

An Overview of Systemic Therapy/“A pathway through the landscape of theory”

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A Landscape of Theory

Model	Authors	Concepts	Skills/ techniques	View of change	Comments
Cybernetics	Bateson & Mental Health Institute (Haley, Watzlawick, Beavin, Weakland, Jackson Based on General Systems Theory (von Bertalanfy).	Metaphor of machines, of structure and flow of information-feedback loops. Self-regulation. Homeostasis. Circular Causality. Analogic and digital communication.	Working with difference and pattern . Following feedback . Using paradox to overcome ‘double bind’. Exploring symmetry & complementarity in relationships. Working with triads .	Therapist as meta to system, guiding it towards an objective, pushing against homeostatic forces.	Early work with families with schizophrenia. Emphasis on second order rather than first order change (‘learning about learning’).
Structural	Minuchin, Fishman, Colapinto Boyd Franklin Asen	Structure and hierarchy; subsystems, boundaries-enmeshed/disengaged families, alliances, triangulation. Life cycle transitions as times of stress, needing flexibility of response.	Joining Unbalancing Intensifying emotions Enactment Restructuring from ‘dysfunctional’ to ‘functional’ systems	Therapist as active facilitator/director. Originally meta-, objective, “expert”. Currently facilitative, more explicit use of self . Focus on here and now in session change.	Triangles/triads concept crosses models eg Bowen Used by some with emphasis on ‘normalising’ family relationships. Originally 1 st order cybernetic position. Currently 1 st and 2 nd order cybernetic positions.
Strategic	Haley. Madanes. Watzlawick, Weakland & Fisch. Walters, Penn Cade	Attempted solutions become the problem. Reframing. Use of paradox.	Identify redundant, stuck patterns, problematic feedback loops.. Focus on reframing, goal setting , attempted solutions. Prescribing the symptom.	Therapist a mechanic, fixing the machine. Task oriented around goals negotiated with family, so unblocking problematic patterns.	1 st order cybernetic position.

Milan	Selvini Palazolli, Boscolo, Cecchin & Prata Campbell & Draper	Focus on family beliefs & meanings Hypothesising, circularity & neutrality. Positive connotation. Paradoxical injunctions.	Hypothesizing & use of circular questions to develop experience of circularity Identifying beliefs. Intervening with end of session “prescriptions”. Use of paradox.	Therapist as neutral to change. Observing team provide ‘binocular vision’ to create difference. Change within & between sessions.	1 st order cybernetic position. Building on Batesonian ideas from a different perspective than MRI.
Post-Milan	Cecchin & Boscolo, Tomm. Campbell, Mason Burck & Daniel	Hypothesising, circularity & neutrality redefined from 2 nd order position to include curiosity.	Using curiosity , Hypothesising, using circular questioning as interventive interviewing .	Emphasis on creating meaning collaboratively. Use of self & reflexivity.	2 nd order cybernetic position. From uni-verse to multi-verse. Critique-absence of consideration of power in families.

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Brief Solution Focused	De Shazer & I.K.Berg	Solution focused: do more of what works! Exceptions. Visitor, customer, complainant categorisation.	Goal setting using miracle question . Questioning around exceptions . Scaling . Following interview structure.	More explicit search for change from family perspective.	Can be used from 1 st or 2 nd order cybernetic position.
Narrative	White & Epston	Narrative metaphor using language & meanings. Externalisation. Unique outcomes. Landscapes of experience and action. Re-authoring lives.	Scaffolding conversations . Exploring “landscapes of action”, unique outcomes . Externalisation . Internalised Other Interviewing . Outsider witnessing .	De-constructing & co-constructing stories with the family/ individual. Emphasis on social justice.	Change through new narratives. 2 nd order cybernetic position. Importance of the GRAACES and impact of wider social contexts.
Attachment & attachment narrative	Bowlby, Byng-Hall Dallos & Vetere	Attachment models; family scripts. Secure base Narrative metaphor.	Creating a ‘ secure base ’ in therapy. Exploring replicative and corrective scripts . Using openness & curiosity about family’s narratives.	Therapist using themselves as secure base to create change collaboratively. Creating coherent narratives about current and past relationships.	Attachment theory very broad-importance of keeping a systemic lens

Conversational	Anderson & Goolishian Andersen.	Meaning through linguistic systems. Problem-determined system. Reflecting teams.	Reflecting conversations more than questioning. Co-evolving solutions.	Collaborative, transparent. Reflective & reflexive conversation creates solutions.	Risk of “co-drifting”.
Communication (Co-ordinated Management of Meaning)	Pearce & Cronen Cooperrider & Whitney	Multiple levels of meaning. Highest context markers. ‘Practical’ and ‘implicative’ forces. Charmed & strange loops. Appreciative enquiry.	Exploring contexts of meaning, speaking into and out of discourses. Use of Appreciative Inquiry, LUUUUUT , Mapping meanings.	Collaborative, openness & curiosity. Being appreciative. Creating joint understanding across contexts allows change to happen.	Complexity! Some have found wordiness off-putting. Hope & inspiration!
Dialogic	Shotter, Rober Seikkula, Bertrando	Linguistic metaphors. Inner conversations. ‘Witness’. Open dialogue.	From separate monologues to joint dialogue. Creating tranquil emotional space.	Collaborative-relational stance of joint enquiry. Generative talk dissolves problem.	A model in development- building on narrative and conversational models.