doing to achieve what we want?

Is it working and how can we improve it?

I see education as a process of engendering changes in knowledge, understanding, values and attitudes. I also see it as a joyful and exciting process. The purpose of the Professional Practice course is to alert students to some basic principles in social practice and to explore philosophy, ethics, skills and the multi-faceted nature of social practice. The course attempts to integrate theory, practice and experience, and the classroom is used as a laboratory for exploration of ideas that permeate social practice in its broadest sense through co-operation and sharing.

What do we want?

Teaching is more than a job for me. It is truly a calling. To me, teaching is social practice. If I want my students to become effective social practitioners, I need to demonstrate effective social practice in my teaching. My job is to create an environment where changes in values, skills, knowledge and attitudes can occur. My job is also to share my values, skills, values and attitudes but not by making them universal, but more tentative and open for challenge, with a purpose of triggering students’ interest in exploration of their values and beliefs which will inevitably guide their practice. I believe that self-evaluation brings forth the world but my belief is not enough. I need to equip my students with the skill of self-evaluation as well as communicate the theory that lies behind it. New understanding may create change in their beliefs and attitudes. This change cannot happen through coercion or fear of failure. Eliminating failure in an academic institution, which builds its credibility on failure, is not an easy task.

My first aim was to eliminate failure but maintain quality, and prove that by eliminating failure, quality of learning improves as well as coverage of learning outcomes by students. Students were keen to be part of that process because they wanted to eliminate failure too, but they wanted to become social practitioners, responsible for continuous enhancement of their learning, and I soon realized that almost all of them were self-directed already, it is just that by coming to a tertiary institution some of them somehow regressed into “tell me what to do people” who sometimes appeared as students who just wanted a piece of paper at the end of the course with the least possible effort invested.

I am pleased that I did not let appearances fool me. I believe that people are basically good and I knew that rarely anybody chooses social practice as their profession for money, same as for teaching; it is just not paid enough! I was also aware that some students choose a social practice degree because they have been hurt in life and they believe that by helping others they may help themselves. I realized that my job is to reach everyone of my students and I wanted them to be able to leave the course with dignity if they realized that this is not what they truly want to do for a living. I wanted to support them in developing the ability to self-evaluate their

1 Our program is focused on educating social workers, counselors and community developers. At the end of their study, students graduate with Bachelors of Social Practice, majoring either in counseling, social work or community development.
work and their learning processes, hoping that that skill will help them to seek supervision when they get stuck or challenged in their future practice. My aim was to work in such a way that during the process we’ll all develop or improve our ability to co-operate and to attend to a range of cultures.

In a group of 55 students, I have a minimum of 10 different cultures and a whole range of age groups and sexual orientations, so a group in itself provides a wonderful practice ground to attend to issues that they’ll inevitably encounter in their future social practice. I wanted us (and I put “us” here purposefully because every teaching is learning) to learn in a variety of ways, to utilize their learning styles, to become passionate about learning and life, because then, they will be able to transfer their passion to their clients and communities. I did not want them to have heaps of information in their heads and not be able to utilize it – assuming that if their “cups are too full” they will not be able to make a genuine contact with their clients. Nevertheless, I wanted them to be knowledgeable and able to utilize the knowledge and resources available. I wanted them to know what they know and to be aware of what they don’t know. I wanted them not to be ashamed for their mistakes or blocked by them; I wanted them to learn from them. While discussing my vision with them, I asked them for theirs and it seemed that we shared a vision about the outcome and about the process of our time together. While discussing these issues, we connected, we shared our quality world pictures, and the next step was to put them in action.

**What are we doing to achieve what we want?**

*Green Cards*

At the beginning of every course, a student gets a *Green Card*. It is a short outline of the course and it clarifies course details, personnel teaching the course, contact phone numbers and e-mails, the purpose and the aim of the course, general learning outcomes, content and other formalities that a student needs to know. A student also gets a Book of Readings, which is a collection of updated readings on the topics a course covers.

When students read the Green Card and browse through the Book of Readings and suggested literature for the course, they are ready to create their learning contracts. Each contract consists of four parts:

- **Learning outcomes**,
- **Resources and strategies**,
- **Evidence and**
- **Criteria**.

Students personalize learning outcomes from the Green card in order to make them familiar and relevant for their learning. For example a learning outcome:

1. Critically analyze major conceptual approaches to social practice from a bi-cultural perspective

May be personalized as:

1. I will critically analyze Strengths Perspective in social practice and Ecological Systems Theory using my knowledge and experience of being Maori.

Then, they list *resources and strategies* by specifying at least two books from the list of recommended readings in the Green Card or they need to justify why they would prefer to use any alternative books. Sometimes, students are aware of a new and relevant book before I am and they are always experts for their learning processes knowing better than I’ll ever know what works the best for them. They specify names of people they would like to contact and web-sites or agencies they would like to visit to achieve their personalized learning outcomes.

They are then asked what *evidence* will they provide to support coverage of learning outcomes, so they choose assignments they want to do. A contract is a “living document” in a sense that it can be changed and modified. Students need to provide deadlines and they may change them providing that they inform a lecturer at least one week before it is due. Students love these flexible deadlines because most of them are mature students (25-65 years old) with families and part-time jobs. Giving them flexibility to organize their own time improved their planning skills so essential for effective social practice. The idea is to provide an environment where they can practice philosophy, values, skills and attitudes for their future profession.

At the end of their contract, they list the *criteria* – they list what they want me to focus on while marking their work. They are asked to list what would be most beneficial for their learning that I focus on in my feedback ². My feedback is always in the form of a letter. I never scribble on a student’s work. I find it disrespectful and it is difficult to read.

The contract keeps students focused but it allows flexibility. In the age of information technology, abundance of texts and research published in the field, students need to learn how to be focused and at the same time have the ability to see the “bigger picture”. This is another useful skill they will need when working with social work and counseling clients or when working in the community.

**Interactive learning**

William Glasser developed the idea that learning is fun. This was one of the most liberating notions in my life and every time when I share it with students, the atmosphere in the group changes. It is as if it gives them the permission to enjoy the process, laugh, share and make mistakes from which they can learn. When they realize that learning improves the quality of their lives (Glasser, 1998) they become even more enthusiastic to participate. Learning is a

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² For example: punctuality, integration of theory, practice and experience, ability to work competently with a range of client populations, knowledge and understanding of theories, ability to work co-operatively, ability to demonstrate application of theory in practice, ability to work in empowering way, ability to develop a critical analysis of the place of social practice in society, ability to attend to the structures imposed by class, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, health status or geographical location, development of necessary skills and strategies to work safely and effectively with individuals, families, groups and the community, ability to establish and maintain successful self care strategies including supervision in your role as social service practitioner, ability to become a competent reflective practitioner who continues to learn from experience and further training, ability to critically think and construct a conceptual framework as a basis for professional practice, ability to value education and ability to show commitment to ongoing professional development...etc.
challenging and enjoyable process and students love being stretched and challenged. Because every group has a good wealth of knowledge, my aim is to utilize it by teaching students how to co-operate and learn from one another. I hope they will retain this skill and utilize it when working with clients, their families and communities. We do not promote the culture of competition in our department and we do not have traditional exams. By getting to know our students and by encouraging them to co-operate in the process of learning, we are teaching them another useful skill for their future professions. During this process, we as teachers learn too. Because of the interactive and co-operative nature of our papers, it is impossible to teach the same course twice. Helped by action research and co-operative inquiry methodologies and by opening our ears to students' comments we cannot avoid improvement of our courses. Quality is not something one ever arrives at. Quality can always be improved (Glasser, 1998). This makes my job interesting and it makes it a real social practice.

Getting to know my students – and letting them get to know me

In every course, my first learning outcome is to learn all the names. I teach groups of 50-55 students. If I don't know their names, I cannot relate to them – if I cannot relate to them – it is not likely that they'll relate to me. I strongly believe that no one cares how much you know until they know how much you care. Being interested in their stories, helps me to understand them better and makes my job exciting. I focus on students' strengths and potentials in order to help them to overcome their weaknesses. Sometimes their strengths and potentials are hidden under the mask of "Life sucks!" or "Nobody loves me" or "Poor me". I never give up looking for strengths – because they are always there, only sometimes, my vision is not sharp enough or they do not trust me enough to share their precious jewels with me. Elimination of failure significantly contributes to the development of the atmosphere of trust. Attendance is compulsory as well as submission of assignments in time chosen by the student and outlined in the contract. Self-evaluation and peer-evaluation need to be attached to each assignment. Providing all that is done, a student cannot fail. However, consequences are clearly stated and every assignment that arrives late is marked down by one mark for each day of being late. Attendance is taken seriously – whoever misses more than 20% of the course cannot pass. It is very visible that failure is closely related to students' actions for which they are responsible. It is impossible to honestly answer self-evaluation questions if the assignment is not a pass, so occasionally I receive a lousy assignment or two but always without self-evaluation. They say that they've forgotten to attach it. It never happens to students who submit an A or B assignment. In most situations their mark, self-evaluation mark and the peer-evaluation mark coincide. Getting rid of the marks completely is my goal, but it will take a while to change the system completely.

Open book activities and encouraging co-operating learning

The main point is that education is the process of learning how to utilize knowledge (Glasser, 1998), it is not the process of accumulating knowledge. On the last day of every course, I do a "recap activity" with my students. It resembles a test, but it is not a test. It comprises questions on learning outcomes and reflections on the process we went through. They have the whole morning to do it. They can do it individually or in groups, they can use all resources they've got and I don't mark it. I use it to improve my teaching – they use it to self-evaluate what they've learned. If there are any gaps – their peers help them, so the recap exercise is the last chance to cover all learning outcomes. If the whole group is stuck with a specific question, I help them. Encouraging partnership and co-operation in this process proved to be extremely useful.

Self-evaluation

As already said at the beginning – we want students to develop the ability to self-evaluate their work. Self-evaluation is the first step to supervision. These are the questions they need to answer and attach to each assignment they produce:

1. Reflect on your work and focus on what you have covered in terms of learning outcomes listed in the Green Card and in terms of your personal outcomes. Please state where and how you covered them.

2. What have you learned and how do you see it relevant for your future practice?

3. Which resources were most useful for you?

4. How have you met the criteria you've listed in your contract?

5. What do you think you need to improve, learn or re-learn in order to become an effective practitioner?

6. Which strategies have you employed to overcome the obstacles you've listed in your contract to produce a quality assignment?

7. What is missing in your assignment?

8. How would you grade it in percentages?

Their self-evaluation becomes part of their final mark. Some students do not feel comfortable doing it, but after the course they report that it was a major learning experience for them.

Is it working and how can we improve it?

I have been using learning contracts and self-evaluation in different forms for eight years now and here follows some data from student evaluations. At first students were confused – they asked: "What is the trick?" They didn't believe that they can do what they wanted to do and that I will be happy with their work as long as they cover the learning outcomes and provide evidence. Initially they could not believe that the pass is guaranteed as long as they participate and do the work they decided to do at the beginning of the course and that they can even change their contracts if they like, without any punishment. They've spent quite a bit of energy trying to find a "hidden agenda". Only after consulting students who have already completed the course, they became more relaxed. This raises a very important issue, which relates to power and trust. It is not helpful to ignore power issues that are so ingrained in tertiary education as well as power issues related
to social practice. Exploration of power issues within the group, including examining my positional power as a lecturer, provides an opportunity for students to use the similar process when working with individuals, groups and communities. It is essential to acknowledge the difference in power, but also to explore ways how to minimize its destructive features. Trust is not something that can be declared or demanded, trust is the outcome of the process of empowerment. Empowering education promotes trusting relationships, but one never completely arrives there, because trust is so fragile. However, the more transparent the process teaching and learning is, it is more likely that trust will appear. When the process is transparent, students start to take responsibility for their learning.

Disadvantages of this way of teaching are that it may be initially time consuming, but at the same time it is so rewarding and energizing that I find that I do tasks quite as fast because it is interesting and exciting. Computers help a lot to do boring chores fast and neat. Group dynamics always fascinated me as well as development of trust in big groups. Being a part of these fascinating processes is a privilege and a challenge. It is also very exposing and daring. I need to be aware that I will continuously be challenged and checked from my students if I am just talking the talk or walking the walk as well. This approach requires continuous reflection and courage to be honest in self-evaluation of my teaching. It also requires modesty and total absence of righteousness. Not an easy task for any academic with more degrees than a thermometer.

Each year I tell my students something along these lines: “Allow yourself to pass this course in flying colors, but also allow yourself to withdraw if you realize that social practice profession is not for you. It is not about passing and failing, it is about living comfortably with yourself because you’ve chosen a profession that you will do for a big part of your life.” And this exactly what happens in our courses. Not all our students are going to become social practitioners, but by providing them with the tool for honest reflection on their work, and self-assessment of their needs and wishes, some of them realize that they would be better off doing something else for a living. Those who demonstrate skills and knowledge and realize where their professional passion lies, excel by being able to focus on aspects of social practice they want to perfect.

Here follow some of their reflections on the process and the content of the papers when self-evaluation and learning contracts have been used:

1. Great – they should be the basis for all courses.
2. I liked it a lot. It made me focus on what areas I would like to improve and work on within myself.
3. I believe that my learning contract kept me focused and it was helpful in keeping one on track. It assisted me in better time management, which was my problem.
4. I think it was a good learning process for me. It is a good idea to put it in our own ideas what we really want to learn. It gives us an open door to put down what we really enjoy and challenges us to go beyond our comfort zone.
5. Good – promotes partnership in learning.
6. I really enjoyed the process and the feeling that I have some input into my own learning. Important and clear guidelines are given at the beginning.
7. They’re good because they give us objectives to work towards during the course and they give us initiatives and opportunity to express our perspectives.
8. Giving examples of past learning contracts was good as this was the first time one was properly done – that is something that is used as the basis of the assessment.

At the beginning, the majority of students did not feel comfortable self-evaluating their work, because they are not used to doing it in academic settings. At tertiary institutions we are more into impressing the teachers and reproducing the knowledge than into application of knowledge, skill development and creativity. If a student’s self-evaluation is not open and honest, I know that I missed building trust with the particular student. I cannot force anyone to trust me but I can demonstrate trustworthiness and teach students the benefits of honest self-evaluation.

Here follows more data from students on self-evaluation:

1. Difficult but I enjoyed the challenge and got a lot out of the reflective process – also having the clarity to articulate it.
2. I found it difficult and challenging. Never really sure if my assessment was right. In some ways I am still not. However same as above, with more practice at this type of learning, I would become more confident.
3. Yes, I learned from it – it allows me to critically analyze my own work. It is quite hard actually to self-assess my own work – but I guess that is another learning process from the learning outcomes list.
4. Helped to perceive work more objectively which has to be positive.
5. It was very difficult for me to self-evaluate my work.
6. Enjoyed the process of writing journal. Self-evaluation was interesting because I realized after, that I tend to undervalue my own work/talent/strengths.
7. Self-evaluation was good because it helped me review my work and evaluate my own attitudes and practice and looked at whether or not I had met my learning outcomes.
8. I’m still uncomfortable with the concept of self-assessment. I found it hard to be fair and not critical of what I do. I always know I could have done better.

This last reflection relates to our starting point on quality. Quality can always be improved – and this is the purpose of self-evaluation – to continuously improve our practices. Every year I self-evaluate courses that I teach, every year I change something and learn from my students. Making assessment transparent and students’ input visible improved the quality of our relationships and consequently quality of our learning. Student satisfaction with the course, coverage of learning outcomes, and quality of students’ assignments improved too. Most of all, quality of relationships within the...
group was perceived as very important and students started developing valuable networks so essential for their future practice. The process guided me into areas of exploration of trust and ways of teaching values and attitudes without imposing them. The empowering nature of experiential and co-operative learning inevitably touches people on a deeper level than traditional teaching does, but the transformation needs to start with the teacher. Values and attitudes cannot be taught but they can be re-discovered and explored. Can love be taught? No, but it can be shared in a trusting environment. This process or collaborative inquiry keeps my practice alive and dynamic, and yes, it all comes to caring, sharing and daring!

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Spontaneous Choice: An Explanation for Stopping Addictive Behaviors

William A. Howatt

ABSTRACT

In the field of counseling, one of the challenges for counselors is working with persons who have an addiction of some sort. All addictions can be challenging. This article introduces and discusses the concept of 'spontaneous choice' for overcoming any kind of life addiction.

Introduction

Counselors, therapists, social workers, psychiatrists, psychologists, and other mental health professionals will be faced with the challenges of working with a person who has addictive behavior(s). One of the goals of addiction counseling is to help people become free from the controlling effects of addictions. The purpose of this article is to discuss how Choice Theory may provide some insight into understanding how many addictions are spontaneously started and stopped.

The current research in addictions continues to report that more people will spontaneously stop their addiction on their own without relapse, than do those who are supported and attend addiction counseling. This makes it valuable for counselors to have a model for better understanding this phenomenon, and some insight as to how they can help their clients also become aware of this fact.

The word ‘addiction’ has been fully assimilated into our culture, for the most part, as holding a negative connotation. But what is an addiction, and why do people start and stop addictions?

Defining an Addiction

All addictions eventually will become attached to a set of preference behavior(s) that can include one or more of the following: alcohol, overeating, cocaine, marijuana, amphetamines, benzodiazepines, barbiturates, tobacco, ecstasy, solvents, anabolic steroids, prescription medications, opiates, sex, gambling, stealing, exercising, or hard drugs. It is important to note that many people can have more than one addiction at a time.

Many professionals develop their own criteria as to how they define an addiction; though it is important that all work from one universal guideline, so they can help their clients determine the risk of their behaviors. The single resource that is most often used to define what is and is not an addiction is the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (Fourth Edition) known as the DSM IV. I would expect the majority of professionals who work with addictions are familiar with this resource. The criteria for any addiction are ultimately determined by measuring amount of use, frequency and length of addictive behavior activities, function ability, and impact on normal daily activities and quality of life.

The intensity of any addictions can fall on a continuum from mild to severe. Most are very often put into two specific classifications. The first is defined as 'abuse': psychological addictive behaviors, which are causing some difficulties in normal life. The second, much more severe, is defined as 'dependency,' where the addictive behavior is now fully active daily, to the point that there are psychological and/or physical drives, and the addiction has taken over the person's life.

The DSM IV defines two kinds of dependency: physical and psychological:

1. The psychological addiction is separate from the physical addiction. This is the cognitive schema a person has that provides the original rationale for starting the use of tobacco (e.g., social acceptance). Most addictive behaviors start out psychologically in some vein, meaning a person has to have some cognition for them to occur, unless they were drugged or otherwise influenced.

2. Physical dependency occurs when a person starts to develop a physical craving to obtain more chemicals...
In addictions counseling, it is commonplace for clients to be trapped, more than the actual addiction. They have a new perception of their behavior as being the single solution to this question. Alcoholics Anonymous, the largest treatment program in the world, has accepted popular models like the disease model, but with all the research and studies of AA in the last thirty years, it now too is showing its limitations as not being foolproof. In the end, AA works only if a person chooses to follow the program; thus is it the program or the person’s choice?

Spontaneous Choice Model

Spontaneous Choice, the model I use to explain how a person gets addicted, is one I learned from William Glasser’s Choice Theory. Human beings become addicted because the behavior(s) which makes up the addiction is perceived in some manner as being more need fulfilling than the alternatives available for them to meet their basic needs. The Spontaneous Choice model can be explained by observing the comparing places component of Choice Theory Situation A. When individuals put their spontaneous choice into a program, this choice can then become organized and be a driver of their total behavior. If they continue choosing the addictive behavior(s), over time users are at risk of becoming trained to use this addicting program, regardless of the known consequences.
When people are in pure pain, they must choose a behavior. As Glasser says, they have no other choice. He teaches that individuals do not know if the behavior will work unless they try it, or have previous knowledge. From a Choice Theory perspective, those who choose to use addictive behaviors to meet needs often know they are not healthy behaviors; however, at that moment in time their perception of pain is so great they believe they must do something – whatever behavior they believe will help. The experience with the addictive behavior does not always have to be rewarding; it only has to be perceived to be better and more fulfilling than the alternative(s). This is why addictions are hard for many to understand: the person may be choosing one pain to offset another. Most addictions start out psychologically, and then physical addiction (withdrawal) becomes the fuel and motivator for the person to continue the pattern. If it is repeated enough, it becomes habit, and then the addiction has an opportunity to become alive.

How a Person Can Stop Addictions

If individuals can start an addiction with a spontaneous choice, can they stop with one? The above research may lead the reader to believe that this is highly unlikely because of all the factors at play, such as withdrawal, habit, limited new organized behaviors, and a host of other reasons.

Understanding Choice Theory, I would say yes. My rationale is that if people used the addictive behaviors to meet a need, and at a moment in time made a spontaneous choice, if at another independent moment they determined that the addictive behaviors were no longer meeting one or more of their basic needs, and they wanted to get their life back and find a healthier way to live, this would be an example of spontaneous remission.

Choice is like a light switch. If it is true a person can get addicted in a second due to a single choice of using an addictive substance or partaking in some addictive behavior, then he/she must also be able to get un-addicted in the same amount of time.

One challenge with spontaneous choice people will very often need to overcome is that they will go through a period of withdrawal. For some drugs, especially alcohol, it is wise to undergo withdrawal under medical supervision, so it is important to educate clients about withdrawal and the need for support. The good news is that physical withdrawal is usually fairly short-lived, regardless of its original intensity, and the body will eventually get caught up to the mind.

Psychological withdrawal is one of the biggest factors behind relapse. People with addictions are most often very emotionally centered, meaning if they feel bad and have old negative thinking, they are at risk of relapse. Triggers such as people, places, and things can be very instrumental in firing off the compulsion to repeat an old behavior.

In regard to spontaneous choice, this is not a consideration; because individuals have made the commitment that they are no longer going to look to the addictive behavior as a solution for meeting needs. For example, Sobell, Sobell, and Toneatto (1991) explain that they have evidence that the majority of excessive drinkers gave up alcohol without expert help. They were unaided, and made the choice on their own to stop. Biernacki (1986) found the same results with the very challenging heroin addicted population.

Promote Spontaneous Choice

One of the best interventions we can do to empower clients is to teach them about spontaneous choice. Without this knowledge, a person may never take this choice. Not to simplify the matter, though if we were never taught how to tie shoeaces, many of us would still have our shoes untied. I suggest we teach Choice Theory to people who are addicted, if they are motivated to listen, with the purpose of helping them learn and create the insight of spontaneous choice for their consideration of a potential new life choice. In this teaching, we can explain that the most successful intervention for stopping addictions is not formal interventions, but personal choice interventions. Again, the point is that it is people who know what is possible who are in a more proactive position to bring this choice to light to help take charge of their life.

As with anything in life, just because people know what is good for them does not mean they will do it; however, when people know that there is a 'get off addiction free card' called spontaneous choice, this may be the bridge to a new beginning. As addiction workers, the first step is the hardest; the choice to want to take charge. Once you get your clients to this position, you can use all your tools and training to help them. I am not suggesting clients will not need addiction counseling, but I do not believe we need to make it harder than it is. The first step to stopping any addiction is the choice. The learnings, the hows, etc. can all be worked out.

Change is a process, and not an event; however, all change starts with one new behavior choice. Smokers may choose to stop smoking, and even stop on their own, but for long-term success, the more skills they can learn to meet their needs the way smoking did, the better their chance for long-term recovery. The normal rule of thumb in addictions is that to give one up, individuals must replace it with a new healthy set of behaviors that meets their needs or they are at risk of relapsing to the old patterns. As counselors, we know regardless of what issue we are working with, clients will need to learn new skills, and this make take time, practice, and persistence.

Conclusion

If people are able to make a choice to start an addiction, then they must also be able to stop addictions spontaneously. One important factor for the promotion of this logic is that persons with addictions must be made aware of the evidence of spontaneous choice. It does not matter if people with the addiction come to this conclusion on their own or if they are informed about this choice. In the end, it will be up to individuals to make their own decision as to what their future will hold. Some will be able to make the choice and need no help, while others will need all the resources available. The point is that the decision to stop is the choice users with an addiction must make for them ever to move beyond the addictive behavior. Chemicals may fog perception, though they never, in the end, blind choice. Unfortunately, too many people never become aware or accept this reality, and they become lost in an addiction.
Learning Choice Theory can help clients get rid of guilt, shame, and other emotions that put them in a position of weakness. The science of being ‘clean and negatively addiction free’ comes down to individual choice and conviction of getting the help people want, or by saying to themselves “no more, I want to live my life with more quality.” It has nothing to do with being weak or strong, good or bad; it comes down to knowing and understanding that we all are in control of our life choices.

References

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Parents of Children with Autism and the Five Basic Needs

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ABSTRACT

This study was carried out in order to identify 'what parents of children with autism want' and whether their five basic needs, as defined by Choice Theory, can be met when they are faced with a life-long challenge in educating, caring, and raising their children with autism.

Introduction

Autism is a developmental disability characterized by impairment in three dimensions of human development: creativity, socialization, and communication. Its causation remains unknown. Autism is not an obvious disability. Autistic conditions are characterized by the display not only of 'bizarre' or 'ritualistic' behaviors but also behaviors known as 'challenging' which may endanger other people as well as the person who exhibits them.

Parents, who are the prime caretakers of a child with autism, on top of accepting and coming to terms with having a child with such an incapacitating, life-long developmental disability, are also faced with a number of problems, concerns, and dilemmas. The chronicity of care and disappointing prognosis, the effects on the family system, increased financial problems, lack of independence, the attitudes of the public towards them and their children in relation to the misunderstood nature of the condition, are all problems that such parents have to deal with.

Choice Theory was developed by William Glasser (1998) (by expanding his earlier work on Control Theory), and it is a theory that focuses on five basic human needs (love/belonging, fun/enjoyment, self-worth/empowerment, freedom, and survival/health) which all humans are motivated by. These needs are innate and universal, dynamic and concurrent. Choice Theory argues that we all try to fulfill these needs by constructing our unique 'quality worlds' which contains people we like/love, our beliefs, and specific 'wants'. What we do all the time is to behave and this behavior is always purposeful. However, when there is a perceived difference between what we want and what we are getting, we tend to try and eliminate/minimize this 'frustration' in order to get closer to meeting our needs and getting what we want.

The present study is an attempt to explore with parents of children with autism their five basic needs and their 'quality worlds', and ask them to evaluate their current situations in order to identify whether what they are getting from the outside world matches what they want in order to fulfill their needs.

The participants

Eight fathers and 28 mothers as well as 2 grandmothers and 1 grandfather were interviewed. Four families had a child with Asperger Syndrome (high functioning autism) whereas the rest of the families had a child who had been diagnosed as 'classically' autistic. The interviewees represented 32 children in total (28 boys and 4 girls). There were no reports to indicate that any of the participants suffered from a medical, physical or mental condition.

The research questions

The study was carried out in order to examine whether

• Parental 'basic needs' are not just needs associated with the children's autistic condition but a reflection of the parents' 'quality worlds'

• Although parents of children with autism strive to fulfill their 'basic needs', this is difficult or sometimes impossible to achieve

• The 'basic needs' of parents whose children have been diagnosed as 'classically' autistic differ in strength and importance from those parents whose children have had another diagnosis (eg Asperger Syndrome, PDD-NOS etc)

• The 'basic needs' of mothers of children with autism differ in strength and importance from those of fathers

• Parents of children with autism rely mainly on their personal emotional strength and intuition to cope with their children's condition and not on relationships they build with people outside their immediate family

The findings

1) When parents of children with autism find out about their children's condition, their 'quality worlds' collapse – they pictured healthy and full of life children in them and now these pictures are slowly being replaced by pictures of 'disabled', 'autistic', 'challenging', 'unmanageable' children. The majority of such children cannot speak for themselves, are constantly dependent on their parents for emotional/physical/practical support, find it extremely difficult to make friends and sustain long-term friendships, have no sense of danger, and cannot fight for their rights.

Parents therefore reported that their needs are their children's needs and when their children's needs are met and fulfilled, theirs are too.

2) Parents reported that it is indeed difficult or even sometimes impossible to fulfill all five basic needs or even in
some instances decide which need is more important to be met first. As far as the need for 'survival' is concerned, they reported tiredness, lack of sleep, and inability to relax.

The need for ‘belonging’ was also explored. Parents revealed that the first years after the diagnosis, they felt closer to their husbands/wives/partners. Parents of children with ‘classic’ autism felt closer together than those whose children had an Asperger Syndrome diagnosis. Parents said that because ‘classic’ autism can be diagnosed as early as 18 months, they know from the very beginning what they deal with and adapt to the situation (and the news) quicker than the parents who have to wait for as long as 9-10 years before they are actually told that their children are not ‘stupid’, ‘unsociable’ or ‘mean’ but they suffer from Asperger Syndrome. By that time, parents feel emotionally and physically exhausted and in many cases blame each other for their children’s problems. Mothers have found support and understanding in support groups or their local church whereas fathers are more likely to carry on, blaming their wives for ‘creating this autism condition’ in their children (worse if the child happens to be a boy).

As far as ‘fun and enjoyment’ go, mothers of younger children with autism report that it can be fun to be with their children. They try to get involved with fund-raising activities or participate in local playgroup functions and try to do things with their children, too. Again, everything they get involved with has to be child-focused and necessarily what pleases them or what they would have otherwise chosen to do. This is actually called ‘bargaining’ (Duncan, 1977) which means that they actually define ‘having fun’ in terms of ‘I’m doing something for my child/to prove that I do care for my child! I’m a good parent’. Research shows though (e.g. Stewart and Dent, 1994) that parents who act like this have not fully accepted their child’s autism and therefore have not yet adjusted to the situation.

Parents also reported that they feel powerless over choosing what is best for their children especially in terms of their education. They said that they hesitate to take action or change the way things are between them and the professionals they deal with because they are afraid of the consequences (e.g. what would happen if I disagree with the Local Educational Authority? They would probably withdraw the funds and make me pay for his/her home based educational program).

Finally, the need for ‘self-worth’ is fulfilled through what others say about them and how they feel about themselves. When other people praise them and make encouraging remarks about their ‘good parenting skills’, they feel valued and positive. When others see them as ‘emotionally weak’, they feel worthless and unhappy.

3) Although we all have the five basic needs in our genes, their strength and importance vary from person to person. This research has found that parents of children with ‘classic’ autism tend to see the fulfillment of the need for ‘love and belonging’ as very important whereas parents of more high functioning children place more importance on their need to have fun and enjoy the friends they have made over the years. Also, mothers tend to put their need for togetherness first, whereas fathers’ need for ‘self-worth’ and feeling powerful tends to be given priority over the other needs.

4) Parents said that during the first years after the diagnosis, they tend to rely on each other within the immediate family environment for support of ‘fulfillment of their needs’. As the years go by and they learn to accept autism and what comes with it, they try to free themselves from the family system and explore other ways for helping themselves and their children. They realize how much they want to return to work, how they want to spend time with friends and not just their spouses, how to care for their appearance, and generally how to enjoy life with a child with autism.

References


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Way back when...I read Reality Therapy as a college student and thought I understood what a young upstart psychiatrist was talking about. After all, what he said was only common sense. For several years after college, I counseled individuals and families as part of my role as a pastor in various churches. I believed that I was being quite consistent with Reality Therapy. I still have the green hardcover, dog-eared and high-lighted.

15 years later, I became the Executive Director of a residential care and treatment facility for adolescent females and remembered that was where he started. So I pulled out the book and assured myself that I understood this stuff. But then after a few years, I took an opportunity to attend a basic intensive week. He had changed on me! What was this new stuff about taking effective control of your life? He even had the nerve to suggest that there was no such thing as common sense. Crunch point - get serious or get off the bus. Eight years later, I hung my Advanced Week Instructor certificate up in my office - proof positive that I understood. I finally had it nailed down.

Since 1984, every staff person at Anago Resources Inc. has been offered training in CT/RT to the certification level. I have lost track of the number of individuals that I have trained at the basic or advanced levels. I was having a great time experiencing the word. In my first career, I was a clergyman, and I am sure more than a few believed that I had just found a new gospel and was still on the preaching circuit. But once staff got into the training, it took little encouragement to keep them involved. As an agency, we understood what Dr. Glasser was saying and we applied it in every part of our policies, procedures and protocols. Whether our client base was young offenders, children in need of protection, or developmentally challenged adults, we saw countless ways that understanding Choice Theory helped us become more effective in our work.

But after all, I was the E.D. The Board of Directors supported my leadership and trusted my judgment. Together, we had mapped out a philosophy and mission statement that embraced Choice Theory and Reality Therapy. We understood what we wanted. If you wanted to work at Anago, it just made sense to participate in the training. No coercion here.

Then, about one year ago, I decided to begin to retire. I asked my employer, the Board of Directors, to appoint a new Executive Director and free me to do staff training and treatment consulting for the agency. Anago Resources Inc. had grown from that small residential treatment facility to a multi-service agency providing residential care and treatment to developmentally challenged adults, young offenders and adolescent girls. It operates out of 7 different settings in and around London. Ont. Anago has approximately 160 staff members and is committed to providing Win. Glasser Institute approved training to every employee to the Certification level. I would have lots to do. But I understood CT/RT; I could do that!

Shortly after moving to this new position, Mandy Bennett, the new Executive Director, asked me to move my office into and focus all of my time and work in a secure detention facility for phase I young offenders. In Ontario, this is the 12 to 15 year old group. We had just taken over the operation of this program when I decided it was time to start to retire. Taking over a program that had been directly operated by the provincial government was not an easy transition, So I moved. After all, who was I to question the decision? I had asked to be relieved of that kind of responsibility. But the program was new, the staff members were all new to the agency, there was lots of training to do, and I understood Reality Therapy. After all, I had been teaching it for 18 years.

Only this time the assignment had a new twist. We decided to take another page out of Bill’s experience and I would make like he did at the Schwab School. So I bought a pair of jeans, put my ties and sports coat away, and went to work side by side with child and youth care workers on the floor at the Genest Detention Centre for Youth. My assignment was to assist the managers in stabilizing what was for us a new program. That should have been my first clue. I had forgotten the old saw “Those who can – do: Those who can’t – teach”. I found myself on a new, very steep, learning curve.

Let me put it into even more vivid context. As the CEO, I hadn’t done direct child and youth work for better than 20 years. The counseling part was a breeze. I understood what Bill was talking about. The problem was that I could seldom get into a place to do counseling. There are generally 18 youth in the center with an average length of stay about 10 days. That means, on average, just less than two new admissions every day. For security reasons, every transition from one area to another must be monitored. Youth must attend court or court appointed assessments whether they want to go or not. They are still expected to attend an in-house school. By law, we must provide life-skills training. And I can go on to describe the nature of the work but you get the picture. In the most literal sense, we were dealing with a captive audience. Talk about resistive clients!

I heard myself start to say things like “stop trying to counsel this youth until he/she follows through on the expectation that you have”, “Don’t give them so many choices”. “You let the youth divert you until you lost your original agenda”. What heresy coming out of my mouth.
Counselors don’t have an agenda, do they? It’s all about giving choices, isn’t it? After all, I had been providing counselor training to everyone for 18 years.

Operating the most visible young offender program in the community got us some feedback we were not used to hearing. Anago had a reputation for dealing with the hard to serve. At community placement forums, the most difficult were referred to as Anago youth. To hear service partners think we were a bunch of “bleeding hearts” was a wake up call. How come we had been respected and trusted with some of the most challenging youth in the province one day and second-guessed about what we were doing the next?

And for the first time I think I am beginning to understand why Bill talks about Choice Theory, Reality Therapy and Lead Management in the same breath. Anago was not known first and foremost for treatment capabilities. We were known for how well we were able to manage situations created by youth who could be extremely irresponsible and ineffective in their choice of behaviors. That is what the community saw as the outcome of placing youth with us. We saw effective management not as the outcome but as the step we have to accomplish to do effective counseling. And if we were going to be effective with youth in secure detention and custody, we had to become much more intentional about learning how and what to manage.

I want to offer some of the insights that we have gained in understanding the relationship between managing and counseling. If what you read doesn’t fit with your understanding of CT/RT/LM, please clue me in. I don’t have it all figured out anymore. I developed this teaching module as a PowerPoint presentation, hence the slides that you will see below.

First, I want to give you a working definition of management within the context of this article. Management is the art of getting a desired outcome through the energy of other people. I developed this thesis in some detail in an article, Total Quality Management and the Worker, published in the Journal of Reality Therapy, Vol. XII No. 2, Spring 1993. That article came at another point at which I thought I had it all figured out. I do not want to repeat that article, but if you are interested, maybe you can still find it. I discussed how effective managers focus on creating a quality workplace. They create an environment that workers identify quickly as a need-fulfilling place to be. It is an environment in which they can fulfill the requirements of the job and meet their own needs at the same time. I will only put my energy willingly into something that I can feel good about – that in some way meets my needs too.

On the basis of that definition I see managing and counseling on the opposite ends of a spectrum.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>manage</th>
<th>counsel</th>
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Managing, as much as counseling, is a people focused behavior. If I did not need the energy of someone other than myself to achieve the outcome that I want, I would not have to concern myself about managing. We use the word in many other contexts as well, but for this article, I want to keep the focus as clear as possible. Whether we are managing or counseling, we are working with at least one other person.

What is characteristic and distinct about each end of the spectrum is the matter of who carries the agenda. What is common across the spectrum is the process and fundamental understanding of human behavior.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When you are managing</th>
<th>When you are counseling</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The focus remains on what you want</td>
<td>The focus remains on what the other person wants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You provide clear expectations</td>
<td>The other person has the expectation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is little to no input from the other person</td>
<td>There is little to no input from you</td>
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To illustrate what I am trying to say, think about the manager at a GM plant. He wants to see shiny new Chevrolets coming off the assembly line. Why, I have never figured out. I have only owned one GM product in my life and that was one too many. But can you imagine me working in that plant and deciding to produce a Volvo? I would be told very clearly that my input was not welcome. I could try all I wanted to convince the manager that I would feel so much better providing the world with high quality foreign cars. He wouldn’t thank me for it and might suggest that I would really be happier working somewhere else.

Similarly, if a counselor kept trying to sell me on a great activity program for retirees when I am contemplating suicide because I have no one left to share my life with – well I hope you get the point.

Before moving beyond, it is important to look more closely at the counseling end of the spectrum. We have all learned very well from Dr. Glasser that the ultimate end result of Reality Therapy, and in my view even a better name for what we do, is that a person becomes effective at self evaluation. I remember Bill so clearly stating in front of an audience in Toronto that we do not teach them to self evaluate. That is something a choice system does as long as it is alive. What we do is help them become convinced that it is in their best interest to act upon that self evaluation – to do something different to get what they want. The right hand end of the spectrum might be better represented as self-management. That is ultimately what is behind the quality world for everyone of us – to behave in ways to get more of what we want when we want it.

When it comes to working in a residential care and treatment setting and I believe also in a classroom, the spectrum is really more accurately represented this way.

[Diagram of spectrum with labels: Lead Manage, Manage Counsel, Self Manage]

This overlapping of who owns the agenda and makes the “management decisions” more clearly represents the process. I do not think it is helpful to try to identify the most effective
position on this spectrum. I believe that position is constantly moving according to the level of engagement and the strength of the relationship that you have with the person. The manager who doesn't care lets the other person self manage into personal bankruptcy. The person who doesn't care would let the manager run his life and he would likely still end up bankrupt. What I want to illustrate is that the more effectively we do lead manage, the more quickly and effectively we can then start the shift to encourage others to become more effective in living their lives.

To do that we must be very clear not only on when it is necessary to manage and when we can counsel (support self evaluation and self management), but we must be very clear on what we manage. But to a certain extent they are the same question.

First, what do we manage? I am certainly not claiming to be original in the following slides. For anyone trained in even a basic week I am sure the following is quite familiar.

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### Lead Managers Manage

The relationship
- Is it strong enough to stand what I am asking of it?
- What is it based on?
- Power - - - - - - Respect
- Fear - - - - - - Trust

The Assignment
- Will it meet your expectations?
- Does the other person see it as useful? - in any way need fulfilling?

The Environment
- Are the boundaries clearly set?
- Can the person succeed within them?
- Does it ensure safety and dignity?
- Who is involved (audience effect)

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Let me walk you through a scenario that I am sure many of you will recognize immediately.

I am working today as the classroom support worker in a secure detention setting. One of the youth is here, as many are, unfortunately by default. He is not a criminal. He has been identified as “high risk and needs” because he has little structure or support in his life and has likely been in and out of the social service system for most of his life. His first arrest was for truancy and his charges before the court have escalated to include serious assaults against peers, staff and police. Believe me, that is a very common scenario. Statistics, with which I will not bore you, indicate that the vast majority of youth who end up in secure custody start with minor offenses. We don’t do a good job from inside the system of helping youth self-manage more responsibly.

Today he tells a teacher to “get the F--- out of my face” when he is asked to turn off a game on the classroom computer because he is expected to work in a math program. I know that the boundaries of acceptable behavior in the classroom are very clear. No youth is admitted to the school without a clear conversation with the teacher about classroom behavior. I immediately introduce a new assignment. “John, please come with me into the hallway” Even that might be too much for the relationship to stand if I hadn’t at least greeted him this morning or introduced myself to him. I might have been off work for a few days while he was admitted. I decided very quickly that the classroom audience is counterproductive to any conversation that might ensue. I have attempted to manage the relationship, the assignment, and the environment already in this short scenario. But my work is not finished.

Until I get that outcome, there is absolutely no benefit of trying to engage him in counseling. He still has a choice to make but it is very small. Come with me! I know he can walk: he can complete that assignment. To try to talk to him about the disappointment he felt when his folks stood him up at an arranged visit the night before while he is still in the classroom telling me to “Shut the F--- up” only compounds the problem. He is not about to reveal his pain to a classroom of peers. I cannot let go of the agenda and let the youth self manage because he has demonstrated that he is not able to do so responsibly within the context of the classroom. No matter how he tries to engage me I maintain one expectation. Come with me before we discuss anything else. If he chooses instead to “stand off”, I can still get the outcome that I want by asking the rest of the class to take their break early and go to the lounge. I have to continue to maintain the expectation and manage the environment.

In this instance, a simple question to John will illustrate what I mean by managing the assignment. “Do you really want to talk about this in front of your peers or would it not feel better to do this in the privacy of the hallway?” By that question, I am also attempting to manage the relationship by trying to shift toward the right. I have asked for an evaluation. I did not tell him that he was looking ridiculous making such an issue in front of his peers. Given a different scenario where safety and security is at stake, I might have to continue to manage the environment by physically restraining or removing the youth. The goal nevertheless remains – how quickly can I shift the balance so that the individual can find some success in self-management.

It was a sobering wake up call to see the problems that the training I was providing to all of our staff created. My training was out of balance. I focused on Choice Theory and Reality Therapy. Lead management only affected the managers so I reserved that discussion for them. Over and over again, I saw front line staff members trying hard to counsel with youth and it was going nowhere. It was going nowhere because the first requirement was to manage a situation in which the youth, for any number of reasons, was being irresponsible and less effective than acceptable. We cannot let go of our fundamental agenda, provide a safe and secure environment for youth within which they can begin to self manage in more effective ways.

Many years ago, when I first read “Stations of the Mind”, I was captivated by the concept that Bill developed of the worlds in which we live. We all know them well. There was the real world or the source of all of our information. There is
the world that we create, our reality, the perceived world. And there is the quality world, special to our mind alone. We are all very familiar too with the concept of the three filters through which a person creates his/her perceived world. When I am managing the information and experience that another person has, it helps me to think in terms of creating a fourth filter. As the lead manager, I am deciding what information from the real world another person has to deal with. I am creating a smaller world within which someone might become more effective and start to experience success.

Yes, it looks like I get into another person’s face. I have been accused of worse. Nevertheless, I believe that this visual describes accurately what police officers, judges, social workers, residential staff, and even or especially parents do. We are often “filtering” or determining what another person can be expected to deal with at any given time. It can become quite intrusive. Rather than allowing a child, or an adolescent girl, to play her games in the street! After 25 years of working with youth in residential treatment settings, I have no question about the need to set limits and frameworks within which someone might be persuaded to try a new behavior and experience something that I am convinced will feel far better than the drug and sex scene in downtown Toronto.

It is so appealing to try to counsel youth and let them make choices. You can offer support and help individuals through a process so that they clarify what they want, what they are doing, and what is not working for them. It is a great gift to be able to offer someone who is honestly trying to find more effective ways to manage his or her life. It take courage to intercept irresponsible and less effective behaviors by becoming the manager. It also takes experience to know that after you manage well, you will get quality opportunities to counsel.

Up to this point I have focused my comments to relate to a Child and Youth Worker in a classroom support role or in a residential worker role. That in no way exhausts the implications of the relationship between Reality Therapy and Lead Management. I am sure that you can immediately see the significance of this focus for managers in the most traditional sense of that role. The Lead manager in any employee employer relationship is also looking for every opportunity to shift toward the right end of the spectrum as well. What we manage is still the relationship, the assignment, and the environment.

Way back when...really feels like yesterday, I guess working with youth does keep you feeling young. Being able to go back to front line work after so long at the other end of the spectrum has been an incredible gift. This was to be a first step toward retiring. It sure doesn’t feel like it. I am having far too much fun.

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What is Most Demanding in Teaching, Managing and Counseling?

Bosiljka Lojk

The article presents differences in demands of teaching, leading and counseling, which result from different individual motives. It tries to answer the following questions, using experience and examples from school:

- How do our motives influence our relationships?
- How do they affect our results?
- What does the efficiency of teaching, leading and counseling depend on?
- What do teachers, leaders and counselors have to pay attention to in order to accomplish optimal results?

If you ask people why they do something, their responses could be placed in three categories. The first group will say that they do something because they have to, and they will list their reasons; the second group will say that what they are doing will help them in their achievement of some specific outcomes or goals; and the third group will say that they are doing what they are doing because they are interested in it or because if makes them happy.

If you attempted to check this notion with employees, one group would say that they have to work to get the money to feed their families, the second group would say that they want to excel or climb up the corporate ladder, and the third group would say that they simply love what they do and that it fulfills them.

If you choose to do the same with your counselees, you will get similar answers. The group which is sent by somebody else (e.g. student sent by the teacher) or institution (e.g. a parent sent from the social service agency) will say that they were forced to come and that they had no idea why or what to talk about with you. The second group would be the group of people who blame others for their misery (e.g. drinking husband, sulking wife, or “impossible” boss) and they will say that they’ve come to you because they want you to give them advice or to teach them how to make these “terrible people” treat them better.

The third group would be the group of people who have been busy for a while trying to solve this problem, aware that nobody can solve it for them and that they need to do something, but nothing creative is coming to their mind. They will ask you to help them figure it out.

If you ask students the question why do they go to school, you will soon notice that there is a group of them who believe that they are forced to, they believe that they have to go to school because this is what their parents want. The biggest group will be the group who perceives that the purpose of going to school is formal advancement through good marks, a profession, certificate at the end, or to get a better position at the workplace. The smallest group will say that they are going to school because they are interested in the content of the subjects and that they enjoy school.

It is interesting that you will get the exact same answers from adult learners, for example, teachers sent by the Ministry of Education to improve their skills when their principal has chosen the program for them which they have to attend.

Although I have much experience working with clients in the counseling environment, what I want to share with you is mostly learned by working with adults, specifically teachers in more than sixty primary and high schools in Slovenia, teaching them Choice Theory and Quality school ideas.

If I compare this with teaching Choice theory and Reality therapy in the framework of Reality Therapy Certification, which attracts people who are, in advance, familiar with William Glasser’s ideas and feel very positive about them, work with teachers was and still is the most demanding form of teaching, but also the job from which I’ve learned the most about Choice Theory and about myself. Every encounter with a new group of teachers has been for me a test if CT is really in my Quality world, or am I just thinking and saying that. My experience of teaching continuously confirms Dr. Glasser’s notion that teaching is one of the most demanding jobs of all, and therefore we need to learn to respect it.

The first thing I’ve learned is to notice the difference in the level of demand when teaching individuals in the same group. From that experience I tried to find a logical and CT-supported explanation to clarify my premise. The following are my conclusions:

The level of how demanding the teaching is does not depend on whom we teach: young, old, educated, not educated... but it depends on their motives and the meaning they see in what they are doing. I am sure that it is very similar in counseling and managing, which I mentioned at the beginning. I have chosen the school because it is familiar to all of us, some of us are teachers, and all of us have been students – so I hope this will be meaningful to all.

Motives

Students have their reasons for coming to school. As I said before we can fit them into three groups: “COERCION”, FORMAL ADVANCEMENT and INTEREST. I put the word “COERCION” in quotation marks, because we are not talking about real coercion. If we did not see any interest in something we do, we would not do it at all. What is the interest of a child who says that he/she has to go to school?
because of mum and dad? Who knows, maybe he/she is avoiding a fight with parents, or does not want to spoil a good relationship with them. Whatever his/her reasons are, the interest is there and he or she does not want to see it at the moment. When we do something we do not want to do or see it as irrelevant and useless, it is much easier to say that we are forced to do it, than to say that it was actually our choice. But, behind this is the belief that we are trapped in our environment and that our behavior is manipulated and guided by others. This is the reason why our “coerced student” is upset and angry.

It is interesting that very often parents, and even some primary school teachers, see primary education as coercion coming from society. They explain this belief by the notion that it is compulsory and regulated by the law. By asserting this they forget that, in spite of this fact, some kids do not go to school. This means that primary school is compulsory only for kids and parents who make that choice.

Expectations

Expectations are closely linked with motives. In every situation, people want to get as much as they can. Our expectations are very specific ideas about what we want to see, hear or experience in a certain situation. Dependent on motives, students have very definite expectations related to situations in the classroom and in school in general. Try to recall your own school years. Probably, you had a subject about which you kept telling yourself “I don’t need this!” For me, that kind of subject was chemistry. Then, try to recall a subject that you did not like, but you knew that, without it, it would not be possible to continue your education. In my case, that was math. Finally, try to recall a subject that you really liked. For example, I liked Croatian language.

It is important to understand in what way student expectations are linked with their motives and what is their perception. Chemistry and memorizing formulas was for me totally useless and terribly boring. The only thing I thought of was, who will sit next to me to prevent me from being bored? What shall we do during the class, or in other words, how will I survive in this uncomfortable situation?

We are created in a way that we are continuously attempting to satisfy our needs, especially when our expectations are different from what we perceive. My expectations related to math were still coming from my attempts to satisfy our needs, especially when our expectations are different from what we perceive. My expectations covered that dimension as well.

Croatian language, the subject I really loved, was linked to very specific expectations closely linked to the content of the subject. It is interesting that just forming my expectations was need satisfying, and it seemed to me that I did not have to do anything else, but discover what I was interested in.

Probably your experiences are similar. For better understanding I’ve included some concrete student expectations in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL OF DEMAND</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
<th>III</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STUDENTS PERCEIVING THE TEACHER</td>
<td>OPPONENT</td>
<td>INSTRUMENT</td>
<td>PARTNER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERCEIVING THE RESULTS</td>
<td>STUDENT + TEACHER</td>
<td>STUDENT + TEACHER</td>
<td>STUDENT + TEACHER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STUDENT'S BEHAVIORS</td>
<td>INTERRUPT</td>
<td>DO THE MINIMUM</td>
<td>LEARN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STUDENT'S EXPECTATIONS</td>
<td>ENDING CLASS</td>
<td>ASLIP</td>
<td>LEARN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STUDENT'S MOTIVES</td>
<td>-CORRECTION-</td>
<td>BELIEF I don’t need this</td>
<td>BELIEF I like this</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Behaviors

In order to satisfy their needs, namely realize their expectations, students use different behaviors. They, as it can be seen in table 1, differ, but they are well balanced with the expectations on which they are based. It is important to understand here that students develop these behaviors in an attempt to satisfy their needs while at school, in the environment dictated by the school system. Behaviors students use are somewhat of a critique of the school system, because they clearly describe the relationship between the students and the school. This is important. the data that most students, and I dare say, that this is 80%, also confirmed by school practice in Slovenia, belong to the group whose interest is in formal advancement (good grades, points, diplomas, career opportunities, etc.) is telling us that our values are changing. Can you imagine them as future employees? I am concerned about a few things here. First, I wonder how many of them will love their jobs enough to do their job with enjoyment, how many will only chase money and career, and how many will go to work just to feed the family. Behaviors they are using to some extent show the direction of their future movements, but also focus on opportunities missed by the school’s system, which needs to be changed.

Students are not responsible for the way the educational system is conceptualized, but when they leave, they will use what they’ve learned from it. In our system, they are learning how to compete. That would not be too bad if it was a sports competition, but school competition is far removed from it. Everyone wants to be the best, because only the best can get where they want to go and the number of spaces is limited.
There are points and criteria that some cannot achieve. To help a classmate becomes old fashioned, and is sometimes even threatening. The only ones who succeed are those who are better than the others! How do we encourage cooperation, which is so necessary for our survival, in that kind of environment?

I do not have the answer for this question, but I know that these circumstances prevent cooperation from taking place. In our attempt to be more effective, we forget that effectiveness decreases if there is no cooperation, or in other words, our competition will destroy us if we continue at the same pace. Is it too late to do something about it?

Results

Results follow behaviors because in life we look at behaviors through the scope of their effectiveness. Seen with the teacher's eyes, students from the first group do not achieve any results. I am not sure that we would get the same answer if we asked students. With the expectations they've got and with behaviors they use, they are achieving what they want, even sometimes having great fun and in specific ways achieving their results, but their results are diametrically opposed to results expected by teachers. In the second group, the situation in terms of results, seem to be much better. Students achieve good marks, as expected by teachers, but teachers expect students to retain some knowledge as well, and this is not often the case. In the group, students memorize using their short-term memory, usually without understanding.

Only in the group of students who learn because they are interested in the subject do students and teachers have the same understanding of results.

Relationship

Initially, students' motives define their relationship with the teacher. You may be a perfect lecturer or brilliant speaker, excited about the subject you teach, have endless patience and refined empathy with people, but if the student thinks: "Why do I need to learn these stupid things if I cannot use them?", you can be sure that he or she perceives you as an opponent and he or she will let you know that a hundred times in more than a hundred ways.

Teaching people who perceive you as an opponent is the most demanding. Usually, teachers can hardly resist the temptation to "retaliate". Retaliation always has catastrophic consequences for both, the student and the teacher. Why? Most teachers believe in external control psychology and act from that belief system. Using various methods, they try to motivate students, whose behaviors do not fit their expectations, hoping that they will change their behavior. We know that we cannot change other people's behavior, but teachers with an external control belief system have difficulties letting it go and some even believe that it is their "sacred duty" to change students or make them do something they do not want to do. Labeling the student as "a problem", they escalate their behavior to such an extent that they really start behaving as opponents, and for the sake of what they believe is their duty, they sacrifice the relationship, unaware that without the relationship, serious teaching is impossible.

Results of this kind of teachers' behavior is depicted in teachers' mood (feelings and physiology) listed in table 2.
you be the best teacher in the whole school, you may be an average teacher, but for that group, you will be a partner in the best meaning of this word and that is how they will treat you. No matter how much this may look appealing, it is not easy, because you always have to be “able to cope” when a student like this continuously interrupts by asking millions of questions when you are trying to explain something. It can be demanding, because sometimes interactions with students like this may seem like class disruptions, but the reward is the good feeling you get when you realize that they value and care about the same stuff you do. This is a feeling that you can give them something they really want and that you can learn with them. The teacher perceives this kind of student as a companion, and a teaching is not so demanding as in previous situations because the student is behaving as a collaborator. Unfortunately, situations like the one described are rare.

But, is it possible to have more situations like that? I’ve heard many teachers saying, “Yes, if we motivate them.” But as described earlier, students are motivated already. If they are motivated, they know what they want and what they do not want. Some students are motivated for the same or similar things as you are, some for different things, but motives are already there. Practice shows that all attempts to make them motivated fail. They always go the way they want to go. “So what shall we do then, just leave them the way they are and let them be? Is that what you are advising us?” It is very difficult for teachers to accept Choice Theory. The old psychology is deeply rooted.

My experience has taught me that there are evident differences between the demands of teaching individuals within the same group, who come from different motives, expectations and perceptions of their teacher – and their behaviors are dictated by their motives, expectations and perceptions. This understanding helped me to raise the level of my teaching and to help teachers to raise theirs. It is necessary to believe in Choice Theory or at least work along the lines that it becomes part of our worldview. Student behaviors are very important information upon which we can base our conclusions. For a teacher, the most valid information is the behavior, which tells us how he or she perceives us. At the same time behaviors provide guidelines to which relationships we need to devote more attention and improve.

Choice Theory teaches us that what we do is not conditioned by what others do. That means that no matter how our students behave, we can choose to behave like partners. Benefits from this kind of choice are multiple. First, everyone feels good in the company of a partner, and when we feel good it is likely that we will cooperate. So, with this decision we change the system of the relationship, and the good cooperative relationship is a firm foundation for teaching, leading and counseling.

Teachers often ask me what does a good cooperative relationship look like, as if they’ve forgotten that they already have good relations with colleagues and partners. Behaviors they have used could become part of their repertoire. This is not that difficult, because teachers are already good partners with some of their students and other teachers. The only condition is to give up the intention often hidden in the question: “If I become a partner to them, would they change their behavior and do what I tell them to do?” With this idea in our minds, we cannot have a good co-operative relationship. We have to give it up, forget it. People, and especially children, have a strong sense for deceit and they will not fall into that trap! So, if you just recall your own school experience, you’ll probably remember one teacher who attracted you as a person because of the way he or she treated you, and then you got interested in the subject although it did not look very appealing at first sight. Choice theory encourages us to create these kinds of relationships where we and people with whom we work will satisfy their needs.

Khalil Gibran in The Prophet says about teaching (as I remember): “The teacher, who walks in the shadow of his temple is not giving from his wisdom, but from his faith and his love. If he is really wise he does not offer to come to the house of his prudence but rather takes you to the threshold of your soul”.

These are the teachers whom we have always followed, and I am sure that we will do the same in the future.

From my point of view leaders and counselors are in a similar position. The main thing we need to keep in our mind is that the demands of teaching, managing and counseling people depend on their motives, but only a supportive relationship which can be built by the teacher, manager or counselor can make significant progress in teaching, managing or counseling.

References


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Choice Theory and PCT: What are the differences and do they matter anyway?

Timothy A. Carey

ABSTRACT

This paper provides a comparison between choice theory and PCT. The purpose of the comparison is to enable practitioners of reality therapy to reflect critically on their practices. This reflection may enable practitioners to become more effective should they wish to do so. Various aspects of the theories are examined such as the type of theories they are and what they are theories of. I conclude that reality therapists do not achieve the results they do for the reasons provided by choice theory. Anyone wishing to examine their results as a reality therapist more closely may require a different explanation for those results. PCT is offered as an alternative explanation for people to consider.

Reality therapy is a counseling or therapeutic approach that could be considered to belong in the cognitive-behavioral category of psychotherapeutic schools. William Glasser is the creator of reality therapy, and published the first book on this method in 1965. Since this book was published, reality therapy has become an enormously popular way of helping others. It has been used in many different situations and has been used by and with people from widely different backgrounds. Regardless of the differences among people, it seems that large numbers of people who experience problems in their lives find it helpful and worthwhile to participate in a program of reality therapy conducted by a trained practitioner. While empirical evidence for the efficacy of reality therapy may not be as abundant as the evidence available for other cognitive-behavioral methods, the evidence that is available certainly indicates that this is an effective and viable approach for many people.

According to Glasser (1998, p. 116), reality therapy is informed by the principles of choice theory. The framework of choice theory, however, was provided some time after the therapy had been established as a useful therapeutic approach. The original inspiration for choice theory came from another theory known as perceptual control theory (PCT). This theory was developed by William T. Powers and is described in his seminal work Behavior: The Control of Perception (1973) and a later book Making sense of behavior: The meaning of control (1968). Glasser spent time learning PCT (at that time it was called control theory or control systems theory) from Powers and then made changes to this theory to suit the approach he had developed known as reality therapy. The first book in which Glasser described his ideas of this theory was Stations of the Mind (1981). Powers wrote the forward to this book. The ideas that Glasser formalized were originally known as control theory but have since been renamed choice theory.

Glasser’s alterations of PCT to arrive at choice theory were significant. Wubbolding (2000) describes the changes as a “major development” (p. 1) and a “distinguishing contribution” (p. 2). Specifically, he states that changing the name control theory to choice theory was a “dramatic change” (p. 2). It is these changes I wish to examine in this paper. My reasoning for examining these changes is not trivial. There is no doubt that Glasser’s changes to the original theory were pervasive. PCT is virtually unrecognizable in the current form of choice theory. As I will demonstrate in this paper, the changes have been so extensive that it would be inaccurate to think of these two theories as similar anymore.

While the changes Glasser has made are undeniable, it does not automatically nor logically follow that change equals improvement. Often, whether or not a change is an improvement on whatever has been changed will depend on the purposes of the individual experiencing the change. Changing my residence from a warm climate to a cold climate will be an improvement for me if I enjoy living in cooler places. If my wife, however, prefers hot days and the sunny outdoors, then this change will probably not be an improvement for her.

Sometimes a change can actually lead to a decrease in the quality or standard that existed previously. People, for example, sometimes change from a state of mental health to one of mental illness. This change would not normally be considered an improvement. In fact, largely the reason that the services of counselors or therapists are sought is to create a change back from mental illness to mental health. Most people would consider a change in this direction an improvement. Change then can, but does not necessarily, imply improvement.

Even though Glasser used PCT as the basis for the development of choice theory, this does not mean that comparisons of the two theories are warranted nor justified. The main purpose for the comparison I am about to make is to help clarify some of the principles of both theories. One way of being effective in any given area of expertise is to base what you do on some theoretical principles. Many of our greatest inventions were arrived at through the application of the principles of robust theories. Even when working with other people in a counseling or educative capacity, using theoretical principles to inform your practices can add a structure and coherence to your work that might not otherwise be there. Glasser seems to acknowledge the utility of this approach when he describes choice theory as providing a “framework for reality therapy” (Glasser, 1998, p. 116).

Of course, the assistance you find in the principles of any particular theory will depend partly on how successful the theory is. Many people nowadays would consider Freud’s theories of personality to be inadequate and would attribute many of the shortcomings of traditional psychoanalysis to the theory that informs this practice. I say “depend partly”
because the adequacy of the theory is only part of the equation in terms of what you will or will not find helpful. The other part of the equation is your own individual intentions or purposes. If you are simply interested in finding out about different ways that the notion of personality has been conceptualized throughout history, then Freud’s accounts will provide a wealth of valuable information. If, however, you wish to learn some theoretical principles so that you can better understand the human condition and if, in your learning, you wish to form hypotheses from the principles of the theory that you can test in order to further your understanding, then Freud’s theories will be of very little use. They are simply not that kind of theory. To some people, however, understanding things in this way and forming and testing hypotheses are not important.

Some people may not even have considered that theories can differ in kind or quality. This is one of the notions that I intend to introduce in this paper. As explained in the paragraph above, the success or otherwise of any theory will be determined by the type of explanation that individuals require for the particular purposes they have in mind. If you want to construct an historical account of the development of theories of personality, then Freud’s explanations will successfully provide you with useful information. If you are interested in forming testable hypotheses about internal, stable, individual characteristics, then the explanations Freud has provided will not suffice.

I am assuming in this paper that a theory is an explanation of something. Theories in the physical sciences, for example, are typically explanations of phenomena in the natural world. Many theories in the life sciences are not about phenomena as discrete as events and objects that occur in the natural world, but they are typically about some kinds of phenomena nevertheless. When discussing theories then, it seems to make sense to consider how well or how successfully the theories explain the phenomena they describe. This is the sense in which I use the term “successfully.” Other people might use different criteria for comparing theories. When drawing a distinction between PCT and choice theory, for example, Wubbolding (2000) refers to PCT as being “highly theoretical” (p. 10). I am unsure of what the term “highly theoretical” means. Does it mean that somehow choice theory is less theoretical than PCT? Again, what would “less” refer to in this instance? In this paper, my criterion for considering theories is how successfully they explain what it is they are theories about.

The criterion that I am suggesting here that could be used to judge the success of a theory is how accurately it explains a particular phenomenon. Once again, people are likely to have different standards about how accurate they consider a theory to be. There may be a point, however, at which some consensus could be reached about this theory being more accurate than that theory. By way of analogy it is possible to imagine that you could observe two athletes running, and express a preference for Jack’s style of running over Brian’s style of running. Brian, however, might be able to run measurably faster than Jack. You could recognize perhaps that the speed of the athletes was something that could be judged independently of your preference for running style.

The accuracy of a theory then is no guarantee that all people will favor the more accurate theory. An accurate theory will only be favored by people who believe accuracy is important. People may be able to recognize that one theory is more accurate than another but still prefer the “style” of the less accurate theory. A theory that can be tested might be considered a more accurate theory than a theory that can not be tested. Using Freud again as an example, there is really no way that we could test whether someone had an id or an ego. These concepts therefore might contribute to Freud’s ideas being considered less accurate than another theory from which testable hypotheses could be formed.

As I have already mentioned, however, acknowledging that a theory is more accurate than another does not necessarily imply that the more accurate theory will be the more desirable. There seems to be no way of escaping the notion of individual purposes. Your own expectations and attitudes will determine whether or not accuracy is an important criterion for you. Practically, a more accurate theory might have greater explanatory power than a less accurate theory. Also, a more accurate theory may provide more avenues for testing and more rigorous guidelines for modifications than a less accurate theory. A broader scope of explanation, testing, and modification, however, may only be important in improving one’s current level of understanding in the belief that this might help one to be more effective in one’s work. People who are relatively satisfied with the work they do may find little benefit in taking the time to learn a different theory. For people who are interested in improving how effective they are with others, however, the scenario might be different. To assist in improving your practices, it might be advantageous to be familiar with a theory that explains more rather than less, and that can be tested and modified by anyone who takes the time to learn how this might be done.

In writing this paper, I am undoubtedly expressing some of my own biases. In a professional capacity, for example, I am interested in the most accurate theory that I can find. While I enjoy reading about many different explanations of various phenomena, when I select a theory on which to base my practice, it is the degree of accuracy of the theory that I use as my benchmark. I readily accept that other people will have different criteria, and for these people I believe I have little to offer in this paper. If it is not important to you which explanations you inform your practices by, or if you use a criterion other than accuracy by which to select a theory, then there is little point in reading any further. I firmly believe that the physical sciences have demonstrated the power of accurate theories. In principle, I see no reason to believe the life sciences should be any different. I am proposing that people with more accurate understandings of the work that they do are able ultimately to be more effective than people with less accurate understandings.

The point of this paper then is not to deny the efficacy of reality therapy. Reality therapy is, and remains, a respectful, humane, and effective way of working with troubled people. It is practiced by many talented and well trained people. It incorporates a variety of procedures and strategies and is a tremendously creative and individualized approach to helping people live more effective lives. If, however, choice theory is not an accurate theory, then it may be the case that reality therapy practitioners are not achieving their results for the reasons that they think they are. If, for example, it could ever
be convincingly demonstrated that people did not have quality worlds in their heads, then it could not be the case that people experienced benefits in reality therapy due to the effect the procedures have on quality worlds. In this instance, there would have to be a different explanation for the results that were observed. If the benefits experienced through reality therapy were deemed to be valuable, then in order to increase the likelihood that these benefits would occur more frequently, would it not be necessary to have a more accurate understanding of how the benefits were occurring? It is for the purpose of improving our understanding of what we do that I am suggesting a comparison of choice theory and PCT might be worthwhile. A greater understanding of what we do might be useful if we want to improve what it is we do.

I am suggesting in this paper that reality therapy might not work for the reasons that are currently proposed. This notion will have no relevance for people who are currently as effective practitioners of reality therapy as they want to be. For people who wish to improve their effectiveness however, what I write may have some utility. If the theory you base your practices on is limited in its accuracy or scope of explanation, then these principles will only be of limited assistance in helping you become more effective at what you do. So that you might repeat your successes more often, it would be useful to base your practices on a more accurate theory.

In this paper, then I will examine the differences between choice theory and PCT and suggest what some possible implications of these changes might be. When considering information on choice theory and reality therapy I will refer mostly to two sources. These are Choice Theory (Glasser, 1998) and Reality Therapy for the 21st Century (Wubbolding, 2000). I am assuming that these books have the most up to date information relevant for my purposes. In the forward of Reality Therapy for the 21st Century, for example, Glasser describes Wubbolding's (2000) book as "the complete and definitive book on the subject" (p xi.)

When considering PCT, I will draw heavily from two books by Powers: Behavior: The control of perception (Powers, 1973) and Making sense of behavior: The meaning of control (Powers, 1998). I am aware that other sources of information exist for both theories and also for reality therapy. The books mentioned, however, provide comprehensive accounts of these topics and have all the necessary information I require for my task.

To begin with, it might be useful at a general level to consider how PCT and choice theory were constructed as individual theories. I have already mentioned that one aspect of theories is testing and development. That is, how are theories constructed and how are they modified if any modifications are necessary? Since I am not reporting from Glasser or Powers directly, what I am about to suggest should be considered my interpretation of the various decision making processes that may have occurred. While these comments are hypothetical, there is some evidence for what I am about to suggest in the sources I have mentioned above.

Choice theory seems to have been developed from the ideas, logic, and intuition of William Glasser. There is no evidence that I can find of any formal testing of the major concepts in choice theory such as needs, quality worlds, scales, or filters. Rather, there is evidence that the way the theory was constructed was based on the ideas that Glasser had formed. When Glasser (1998) discussed creating a new psychology, for example, he states that one of the criteria is that the new psychology "must be easy to understand, so it can be taught to anyone who wants to learn it." (p. 5). This seems like an unusual standard to introduce when constructing a theory. Does it seem likely that Newton or Einstein, for example, would have considered ease of understanding to be an important criterion in the construction of their theories? Throughout the sources I have mentioned (Glasser, 1998; Wubbolding, 2000) there is much evidence to indicate that choice theory is a summary of Glasser's own personal ideas and beliefs. Statements such as "I believe" are common and when discussing his reasoning for changing the name from control theory to choice theory he states "I always disliked the name of the theory" (Wubbolding, 2000, p. 58). Again, personal likes and dislikes seem to be an unusual criterion for making decisions about theory building.

Perhaps the clearest example of Glasser's own personal opinions influencing his decision making is in the concepts of needs. The concept of needs in choice theory is pre- eminent. Glasser is, in fact, in good company when he discusses the concept of needs. Mentioning just a few of the authors who have written about the needs concept may help to illustrate just how popular the idea of needs is. James (1890), for example, used the idea of instincts as part of his explanation of human behavior. Among the human instincts that James outlines in The principles of psychology (1890) are "emulation or rivalry", "play", "curiosity", "sociability and shyness", and "love" (pp. 409-439). These names seem like they could be capturing similar ideas to Glasser's (1998) needs of "power", "fun", and "love, loving sex, and belonging" (pp. 33-41). Murray (1938) lists about 40 different needs, and Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs is familiar to many people. At a more specific level, Jones and Jones (1995) describe 12 academic needs. For a more detailed chronology of the history of the needs concept, see Bourbon (in Ford, 1999).

Throughout history then, the idea of needs has been described, discussed, and reinvented. The names and numbers often change but the underlying idea of an internal "something" driving, generating, producing, or motivating our behavior is common. Even in Glasser's own work, changes in the number of needs is evident. In 1965, Glasser described two psychological needs; the need to love and be loved, and the need to feel worthwhile to self and others (p 10). He also referred to three physiological needs: food, warmth, and rest (p. 9). Later however Glasser (1984, pp. 5-18) claimed that there was one physiological need and four psychological needs. At this stage, it didn't seem essential to Glasser that he specify the number or names of the needs. He stated "It is not important to the thesis of this book that I establish with any certainty what the basic needs are that drive us." (p. 16).

By 1998, even though Glasser described four psychological needs and one physiological need, he claimed that the love and belonging need had both a love component and a belonging component. People could have different "strengths" of each of these components (p. 104). If this is the
case, should each of these components be considered a separate need? Furthermore, Glasser in this text described the physiological need as encompassing things such as risk taking (p. 102) and financial spending habits (p. 94). Since risk taking and financial spending could be considered more psychological than physiological, should the survival need now be considered another psychological need in addition to the other four? Wubbolding (2000) adds support to this notion when he mentions the “five psychological needs” (p. 83) in the context of conducting therapy. Later, however, Wubbolding lists the psychological needs as “belonging, power, freedom and fun” (p. 110) which seems to support Glasser’s belief of four psychological needs. Wubbolding (2000), however, also includes terms such as “relationships”, “involvement”, “achievement”, “recognition”, and “fame” in a table (p. 15) under the heading “relevant needs” so I am unclear as to whether these are extra needs (as they are called) or simply sub-components of the original needs.

Let me emphasize at this point that I am not questioning Glasser’s right to adapt and change his theory. Many theories undergo modifications to their original form during their development. What I am questioning here is the method Glasser used to arrive at the changes. The reason for the changes that have occurred generally in the number of names of these internal forces, drives, or needs may be that there is no scientific evidence for the existence of any of them. By “scientific”, I am referring to evidence that has been produced through experimentation. Specifically, Glasser (1998) provides evidence for a lack of experimental verification when he states “I believe that some of these unknown genes provide a basis for our psychology...” (p. 27). Glasser (1998) may well be right but at this point in time we are relying on his beliefs rather than information obtained through scientific experimentation. Glasser (in Wubbolding, 2000) restates the importance he places on his beliefs when he says “By 1996, Powers and I had major disagreements. He didn’t believe in the basic needs...” (p. 58). It seems to be the case then, that the only evidence available for the existence of five basic needs is Glasser’s own personal logic and intuition. Logic and intuition certainly have their place in theory building. In many scientific approaches, however, the creation of ideas through logic and intuition would be regarded only as the first step in building a theoretical explanation of any particular phenomenon.

Perhaps this is a good place to provide the first direct comparison between choice theory and PCT. In PCT, decisions about what form the theory should take or what should or should not be included in the theory are made through testing. Essentially, the decision making process in PCT relies on model building (Powers, 1973, p. 10). When PCT scientists have an idea about the way something works, they build a model of the thing they’re attempting to explain and then observe what the model does. If the model is able to accurately reproduce the phenomenon they are attempting to describe, these scientists would assume that they have a reasonable explanation of the phenomenon. Powers (1973, p. 73) puts it this way “we are aiming here not for a sufficient model, but a correct model – one that not only accomplishes the same results that the human being accomplishes, but does it in the same way.” This means that if someone has an idea about something that should be added to the theory or that the theory should be otherwise changed in some way, then he or she would need to build a model which incorporates the changes and demonstrate that the model performs better (that is, more like the thing that is being explained) with the changes than it does without them. The only criterion is “how closely does the performance of the model match the performance of what I am explaining?” Regardless of how much the individual believed in his or her idea, the idea would be discarded if it did not improve the performance of the model. This means that anyone is able to contribute to the development of PCT. Anyone who is interested in learning about this theory is welcome to test it and suggest changes. The only criterion is that the changes you suggest improve the performance of the model in terms of its ability to duplicate the phenomenon it is a model of.

The fact, therefore, that Glasser thought changes to PCT were appropriate could never have been a problem. PCT theorists welcome and are excited by changes that improve the model. Improvements such as these can often clarify important aspects of behavior that were previously misunderstood. Glasser was certainly welcome to suggest changes to PCT. In fact, given that Glasser has degrees in chemical engineering, clinical psychology, and psychiatry (Glasser, 1965) he would be well credentialled to participate in the model building activities that are undertaken to test and improve PCT. The problem is not that Glasser has suggested changes, the problem lies in the kind of changes Glasser suggested and his criteria for suggesting them.

The diagrams provided to explain both PCT and choice theory are good examples of the difference between a theory where the standard is accuracy and a theory where the standard has to do with personal beliefs and ease of understanding. In PCT, a diagram such as the one provided by Powers (1973, p. 58) is regarded as the first stage in building something that works. Every box in the diagram “represents something that can be objectively determined by normal scientific procedures.” (Powers, 1973, p. 57). In this regard, Powers’ (1973) diagrams can be thought of as analogous to a plan for a house. The purpose of a housing plan is to outline the specifications of a structure that can be built. When drawing a housing plan, there are obvious conventions that need to be followed in terms of the symbols that are used to represent certain physical features. Also, the person drawing the plan is constrained in particular ways as to where he or she places certain lines or symbols. Drawing a window on the floor, for example, would not make sense to someone who was charged with the responsibility of building a physical structure from the drawing. Since building a physical model is the ultimate intention of PCT theorists, they too are constrained in certain ways with the types of diagrams they draw. They are not free, for example, to place boxes and arrows wherever they like. They are only able to place boxes and arrows in ways that can be translated into building something that works.

These kinds of constraints, however, do not appear to exist for Glasser’s diagram. It is doubtful that the symbols and figures used in this diagram represent physical objects. Rather, decisions about the kinds of figures to use and also which colors to include seem to have been guided more by principles of aesthetics than standards of accuracy. Similarly a person who wished to draw a picture of a “dream house” or
a futuristic dwelling and had no desire to actually build the structure would be much less constrained in what he or she drew than a person who wanted to be able to live in the structure that his or her drawing represented.

Again, whether or not these differences are important to you will depend on your own preferences. Is a standard of building something that works better than a standard of personal beliefs or aesthetics? There is no objective way of answering that. It is highly likely, however, that phenomena will be better understood by learning about models that work than they will be learning about someone's personal beliefs.

This is a profound difference between the two theories. Why does PCT have components such as reference and perceptual signals? Because the inclusion of these signals into the model makes the model perform more like the phenomenon that is being explained than it would perform without these signals. Conversely, we could ask why does choice theory have components such as basic needs? The answer is because Glasser believes there are basic needs. Regardless of how sensible this belief may be, until it is subjected to testing through a procedure like model building, it remains a personal belief. History is replete with logical and intuitive ideas that were found inadequate and inaccurate when subjected to testing for verification. Is the idea of basic needs one of these inadequate or inaccurate ideas? At the moment we have no way of answering this question.

The differences I have just described relate to another subtle yet just as significant difference. In choice theory, the words that are used to teach the theory are an important consideration. I have already illustrated how Glasser (1998) believes that the theory must be easy to teach and easy to understand. Glasser (in Wubbolding, 2000, p. 58) also expressed a clear dislike for the term control "I always disliked that name of the theory, 'control theory'." Also, Glasser and Wubbolding (1995, in Wubbolding, 2000, p. 165) demonstrate the importance they ascribe to the correct words when they state "In formulating the principles of reality therapy, a conscious decision was made to use easily understood words." Consequently, choice theory and reality therapy are described with words that are familiar and easy to listen to such as "basic needs", "quality world", "pictures", "wants", "scales", and "behavioral suitcase" (Glasser, 1998; Wubbolding, 2000).

In PCT, however, the name of the term is of secondary importance compared to a description of how it functions in the model. Calling something a "comparator", for example, is not as important as being able to describe that this is the place where the reference signal is compared to the perceptual signal and an error signal is produced. It is the place where "r - p = e" takes place. This kind of description is almost entirely nonexistent in choice theory. One exception occurs when Wubbolding (2000, p. 159) explains the relationship between actions and feelings and claims that "changing actions = changing feelings (CA = CF)." Elsewhere, however, Wubbolding (2000) indicates that the relationship between actions and feelings and changes in the two might not be equal. He states "It is as though a person has a range of behaviors layered in a suitcase with a handle attached to the action component. Beneath are thinking, feeling, and physiology. Grabbing the suitcase by the handle is the best way to move it from one place to another." (p. 108). "The entire suitcase is controlled by the handle..." (p. 124), "...feelings are not discussed as causes of actions..." (p. 126), and "feelings will change as a direct result of a change in actions." (p. 126). These descriptions by Wubbolding (2000) seem to indicate that CA = CF is an incorrect way of conceptualizing the problem since the equation in this form implies that both sides are the same. As with the equation $2 + 2 = 4$, you could use either side of the equation to get to the other. Wubbolding (2000), however, has stated that you can use the CA side to get to CF but not the other way around. Hence it would appear to be a misrepresentation to depict this relationship with an "equals" sign.

This kind of discrepancy would be far less likely to occur if a model building approach was taken. In a model building approach, it is necessary to describe the function of each component of the model and how each component relates to other components. In this approach, a simple relationship like CA = CF could be clarified. This is the approach that is taken in PCT. In PCT, then, while accurate and clear communication is considered important, accuracy and clarity are achieved by specifying concepts and relationships through model building. Once people understand the function of a component of the theory and how it operates in the model, then it doesn't matter so much what it is called. When Glasser (2000, in Wubbolding 2000) alluded to Powers not believing in needs, it may well have been that Powers simply requested a demonstration of how something called a "need" functioned and how inclusion of this particular "thing" would improve the performance of the model before he felt it necessary to consider it as an important concept.

While the way in which these theories were constructed and developed is an important difference and has direct implications for other differences that exist, it may not be the most dramatic difference. Perhaps the most significant difference lies in what they are both theories of. It is this difference that I will now address.

At a very general level, it could be argued that both theories are theories of what people do. It is at this point, however, that the similarities end. What people do according to choice theory is behave, and this behavior is chosen. As Glasser (1998) describes "we choose everything we do" (p. 3), "we can only control our own behavior" (p. 98), and "we choose all our actions and thoughts" (p. 4). In Wubbolding (2000, p. 31) Glasser states "all we can do from birth to death is behave, that we choose all behavior that attempts to satisfy our needs, and that all behavior should be considered total behavior. Total behavior is always made up of four components: acting, thinking, feeling, and the physiology that accompanies our actions, thoughts, and feelings."

In choice theory then, perhaps not surprisingly, the process of "choosing" seems to be of ultimate importance. Despite this, it is difficult to find an unambiguous definition of the term "choice", nor of the process that this word label might be representing. Wubbolding (2000) describes choice as "a behavior that directly effects the external world." (p. 21), and also states that choice means "that the behavior is generated from within the person for the purpose of need satisfaction." (p. 67). Choice theory therefore, seems to have been developed to promote the idea that the origins of behavior are internal. Wubbolding (2000, p. 165) reflects this when he states " 'Control theory' became 'choice theory' in
order to emphasize the internal origin of human behavior and because the word ‘control’ has too many negative meanings and is easily misunderstood.

The central idea in choice theory seems to be that behavior is internally generated. Glasser (1998) in fact discusses creating an internal control psychology. He says “Choice theory is an internal control psychology; it explains why and how we make the choices that determine the course of our lives.” (Glasser, 1998, p. 7). The idea of control, however, still seems to be present in Glasser’s teachings despite the change in name, and it is clear that in choice theory it is behavior that is controlled. References to control of behavior are common as are notions of behavior being generated or driven (e.g., “We have almost total control over our actions and thoughts...”), Glasser, 1998, p. 74. “...the only behavior we can control is our own.”, Wubbolding 2000, p. 66, and “...all persons generate behaviors in order to fulfill human needs.”, Wubbolding, 2000, p. 67. In summary, choice theory seems to assert that humans control their behavior. The behavior is generated in order to satisfy internal needs.

In constructing choice theory then, Glasser can be thought to have preserved the status quo of the life sciences with regard to notions about behavior. Control of behavior is a common axiom throughout modern psychology. The only difference between separate schools in psychology may well be the proposed causes of the observed behavior. As is generally accepted, behaviorists posit that the causes of behavior are external to the organism. Cognitivists, on the other hand, point to internal factors as the causes of behavior. Choice theory fits comfortably into the cognitive school of psychology.

Choice theory also maintains the status quo of psychology with its notion of causality. It is clear that choice theory is based on the notion of linear cause and effect. Statements such as “The answering of the phone as well as healthy or unhealthy adult behavior are both fundamentally caused by a current unmet need and more proximately by specific wants.” (Wubbolding, 2000, p. 2), “behavior is seen as internally caused” (Wubbolding, 2000, p. 67) and Wubbolding’s (2000) description of “wants as the proximate trigger for all behavior.” (p. 130), seem to clearly indicate that behavior is considered to be at the end of a cause/effect sequence with some internal force being at the beginning of the sequence.

In summary, choice theory generally appears to explain behavior as being internally caused by five needs. I say generally because there are some deviations from this as when Wubbolding (2000) writes that “behavior serves a purpose, which is to close the gap between what a person wants and what a person has at a given moment.” (p. 21) and “behavior, including actions, thinking, and even feelings such as loss and grief, originate in the gap or difference between what a person wants and what one receives from the world.” (p. 168). Here then, it appears that it is “the gap” that is the generator of behavior rather than the need. I will return to this point later but for now it seems sufficient to conclude that in this instance the only change that has occurred is in the location of the internal stimulus. The fundamental notion of behavior being at the end of a linear causal chain has been retained. According to choice theory then, what people do is behave and this behavior is caused by some internal force such as a need or a “gap”.

PCT represents a radical departure from the ideas outlined above. The principles of PCT are unusual and initially counterintuitive. PCT does not fit anywhere into existing schools of thought regarding behavior. For these reasons, it can be a difficult theory to understand. Once understood, however, if accuracy of understanding is important, the tenets of this theory are compelling and well worth the effort taken to understand them.

At its core, PCT proposes that what living things do is control. Life, in fact, is considered to be a process of control. Control is the natural phenomenon that occurs when constancy is maintained in the midst of change. Powers (1973), defines control as “Achievement and maintenance of a preselected perceptual state in the controlling system, through actions on the environment that also cancel the effects of disturbances.” (p. 283). All living things from self-replicating molecules to human beings control. To live is to control. Keeping your trees pruned is a control process. Adjusting the water temperature in the shower is a control process. Maintaining your physical appearance is a control process. Building a career you are proud of is a control process.

While developing PCT through the process of model building, Powers discovered that when living things control, what they control is an internal signal. In PCT, these internal signals are called “perceptions” (Powers, 1973, p. 286). What living things do then is control perceptions. This process of perceptual control involves perceiving, comparing, and acting (Powers, 1998, p. 3). In order to control an internal perceptual signal Powers realized that the means by which the signal was created had to vary (Powers, 1973, 1998). That is, the output of the living thing – what traditionally might be called behavior – must be allowed to vary in order to keep the perception right. “Right” in this instance is determined by another internal signal called a reference signal. The process of control then involves varying behavioral output in order to keep perceptual input matching the reference signal. According to PCT then, behavior is not controlled, perceptions are.

This simple notion has resulted in the isolation of PCT within the crowd of theories of living things. There really is no other explanation quite like it. As far as the PCT story goes, living things do not control or regulate their behavior. They don’t even choose their behavior. All living things do is control their perceptual signals which are the effects of their behavior. The only things that living creatures ever know or are ever aware of are their own individual perceptions. Living things can never know a world beyond their perceptions. While we might accept that there is a common “something” out there beyond our senses, we only ever know it by the way it is represented in our perceptions. We can never even act on the external world. All we can act on are our perceptions.

Wubbolding (2000), on occasion, seems to indicate some appreciation of the idea that we only “know” perceptions. He states “perceptions are our inner reality” (Wubbolding, 2000, p. 24) and “...we only know the world through our perceptions...” (Wubbolding, 2000, p. 134). At other times, however, he writes “Control refers to aligning the external world with what we want...” (Wubbolding, 2000, p. 2); “We fulfill our wants in the real world...” (Wubbolding, 2000, p. 19) and “In seeking to control our behavior and to shape the world around us...” (Wubbolding, 2000, p. 24). The
dissonance created by these statements is distinct. If we only know the world through our perceptions, then our perceptions are the world. We do not, therefore, align the external world with anything because we cannot access the external world. If we are able to access the external world and align it with something, then it is clearly not the case that we only know the world through our perceptions. This kind of incongruity may not have arisen if choice theorists had relied on model building rather than ideas and beliefs to develop their theories.

Earlier I mentioned a similar discrepancy when in choice theory it is discussed on some occasions that behavior is caused by needs and on other occasions that it is caused by a gap between what we want and what we have (Wubbolding, 2000). Again, this kind of inconsistency could be examined through a model building approach. Is behavior caused by needs, is it caused by the gap, or is it caused by a combination of the two? By specifying needs and gaps in such a way that models could be built, a choice theorist would have the opportunity to clarify what seems to be an important issue. If behavior is caused by something it would seem necessary to be clear about what that something was.

Another disparity of ideas is demonstrated when it is explained what a control system does (Wubbolding, 2000). When explaining the origins of choice theory, Wubbolding (2000) claims that control theory "states that the human brain functions like a control system such as a thermostat, which seeks to regulate its own behavior (furnace or air conditioning) with the desired result of changing the world around it." (p. 10). Once again, if Wubbolding (2000) had explored this idea with a working model, he would have discovered the inaccuracy in what he writes. Thermostats do not regulate nor control their behavior. Thermostats have the equivalent of a perceptual signal which is a continuous representation of the temperature that is being sensed. It is this signal that the thermostat regulates or controls. It varies its output in order to keep the signal that represents the sensed temperature matching some internally specified temperature. By doing this, it controls this internal signal. The heating or cooling of the room occurs as a by-product of the thermostat controlling its own internal signal. A thermostat that controlled or regulated its behavior in terms of its output would not "work" in the way that we know thermostats to work. Living things, and objects that mimic living things, control their perceptions, not their behavior. The behavior that we observe in others results as a by-product of people controlling their internal perceptual signals. Behavior is the control of perception.

A simple activity may demonstrate these concepts to you. While reading these words, take the time to clench one of your hands into a fist...Did you do it? This would be regarded by most people as a simple action that any able-bodied person could do in a jiffy. Now for the interesting part. Think carefully. How did you go about creating the fist that you now see before your eyes? I'm not asking you to make guesses about neural signals and muscle fibers. I'm only asking you to describe your experience of "fist making". Many people say when they do this activity that they just know how to make a fist and so they simply "do it". It can be very difficult to describe just exactly what was involved. The three aspects to control that were mentioned above, however, capture succinctly the "how" of this activity. Perception, comparison, and action.

For the purposes of clarification, we could crudely classify our muscle activity as the output of our systems and our sensory information as the input to our systems. In the example above, then, it is clear that we have no knowledge of our muscle activity independent of our knowledge of sensory information. From an internal perspective, a clenched fist looks a certain way and feels a certain way. It is those sights and feelings we produce in order to create the perception of "fist". Undoubtedly there is muscle activity involved in this process, however, we do not control this activity. We control the sight and the feeling, and muscle activity occurs accordingly. Efron (1966, p. 492) elegantly captured the difficulties associated with maintaining the belief that we control behavior when he stated: "In the course of any action many muscles are contracted in a complex temporal sequence. We have no voluntary control over the contraction of each muscle, over the action potentials in the nerve fibers, the excitatory and inhibitory potentials at each of the millions of neural membranes, or the biophysical actions at the neuromuscular junction. We do not decide, 'Now I will contract the triceps, then the supinator, and finally contract the biceps while relaxing the triceps.' We do decide, 'Now I will pick up the paper,' Any voluntary control which we can be said to have over the actions of our muscles follows indirectly from the conscious choice of the purpose of the movement and the decision to initiate the movement. The subsequent series of automatized actions of nerves and muscles is the means by which this purpose is accomplished."

There is strong evidence then that we do not control our behavior. While this may seem counterintuitive at first, once the nature of living things is understood it becomes difficult to understand how the notion of behavioral control could have persisted for so long. Living things control their perceptions. Their perceptions are the only reality they know. Whereas choice theory is reported to be a theory of the functioning of the human brain (Wubbolding, 2000, p. 1), PCT is a theory of life. Anything that lives, controls. Within this process of controlling our perceptual experiences, a phenomenon that we might call "choice" may very well exist. Choice, however, would be considered to be only one small facet of the totality of the experience of living. Despite Wubbolding's (2000) claim that control theory "does not describe the role of choice in the process." (p. 2), the situation is actually the exact reverse. PCT explains choice but choice theory does not explain control. Within a framework of PCT, whatever phenomenon the word label "choice" is referring to could be tested, modeled, and more clearly understood. Within a choice theory perspective, however, control is unexplained.

The final difference I intend to highlight concerns the notion of causality. In choice theory, I have already demonstrated that the concept of linear causality prevails. As such, choice theory nests comfortably amongst the plethora of linear descriptions in the life sciences that consider behavior to be the end result of a chain of events. PCT, however, articulates the idea of circular causality. The concept of circular causality itself is not new. Dewey (1896), for example, was perhaps one of the first to challenge the notion of the simple stimulus-response reflex. He wrote "What we have is a circuit, not an arc or broken segment of a circle. This circuit is more truly termed organic than reflex, because the motor response determines the stimulus, just as truly as
sensory stimulus determines movement.” (p. 363). The contribution of PCT perhaps is to demonstrate, for what may be the first time, how circular causality occurs in living things.

The process of circular causality can be illustrated in many ways. In this paper, I will use the humble eye-blink reflex to demonstrate the wonderful and peculiar relationship causes and effects have when discussed in the context of living things.

The eye-blink reflex is instructive perhaps because of its familiarity to most people. Surely many people are aware of the “reflexive” blink that occurs when a puff of air is delivered to the eye. The eye-blink reflex is easily divided into its component parts of the air puff, which is the stimulus or cause, and the eye blink, which is the response of effect. It is commonly assumed that the stimulus (puff of air) causes the response (eye blink). I use the term “assumed” because the puff causing the blink is not something that can be observed. It is certainly the case that the puff comes before the blink. The placement of one event (a puff) before another event (a blink) is not sufficient, however, to warrant labeling the first event as the cause of the second.

In fact, the puff must have some special properties for it to even be associated with the blink in the way that is commonly understood. For a start, the puff must land on the surface of the eye. This may sound mundanely obvious but it vividly illustrates the point that it is not a puff alone that comes before a blink. Delivering a puff of air to someone’s elbow, for example, will not result in an eye-blink in any systematic way.

Also, the puff of air must be delivered to an alive eye. Puffing on a dead eye or the eye of a pet rock will not result in a blink. For a puff of air and a blink to be related, therefore, two conditions must be established. Firstly, the eye that is to blink must be alive. Secondly, the puff of air must land on the eye. When these two conditions occur, a blink will generally follow a puff of air.

Have I, therefore, identified a linear sequence of cause and effect? Hardly. I have identified two events that occur in a particular order. There are more than these two events that need to be considered, however, if the eye blink reflex is to be understood accurately. The fact that the surface of the eye is in a particular state before the puff arrives needs to be considered. Why is this important? Because the puff of air has the effect, when it lands on the surface of the eye, of drying the surface. Thus, the puff of air alters the surface of the eye. (It is only when the surface of the eye is altered that a blink is likely to follow. That is why the eye must be alive, and the puff must land on the eye surface.) The blink then comes along and restores the surface of the eye to its original condition.

What used to be thought of as a sequence of cause (puff) and effect (blink) can now be understood another way. The phenomenon that is actually observed is a blink opposing the effects of the puff. In this way, it could be said that the effect (blink) causes the effect of the cause (puff) to be eliminated. Sounds confusing doesn’t it? Such is the case when causes and effects are imposed on living things. The identification of either a cause or an effect just depends on where you start and stop your observations. The eye surface is in a particular state. A puff of air causes a change in the eye surface. The change in eye surface causes a blink. The blink causes a change in the eye surface. The sequence of causes and effects began with the eye surface and finished with the eye surface. A change in eye surface, therefore, is both the cause and the effect of behavior. The loop is closed.

Let’s try it another way. Rather than something (puff) causing something else (blink) to occur, what we have is a living thing in a particular state (a creature whose eye surface is moist), something disturbing that state (a puff of air dries out the eye surface), and the living thing acting to restore the state to its original condition (a blink restores that condition).

Why is an analysis of this kind important? Well, apart from being an accurate account of an observable act, there are some other reasons I can think of. Firstly, it is clear from this description that it is not the puff of air that causes the blink to occur. Nor is it the particular state of the eye surface that causes the blink. It is both the condition of the eye surface and the puff occurring simultaneously that result in a blink. One can therefore not look solely at either internal or external factors to explain observable actions.

Also, it is evident from this example that the particular actions being discussed are not crucial from the perspective of the behaving creature. In the example of the eye blink “reflex”, what is important is the moisture level of the eye surface not the blink. There are probably numerous ways to maintain an appropriate moisture level on the surface of the eye. If someone’s ability to blink was impaired, it is not hard to imagine that he or she would invest in eye drops or perhaps a water spray to keep his or her eye surface moist. Also, to prevent puffs of air from reaching the surface of the eye, it is easy to see that someone could turn his or her head, or put a hand over his or her eye, or don sunglasses. The point is, to understand the person’s behavior it is important to gain some appreciation of what effect he or she is trying to produce. Helping the person to become a better blinker in the absence of continued air puffing would probably become irritating to the person.

From a PCT perspective then, the notion of causes and effects is replaced by the notion of the maintenance of perceptual experiences in preferred states. Someone who was helping other people and who did not understand PCT might try to identify and manipulate either internal or external effects in order to produce particular behavioral effects. A helper who understood PCT, however, would seek to understand the states that the people he or she was helping were experiencing in keeping perceived experiences in preferred states and the helper would endeavor to assist these people to create the experiences the people intend.

Although the eye blink sequence may sound simple, from a PCT perspective, the processes involved in this simple behavior are exactly the same processes that occur for any behavior. The particular state of the eye surface is specified internally. This internal specification functions the same way that more complex specifications function such as the specification about the state a loving relationship should be in. The puff of air alters the state of the eye surface in the same way that your lover being late for a romantic dinner might disturb your perceived state of a loving relationship. Blinking has the
effect of restoring the state of the eye surface, and calling your lover's mobile telephone may provide you with information that will restore the state of your loving relationship to its previous condition.

There is perhaps another opportunity at this point to compare specific aspects of the two theories. Earlier, I mentioned the term "reference" which in PCT is an internal signal that specifies what is to be perceived. The reference signal can be thought of as a goal or perhaps an expectation or specification. Again, what is important in PCT is not what it is called but how it functions. People may, at times, equate the reference signal in PCT with the concept of needs in choice theory. While these concepts may sound similar, however, they have very different functions as they are explained in the two theories. In PCT, a reference is a specification about what is to be experienced. Powers states "the final effect produced by one of these causal loops was determined not by the environment, but by something we are calling a reference condition, something inside the person that defines a particular state of a perception and sets it up as a target or an intention against which perceptions are to be matched." (Powers, 1998, pp 15-16). In PCT then, if a reference generates anything at all, it generates a perception. This is very different from the choice theory concept of needs generating behavior.

Once again, the differences between the theories are clear. In PCT, the role of a reference is defined in terms of how it functions in the model. Understanding how a component functions in the model is considered important. In choice theory, however, how a need actually goes about the business of generating behavior is not articulated. How are needs functionally related to quality worlds and how are quality worlds functionally related to the behavioral car that is used in choice theory to represent total behavior? These relationships are not specified in choice theory. Perhaps if these relationships had been explored through a working model, the fallacy of linear causality and the implications of this fallacy for any explanation of living things would have been discovered.

The simple notion of circular causality represents a major departure for PCT from other explanations of living. Living things control. That is the beginning, the middle, and the end of the story. When living things learn, they are learning to control perceptual experiences. When living things flourish, it is because they control perceptual experiences successfully. When living things flounder, it is because of disruptions to the control of perceptual experiences. Human problems are problems of control.

What then are the differences between choice theory and PCT? Choice theory is a description of the beliefs of one man. PCT is a set of principles derived through model building. Choice theory requires you to believe or to accept on faith the principles it espouses. PCT requires you accept the results produced by working models and invites you to contribute to the development of the theory by building models of your own to test. Choice theory contends that what people do is control or choose their behavior. Behavior is generated in order to satisfy five basic needs. Behavior is caused by unmet needs. Causality in choice theory is linear. People act on the external world in order to meet their needs. PCT posits that what living things do is control their perceptions. Behavior is one part of a continual process of simultaneous causes and effects.

Causality in PCT is circular not linear. Behavior occurs as a by-product of living things creating and maintaining intended perceptual experiences. Living things do not know nor have access to a world beyond their perceptions.

This is a summary of my current understanding of the differences between the two theories. There may be more differences that those I have listed. My intention was to highlight the differences I consider to be the most salient and the most relevant for practitioners. Do these differences matter? This question can only be answered by individual readers depending on how clear they want to be about what they do.

According to PCT, however, successful reality therapists are not successful because they have helped people achieve greater control of their behavior. Wubbolding (2000) states for example, “When clients gain clear, more effective, and explicit control of actions and thinking, all components...work more harmoniously.” (p. 108). To the extent that reality therapists help clients experience harmony, it is not because these clients have gained “clear, more effective, and explicit control of actions and thinking”. People could not control their actions even if they wanted to. People only ever control their perceptions. To the extent then that people experience harmony it is because they are successfully controlling perceptual experiences.

To return then to the issue of whether or not the differences matter, the answer can best be answered perhaps by another question. How important is it to you to know what you are doing? If PCT is an accurate description of the activity of living, then reality therapists do not help people change behavior to satisfy needs. Is it important to you to know what you are really doing when you are doing reality therapy? What you are really doing from a PCT perspective is helping people control perceptual experiences more effectively. Knowing what you are really doing when you are doing reality therapy might help you become better at doing it, if that’s what you want to do. Rather than chasing rainbows by assuming you are changing behavior or satisfying needs, you might seek to understand the perceptions the people you work with have difficulty controlling. With this understanding, you might spend time exploring ways you can help these people control their perceptual experiences more satisfactorily.

This paper has been my attempt at clarifying some of the differences between choice theory and PCT and exploring the implications of these differences for practitioners. It has not been my intention to criticize or judge but merely to illustrate. In some ways, perhaps the most defensible conclusion to reach is that it is not legitimate to compare PCT and choice theory in their current forms. PCT is a description of the phenomenon of control that is expressed in precise, quantitative terms that allows testing through model building. Choice theory is the articulate and engaging expression of one man’s ideas about the way in which behavior is produced. Many people would surely agree it would not make sense to compare a well-written adventure novel with a report on the discovery of penicillin. In the same way then, it seems reasonable to conclude that the disparate forms in which PCT and choice theory are expressed severely compromises any sensible comparison between the two. This conclusion, however, might not have been reached without first examining the principles of both theories.
I find choice theory an interesting account of one man’s ideas about people. When working with others, however, I require more than interesting ideas. Again, this is not a criticism, just a statement of personal preference. To maximize the effectiveness of the work I do, I want to ensure that I am informed by the most accurate understanding available. PCT, as an explanation of the phenomenon of control that has been empirically verified through testing by model building, is currently peerless in the life sciences. PCT is an elegant, articulate, and functional expression of what living things do. By understanding this theory, I consider that I will be well placed to help people do what they do more successfully should my help be requested. Perhaps, just as importantly, I will be able to understand more clearly what I am doing when I am helping people. With this understanding, I may be able to do what I do more effectively as well. There may be some of you who think similarly. For those of you to whom this applies, I offer this paper. It may be of some assistance to you in the work that you do.

References

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Variations by gender between children and adolescents on the four basic psychological needs

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Kristen Retter

ABSTRACT

This study compares the profiles of 402 children and adolescents aged 8 through 16 on the Basic Needs Survey, which assesses the relative strength of Glasser's four psychological needs (Fun, Freedom, Power and Control, and Love and Belonging). Young girls expressed a higher need for Love and Belonging, and lesser need for Fun than young boys. Adolescents expressed a higher need for Freedom and a lower need for Power and Control than latency-aged children. The present study demonstrates developmental and gender differences in drives to meet the basic psychological needs depicted by Glasser. These differences have clear implications for teachers’ curricular planning and counselors’ treatment planning. Variations in the perceived importance of psychological needs according to gender and developmental stage warrants further investigation. This research provides preliminary confirmation for seemingly contradictory psychological theories and contains a discussion of implications for education and therapy.

William Glasser attributes actions, thoughts, and feelings as attempts to meet needs for power, belonging, freedom, fun, and survival (Glasser, 1984, 1989, 1998). Although Glasser indicated that these basic needs are universal, he also indicated that individuals learn to meet these needs in specific ways. If a particular need goes unmet, or a conflict arises between needs, the unmet need drives an individual’s behavior. As yet, no investigation of gender or developmental differences in the relative strength of these needs has appeared.

Popular lore (Gray, 1992) describes the two genders as quite divergent. Men are portrayed as having strong needs for autonomy (power and control) and women are portrayed as having strong needs for affiliation (love and belonging). Psychological theories and research conflict around this dichotomous view of gender differences in autonomy and affiliation, and different theories suggest that affiliation and autonomy are acquired at different developmental stages (Harvey, 1999). Traditional psychoanalytic theory, for example, asserted that to be psychologically healthy, every person has the task of achieving an autonomous identity, independent of social roles (Bloš, 1979; Carvalho, 1992; Freud, 1953; Vannoy, 1991). A lack of autonomy, meaning dependency on affiliation, was perceived as infantile. Jung (1933) and subsequent theorists (Bem, 1983; Forisha, 1978; Heath, 1980; Kegan, 1982; and Rubin, 1983) have all indicated that both male and female maturity is characterized by the ability to demonstrate both masculine and feminine behaviors, including the capacities for autonomy, bonding, caring, and work. In contrast, Chodorow (1978) differentiated the development of the genders. She described girls’ development as characterized by increasingly differentiated levels of interpersonal relationships, while boys’ development is characterized by separation, achievement, autonomy, and individuation. Family therapists define health and maturity as autonomy, differentiation, independence, individuation, and rational decision-making for both men and women. Disengagement from the parents is seen as a major task and defines a family life cycle phase (Bowen, 1978; Minuchin, 1974; Minuchin, Rosman, & Baker, 1978).

Psycho-social theory (Erikson, 1950) indicated that the attainment of autonomy and identity in adolescence preceded the attainment of the ability to maintain intimate relationships as a young adult, yet Loevinger and Wessler (1970) described the development of autonomy as the decidedly adult fifth stage of ego development. Miller (1976, 1984) and Gilligan (1982) suggested a gender difference, and stated that women develop their identity in the context of relationships in contrast to men, who develop their identity in the context of autonomy and mastery.

Theories and research on moral development present yet another perspective. Kohlberg (1973) described the highest level of moral development as allowing others to gain autonomy while simultaneously preventing others from limiting one’s own autonomy. Gilligan (1982) contrasted female-based morality with Kohlberg’s male-based theory and found that interpersonal contexts are critical in the determination of women’s sense of self and morality. She indicated that women’s moral values are manifested in caring, consideration of others’ needs, being responsible for others, and maintaining interpersonal connections.

Significant gender differences for adults or children in various behaviors associated with autonomy, such as willingness to help others and independence, were not found by Macoby and Jacklin (1974). Cochran and Peplau (1985) did not find gender differences in the valuing of attachment, but did find that women gave more importance to maintaining autonomy than did men. Similarly, no gender differences were found by Bar-Yam (1991) in men and women’s levels of self-evolution, expressions of autonomy, and emotional attachment. Both genders expressed yearnings for autonomy and community. In contrast, other researchers have found that women scored higher than men in interpersonal relationships and lower on autonomy (Chiu, 1990; Greeley & Tinsley, 1988; Lang-Takac & Osterweil, 1992; Pollard, Benton, & Hinz, 1983).
Thus, a broad range of theory and research conflict regarding gender differences in the relative need for autonomy, power, and control compared to the need for affiliation, love, and belonging. The question posed in this study was whether needs expressed by children and adolescents on the Basic Needs Survey varied by gender and age.

**Method**

**Participants**

This study took place in a mid-sized New England city near Boston. In 1994, the total population exceeded 81,000. In 1990, the median family income was $42,666, as compared with a state median family income of $42,656 and a national median family income of $34,416 (CACI, 1991). The school district has a student population of 12,000 students – kindergarten through twelfth grade – in eleven elementary, three junior high schools, and one senior high school. The population in the schools, as well as in the city, is 95% white.

Within one junior high and one elementary school, heterogeneously grouped third, fourth, fifth, seventh, and ninth grade classes participated in a voluntary activity during routine classroom-wide guidance counseling sessions. Resultant Basic Needs Profiles completed by 402 children and adolescents in grades 3 through 9 were analyzed for differences by age and gender. To ensure confidentiality, students’ names were not placed on the profiles. The only demographic information requested was gender, grade, and age.

**Materials**

The materials used were the Basic Needs Survey (Harvey & Retter, 1995; Retter, 1991). Retter (1991) developed the Basic Needs Survey to help determine the relative strength of Glasser’s four basic psychological needs in children and adolescents. This instrument can be an effective and efficient means to rapidly assess the needs drive of referred children and adolescents before, and often in place of, lengthy psychological assessments. The Basic Needs Survey is composed of 80 student-generated items, organized into a 20-item survey with each item containing one choice for each of the four psychological needs. A sample item follows:

I would like to:

(a) go out to dinner with Mom and Dad. (love)
(b) get all the attention at a party. (power)
(c) watch a funny movie. (fun)
(d) do whatever I want to do. (freedom)

The Basic Needs Survey items were generated in focus groups of students in grades 3 through 9, and were chosen on the basis of frequent mention throughout the age range. The survey has demonstrated short term reliability of .66 to .79 in a test/re-test format, and was found to have an appropriate reading level for use at the elementary and junior high levels (Harvey & Retter, 1995).

**Data Scoring**

When taking the Basic Needs Survey, the respondent ranks the choices in each item according to perceived desirability. The total responses for each need are tallied and compared with each of the other basic needs for that individual. Possible scores for each basic need range from 80 (if a need were chosen first for all 20 items) to 20 (if a need were chosen last for all 20 items). Thus a higher score indicates decreased preference or need drive.

For purpose of analysis, students were divided into two groups, latency (grades 3 through 5) and adolescence (grades 6 through 9). Means, standard deviations, and standard errors were computed for scores on the Basic Needs Survey, the significance of group differences on the survey results were determined using factorial ANOVA.

**Results**

Results are depicted in tables 1 and 2. Girls expressed a significantly higher preference than boys for Love and Belonging \( [E (1,402) = 27.44, p < .0001] \), and boys expressed a significantly higher preference for boys that girls for Fun \( [E (1,402) = 21.37, p < .0001] \). Boys and girls expressed similar levels of need for Freedom \( [E (1,402) = .69, p = .41] \) and for Power and Control \( [E (1,402) = 2.02, p = .16] \).

The comparison of age levels revealed that adolescents expressed significantly higher preference than latency-aged children for Freedom \( [E (1,402) = 47.03, p < .0001] \) and Fun \( [E (1,402) = 9.09, p < .003] \). Adolescents expressed significantly less preference than latency-aged children for Power and Control \( [E (1,402) = 40.89, p < .0001] \) and Love and Belonging \( [E (1,402) = 13.11, p < .003] \).

Some gender differences by age level were evident. With increased age, normal girls expressed greatly decreased preference for Love and Belonging, while boys’ preference for Love and Belonging items decreased only slightly. With increased age, girls expressed a higher preference for Fun, while boys’ preference for Fun remained constant. As noted earlier, for both genders the expressed preferences for Power and Control decreased with age while the expressed need for Freedom increased.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Latency</th>
<th>Adolescence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>Boys</td>
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<td>Love</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>.91</td>
</tr>
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Note: a higher score indicates decreased expressed need.
other hand, adolescents of both genders have expressed a high need for Freedom. This focus on freedom suggests that opportunities for immediate pleasure (Fun) are likely to have a greater appeal for young boys. As they mature, these connections are likely to have a greater appeal for young girls, while curricula and methodology emphasizing opportunities for immediate pleasure (Fun) are likely to have a greater appeal for young boys. As they mature, these differences diminish, and adolescent girls are similar to adolescent boys in their expressed need for Love and Belonging as well as in their expressed need for Fun. On the other hand, adolescents of both genders have expressed a high need for Freedom. This focus on freedom suggests that curricula designed for adolescents should incorporate substantial opportunities for individual choice.

Discussion

This research provides confirmation for seemingly contradictory psychological theories. The increased interest in Freedom for both genders as children became adolescents fits with developmental theories linking an increased need for autonomy with age (Bliss, 1979; Bowen, 1978; Carvalho, 1992; Freud, 1953; Minuchin, 1974; Minuchin, Rosman, & Baker, 1978; Vannoy, 1991). Similarly, the higher need for Freedom expressed by adolescents of both genders reinforces Erikson's definition of adolescence as a time not only to increase autonomy, but also to develop an individual identity (Erikson, 1950).

The higher desire for Love and Belonging expressed by girls – particularly latency-aged girls – reinforces the theories suggesting that interpersonal contexts are critical to girls (Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1976, 1984). This finding also supports previous research findings that women score higher than men in interpersonal relationships and lower on autonomy (Chiu, 1990; Gecelik & Tinsley, 1998; Lang-Takac & Osterweil, 1992; Pollard, Benton, & Hinz, 1983). While adolescent girls express much less need for Love and Belonging than latency-aged girls, their expressed need in this regard is still higher than that of adolescent boys. Thus, evidence emerged to substantiate Gilligan’s (1982) observation that interpersonal contests are critical in the determination of women’s sense of self was reinforced.

Both males and females expressed more interest in Power and Control at young ages than they did as adolescents, which may be a reflection of the lack of Power and Control that young children experience. The high need for Power and control expressed during latency reinforces Erikson’s concept of the latency-aged child’s task to successfully resolve the developmental stage of Industry vs. Inferiority, or successfully mastering skills (Erikson, 1950).

In addition to providing data that supports selected theories, these results have several implications for educational curriculum and teaching methodology. Curricula and methods emphasizing opportunities for interpersonal connections are likely to have a greater appeal for young girls, while curricula and methodology emphasizing opportunities for immediate pleasure (Fun) are likely to have a greater appeal for young boys. As they mature, these differences diminish, and adolescent girls are similar to adolescent boys in their expressed need for Love and Belonging as well as in their expressed need for Fun. On the other hand, adolescents of both genders have expressed a high need for Freedom. This focus on freedom suggests that determination of unmet needs, or conflicted needs, is integral in the application of control (choice) theory in therapy and in the development of quality school programs (Glasser, 1990). Successful interventions for children and adolescents experiencing academic or psychological difficulties would, therefore, include identifying additional methods to meet unmet needs, possibly by linking the unmet needs with activities, persons, or objects that currently meet a different need. Such linking renders the needs complementary rather than competitive (Peterson & Woodward, 1992). Hart-Hester, Heuchert, and Whittier (1989) found that students with behavior problems could be effectively trained in the principles of choice theory, learn more appropriate needs satisfying behaviors than their misbehaviors, and subsequently demonstrate more appropriate behavior. Lafontaine (1990) suggested using choice theory and considering psychological needs in the development of programs for special education students, while Davis (1993) found that the application of choice theory was an effective tool in determining the function of misbehavior for disabled children.

Overall, these findings have multiple implications for professionals. Adults should explore opportunities both to empower younger children appropriately and to enable adolescents to exercise responsible freedom. Individual results of the Basic Needs Survey may lead to the development of therapeutic strategies and to inviting students to assume more direct responsibility for their own behaviors. For example, adults often assume that a child who misbehaves in class does so to seize control, as implied in the phrase “He’s in a power struggle.” On the contrary, a misbehaving child might be attempting to satisfy any of the basic psychological needs including Love and Belonging, Fun, Power, or Freedom, in which case a more accurate expression might be, “He’s in a fun struggle.” If a child is found to have an extremely strong need for fun, interventions that find more appropriate methods to have fun would be most successful.

In general, because these needs are legitimate and appropriate, attempting to change an individual’s basic need structure is inappropriate. However, some needs, such as Love and Belonging, appear to be critical for healthy psychological growth. Children who do not want to form relationships and have minimal needs for Love and Belonging will be very difficult to teach and will find working with, and relating to, others difficult throughout their lives (Goleman, 1995). Teachers need to be able to “stretch” a child into less intense needs or drives while building a classroom structure that is fun, exciting, and full of personal challenges. Therapeutic time can be used to empower a child or adolescent to explore and increase methods to meet unmet needs. When conflicting needs are revealed, successful interventions link activities, persons, or objects that meet a different need to the unmet need. Interventions can be developed to help individuals find additional, socially acceptable methods to meet unmet needs.

This study has several limitations. First, items in particular categories on the Basic Needs Survey may not be universal experiences and would therefore result in false or invalid scores. Although the items were generated in focus groups;
and chosen on the basis of frequent mention, individual differences are possible. Most individuals find “Going to an amusement park” fun, and the variety contained in the 80 items on the scale should allow for individual needs. Yet individual differences may have affected the results.

Second, the study took place in a primarily white, midsize northeastern city. Therefore, extreme care must be made in generalizing the results to other populations. Replication of this study in other locations with other cultures, ethnic and racial groups, and socio-economic classes is highly desirable.

Despite these limitations, this study has demonstrated very interesting developmental and gender differences in the drive to meet the basic psychological needs depicted by Glasser. These differences have clear implications for curriculum and treatment planning and warrant further investigation.

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Family Therapy in Transition: Choice Theory and Music

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ABSTRACT

This article describes the relationship between music and choice theory. Rap music is chosen as the medium through which the authors posit that the family therapist can improve the treatment relationship. This article is proposed as one way to view music – as a need fulfilling activity. We begin with a general overview of the role of music in therapy moving to a specific look at Rap lyrics as need fulfilling. The lyrics chosen for connection are those of Tupac Shakur, for many the quintessential rap artist.

Introduction

Music is your own experience – your thoughts, your wisdom. If you don’t live it, it won’t come out of your horn.

– Charlie Parker

Music is ubiquitous. Music is found everywhere we find life. Music can be found in the fauna and flora. The intent of this article is to initiate a discourse on the relationship between choice theory and music. Music is a key component in the drive to fulfill our basic needs. Although music may not universally be accorded the same value by all participants (listeners), many will value certain sounds or collections of sounds as more need fulfilling than others. Time, or specifically time measured by age, is the most often used interpreter to measure changes in music. Each generation seems to develop its own iteration of music. These sounds usually represent the spirit and sense of that generation. There are times when the current generation assumes the sounds of previous generations, but they may reframe these sounds for themselves. They “sample” (if you will) and use their reorganizational system to take that which exists and transfer it into a new invention.

The focus of this discourse will be the hip hop/rap music, although music in general will be briefly discussed. For the family therapist, music is an often underutilized tool. There is the specialized approach called music therapy, although the generalized therapeutic use of music seems to be limited. According to the American Music Therapy Association (AMTA) web site (www.musictherapy.org), “Music therapy is a well-established allied health profession similar to occupational therapy and physical therapy. It consists of using music therapeutically to address physical, psychological, cognitive, behavioral and/or social functioning. Because music therapy is a powerful and nonthreatening medium, unique outcomes are possible.”

Do you hear what I hear?

You’ve got to find some way of saying it without saying it.

– Duke Ellington

The first step to incorporating music into family therapy is to understand that, in order to assist others, it is necessary that you make an effort to understand the sounds that make up your own as well as their quality world (Glasser, 1998). It is through knowledge of these quality worlds that therapists discern similarities and/or differences with other systems. Self knowledge (key to self evaluation) focuses on always understanding your own reality and accepting that perceptions determine behavior (Powers, 1973).

People listen to music to fulfill a combination of physical and psychological needs. Music can indicate whom that person would like to be. It is our best attempt to match the pictures in our quality world. These external choices reflect the internal components of the quality world. Correspondence (Mickel, 1995) is a principle which describes this process. Whatever occurs internally, is reflected by what we do, externally. According to the Three Initiates (1988, p. 24), “There are planes beyond our knowing, but when we apply the Principle of Correspondence to them we are able to understand much that would otherwise be unknowable to us.” In some cultures certain songs or lyrics may carry deep symbolic meaning which can be interpreted only by the native or other observer who is familiar with such cultural systems. For those outside of these systems, the question and answer approach to understanding is required.

Basic needs

I sing about life. – Marvin Gaye

The choice to sing certain songs or listen to a type or types of music indicates peoples’ attempt to meet their needs. From the beginning of human interaction, music has been used to satisfy human desires. Although the general population would not usually equate human desires with meeting basic needs, a family therapist using choice theory could make this connection. The needs are universal, although their
behavioral manifestation may appear to be differentiated. For example to meet the survival needs, music is reflective of one's relationship with the environment. Music reflects individuals' feeling behaviors, attitude or morale. Music choices reflect psychologically based needs. Music may indicate artistic expression (freedom), or creativity (fun), which can attract favorable attention (power) and contribute to social interactions (love and belonging). Music can indicate whether or not people accept and/or join and commune within their environment (spiritual). The music one hears may sound like a cacophony until one therapeutically fits it into the need fulfilling process. Music fulfills our basic needs through various wants. The basic needs are the intrinsic motivators which can be used to explain the choice of music.

Choosing to rap

There are no wrong notes. – Thelonious Monk

There is a multi-music form which is commonly termed rap music. It is the most recent creation of the Black community (Southern, 1997). Rap reflects the rhythm of the Black community through song. It is a work in process which stands on the shoulder of previous creative progress.

The roots of rap are planted in the soil of the educational and spiritual practices of the traditional African collective. The “call and response” that is a significant component of African historical educational practices places the teacher or preacher in the position of making a statement (call) and expecting critique (response) from the student body or congregation. This is the root of the multi-music form known as rap. According to Bowman (2001, p. 1), “The rap often uses a call-and-response format typical of much African American music. The wordplay in a rap is rooted in African and African American verbal games, known as the dozens ad signifying. Precursors of rap who drew upon the same wordplay traditions include the Jamaican toasters (Djs, also known as dub artists, who talk over recorded music) of the late 1960s and 1970s, African American radio Djs from the 1940s through the 1970s, and Black American poets of the 1960s including the Last Poets and the Watts Prophets.” This music has many critics as well as proponents. The critics are often the older adults and the proponents are often teenagers and young adults (BET/NBC Survey, 2001).

Rap is a wide ranging multi-musical form. Rap music ranges from gospel rap to the "hardcore" gangsta style with many degrees between. The groups/individuals that participate in the musical form are as different as the styles. Historically, rap songs were but one instrument in the battle for autonomy from the perceived oppressor (Southern, 1997). The young perceived parents and other elders as oppressive because they fail to understand their wants. Whether it was the traditional folk songs, patriotic song or the spiritual, there was a message in the music. Rap is a radical method by which many artists expressed personal feelings and their criticism of outsiders as oppressors, and within which their need for a frame of secrecy could be expressed.

Rap is a universal language which connects many generations, from those who listen to KRS-ONE to those who listen to Jay-Z. Rap music connects many. It takes us (those who appreciate the music) away from our reality into the world or mind of someone else. Rap music is so powerful that it can influence those who have “weak minds.” Many don’t listen to the actual lyrics but to the hook, which is a repetitive statement, and to the beat which gives the song power. In one generation (under 25), the lyrics are lost because many repeat the lyrics to a song without actually knowing what they are really saying.

For some members of the musical listening communities, rap music is need fulfilling. This music has therapeutic implications. According to Elligan (2000, p. 28), “Considering the ubiquitous presence of rap and hip hop in the lives of young African American men, psychotherapists who work with this population should become familiar with constructive ways to utilize these stimuli in the interest of treatment.”

Rap’s multi-music is exemplified in the works of Tupac Shakur. According to Michael Eric Dyson, Tupac Shakur’s life represented a “deflection of death.” (Booknotes, 2001). He has expressed the basic needs in both sounds and lyrics. It has been noted that Tupac Shakur sold six million albums during his life but 22 million after his death. He is an excellent example of how music can be parsed and seen as reflective of need fulfillment. He is revered by many because of his talent and his willingness to show vulnerability to a population that is also talented and vulnerable. Michael E. Dyson, responding to questions by Brian Lamb (Booknotes, 2001), describes the complicated life to Tupac Shakur:

As he grew up, his mother became addicted to crack cocaine. As a result of her addiction to crack cocaine, Tupac suffered a series of, shall we say, you know, domestic setbacks. He went from home to home. He was homeless. By the time he was 13, he had lived in 20 different places. He went on to become a serious actor, joining the 127th Street Ensemble in New York, where he performed the part of Travis in “A Raisin in the Sun,” the play by Lorraine Hansberry, for Jesse Jackson’s 1984 campaign. So early on, he enjoyed the spotlight and enjoyed his comradery with these famous black figures.

He went on to leave New York at about the age of 15, moved to Baltimore with his mother and became a member of the Baltimore School of Arts there, which is a very renowned school. And he was an enormously gifted actor. Everybody there says he was tremendous. Even in a school that was known for its extraordinary thespian talent, he stood out because of his spookiness, because of his intensity, because of his mastery of his craft. He also studied ballet and art, began to write poetry, began to rap a bit, met the actress that would eventually become Jada Pinkett Smith, who became one of his close friends; moved from there at age 17 to Marin City in California, and there attended what they call Mount Tam High School, one of the elite schools in a very, very nicely sequestered school district there and was known also for his acting, but become disillusioned with school because it no longer fit his view of the world. And his view of the world was, ‘I’m a young black person trying to struggle for an authentic identity and to articulate my viewpoints about the world, and it’s not being supported in school.’ So he became a rapper after that.
Tupac played a positive and negative role in rap music. He was a great artist who changed the rap world forever. He did this by making controversial music such as songs which would uplift his people and also songs which touched on areas others were afraid to rap about. His music also had a negative effect because at times he would not follow his great abilities and thought but would follow the wave and just be like the rest of the rappers in the industry. He changed the music “game” because he was not afraid to be different but kept it the same in some respects because at times he would perform on a level lower than his true abilities.

What follows are the authors’ perceptions of the correlation of several musical lyrics (Tupac’s Greatest Hits, 1998) with the basic needs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rap Lyrics</th>
<th>Co-Author’s Interpretation</th>
<th>Basic Needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Still I rise</td>
<td>We all die, and when it is one’s time to go we should accept it rather than fight it because death is something which will come to us all. It is a part of life.</td>
<td>Survival/Spiritual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please give me to the sky and there I die</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t want you to cry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you can make it through the night there’s a brighter day</td>
<td>This means that even when adversity strikes one should never look down but attempt to look up because at the end of the darkest tunnel is a little light.</td>
<td>Power/Survival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everything will be alright if ya hold on</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s a struggle everyday, gotta roll on</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We gotta make a change</td>
<td>It is time for Black people to come together as one. Let us change our lives for the better.</td>
<td>Freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s time for us as a people to start makin’ some changes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let’s change the way we eat, let’s change the way we live and let’s change the way we treat each other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let me serenade the streets of LA</td>
<td>Enjoy yourself. Party. An anthem for California.</td>
<td>Fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Oakland to Sacktown</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bay Area and buck down</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calif is where they put the mack down</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To the Lord I’m eternal</td>
<td>I’m resting in peace. Even though I am not here those whose life I’ve touched, Lord please watch over them and those to come.</td>
<td>Love and belonging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resting in peace</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please take care of all my seeds</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And my unborn child</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rap music can be used to communicate a perception of economic, political, social, religious power. Rap music can be used to communicate political power when it is perceived as reflecting or giving rights to the singers which are congruent with the views of their community of listeners. Families play major roles in transmitting these social-cultural values to the younger generation, by teaching standards that are compatible with the family status within the social system. The role of the family therapist is to work within the socially constructed (Mickel and Liddie-Hamilton, 1998) environment to assist families move to responsible need fulfilling behaviors.

**Intervention**

*Work hard, study, get your mind right.* — Tupac

The role of the family therapist, using choice theory, is to determine the sounds which are need fulfilling. What are the sounds of power, fun, freedom, love and belonging, survival, spirituality? What are the sounds that soothe the soul and reflect a spiritual dimension? Once these sounds are discerned, we posit that family therapists will be able to maximize intervention.

Music represents each of the basic needs. The authors postulate that the quality world is not a silent place. There are sounds in our quality world that reflect these basic needs. According to Bates (1998, p. 2), “Listening to any kind of music helps build music-related pathways in the brain. And music can have positive effects on our moods that may make learning easier.” It is important to continue the discourse that it is a place of sounds expressed through rhythm. Music begins and ends with rhythm. Therapy begins and ends with rhythm. According to Chandler, (1999, p. 37), “The principle of rhythm explains the cycles of life, the truth that everything has a tide-like ebb and flow.” Effective therapeutic intervention has a rhythm. When one watches master therapists, there is a rhythm to the process. They seem to have a timing (quality management) which is on time, every time, all the time. And the helper and helped are in time and space together. This is rhythm. In order to discern rhythm, you must not only listen but you must hear the music.

For many, the physical pleasure of music is in part a function of the psychological processes. Music that is physically non need fulfilling is rejected by the listener. The therapist must remember that the physical is not separate from the psychological, and that the needs are interconnected and interdependent. The connectivity of the needs is reflected in the musical choices that exemplify this need fulfillment.

Therapeutic intervention begins with the design of the healing space which is used to conduct education, training and development as well as therapy. It is not the lyric that the therapist should focus upon but the perception of the listener that the music is of value. The valuing filter (Mickel, 1995) provides one baseline for interpreting the quality world of the listener. What are the sounds inherent to the environment that can be construed as music? Music matches different sounds (auditory pictures) for each family. As a family therapist, are you creating sounds which are in the final analysis significant to the family. What is the intent of music, whether vocal or instrumental? Even more important is the questioning of silence that must be addressed. What is the intent of silence? We take the position that the structure of the environment should be chosen. If you choose silence, what are you intending to communicate? After answering these questions, the next step is to use the skills of the family therapist to intervene and support the change process.

The therapist can begin the treatment process with an understanding that music is a form of (verbal and non verbal)
behavior. The therapist in the interview should begin the discourse on the meaning of music as communicative. Have counselors search for values system, basic needs in the lyrics – understand it is the beat (rhythm). Many young people will say I like the “Beat”. Understand that it is the beat. The beat inherently attaches itself to the rhythm. The authors posit that these behaviors are the observable (auditory) manifestation of our best attempt to meet our basic needs. The therapist who can, with the assistance of the family, learn to properly interpret music as manifestations of meeting basic needs can be more effective. The authors present their perceptions based upon experience and practice. Music is in the Quality World. The Quality world is that specific place in our memory that is filled with specific sounds which satisfy one or more of the basic needs. It should be noted that people may have different perceptions from the therapist. The only certain method for understanding is to communicate. In order to effectively communicate one must inquire for clarity. The following process is proposed as one method to develop a shared picture between the practitioner and client:

1. Allow the young person to select the lyrics
2. Ask for his/her interpretation of the lyrics
3. Correlate their interpretation with one or more basic needs,
4. Develop a plan (Mickel, 1993)

Conclusion

A family’s perception of the real world may be reflected in their choice of music. The total environment influences music choices. Understanding why some people may choose to sing specific songs can add to the understanding of the impact of cultures, values, attitudes and personality traits on the total environment. Musical choosing behaviors are especially influenced by culture and ethnic variance. For example, culture often dictates the type of popular music used to identify a particular group, subgrouping of their special celebrations. People within cultures recognize and identify with their prescribed vocal and instrumental requirements, act or react to these, based on personality preference and choice. According to Mickel and Liddie-Hamilton (1998, p. 97) “It is impossible to encode without understanding culture. It is impossible to encode without understanding the total environment.” A basic tenet of systems theory is communication. The foundation for our understanding of musical communication is based in our understanding of total behavior and systems theory. The family is a system. The family therapist works for change within the system.

Therapists must learn to encode as well as decode the quality world of those with whom they work. It is impossible to decode without understanding culture. It is impossible to encode without understanding the totality of the environment. Music is one of the essential communicative components of most environments. Therapists need to understand both intrinsic as well as extrinsic contributions. Both are necessary for effective communication. Therapists, if they are to be effective, need to investigate the culture (community frame of reference) of those we choose to assist in the move to responsible choices (Mickel, 1993).

The focus of this article from the authors’ perspective was to continue the discourse on transitions in family therapy. Specifically, the focus was choice theory and music. We addressed this using the multi-music form rap. Our position is that it is imperative that family therapists work within the real world. Rap is an established component of the real world. Effective reality therapists must include music in the healing process. Our intent was to provide one method which can be used to accomplish this task. In the final analysis, music is ubiquitous.

References


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