

## 4

# Knowledge for Advanced Generalist Practice

## INTRODUCTION

Human beings innately want to know. They seek to understand reality. The goal of this quest may be seen as the completion of a puzzle called "truth." Theories are pieces of a puzzle that may offer a component picture of reality and, when juxtaposed with other pieces, may promote a growing understanding of the truth.

Various epistemologies explain the nature, scope, origin, and methods for acquiring knowledge. For example, according to logical empiricism, knowledge can be obtained and objectively verified through sensory data and scientific technique. The values or biases of the person conducting the inquiry can be controlled through mathematical techniques. Existentialism offers a contrasting view of knowledge, stressing the need to focus on subjective experience, living, and interactions in current reality rather than objective reasoning based on fact. Emphasis is given to the need for human beings to under-

stand self and others in their current reality and to strive for "authentic existence."<sup>1</sup>

Jurgen Habermas<sup>2</sup> brings the objective and the subjective together, combining facts with ideas. He states, "The only knowledge that can truly orient action is knowledge that frees itself from mere human interests and is based on Ideas—in other words, knowledge that has taken a theoretical attitude." He points out that facts alone do not provide knowledge. It is only through understanding of the meaning of the facts that one can begin to arrive at knowledge. In an effort to understand, researchers develop theories to compare facts and study relationships. As described by Fred Kerlinger,

A theory is a set of interrelated constructs (concepts), definitions, and proposition that present a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variables, with the purpose of explaining and predicting the phenomena.<sup>3</sup>

Theory building is a process for developing knowledge. According to Francis Turner, theory building "is a complex and intricate human activity involving the whole spectrum of our intellectual and emotional potential."<sup>4</sup> The process begins with the experiencing of a particular phenomena. The experience is then generalized and conceptualized. Relationships of concepts are considered and efforts are made to test out a "theory" about the phenomena. Results are then analyzed and operationalized.

Not all theory is verified through scientific testing of facts. Herbert Streat describes theory as "a more or less verified explanation of observed facts or phenomena."<sup>5</sup> In a broad sense, "theory" may be used to refer to knowledge derived through accumulated practice wisdom or the systematic formulation of ideas.

Theories used in helping professions may be divided into the categories of (1) theory for understanding and (2) theory for practice. Theories may also be classified as personality, political, or practice theory. The knowledge needed for effective professional social work practice encompasses a broad range of theories and extensive information about persons, problems, places, programs, and policies.

In this chapter, attention will be given to knowledge needed for advanced generalist practice. A study of the multifaceted history of theory in social work is presented as a predecessor to the comprehensive approach to theory development found in advanced generalist practice. An international perspective of advanced ecological systems theory was depicted in Chapter 2. An entire chapter was given to this dimension of knowledge because it is an essential, pervasive, theoretical perspective in advanced generalist practice. The knowledge component of social policy, national and international, for advanced generalist practice will be addressed in Chapter 8. Throughout this chapter, the meaning of knowledge in social work, advanced knowledge about person in environment, and holistic paradigms for advanced generalist practice will be explored.

### Knowledge in Social Work

In 1957, Ernest Greenwood, in his "Attributes of a Profession," stressed the need for a profession to have an identifiable body of theory that is communicable and constantly tested for relevance.<sup>6</sup> He differentiated scientific theory from practice theory, saying that "scientific theory is descriptive, practice theory is prescriptive."<sup>7</sup> Social work's body of knowledge is both descriptive and prescriptive. Max Siporin distinguishes between social work's descriptive knowledge, which is acquired from the social and behavioral sciences, and practice theory, which "prescribes action for change" and exists primarily "in the form of *practice wisdom* rather than in a codified, scientifically tested form."<sup>8</sup> Although most practice theory was based on practice wisdom in the past, there is a strong movement within the profession toward the development of scientifically tested practice theory to prescribe the actions of the "scientific practitioner."<sup>9</sup>

Several authors have addressed the need for an empirical base for practice theory in professional social work. For example, Scott Briar writes, "Intervention theories that do not lend themselves to empirical specification are of questionable value for a scientific profession."<sup>10</sup> Lawrence Shulman argues that "we are still in the early stages of building an empirically based, holistic social work practice theory." Although we often borrow empirically based theories from other disciplines that "are closely tied to prescriptions for worker interventions," Shulman points out that they may not appropriately fit social work practice because "they sometimes seem to ignore our profession's traditional concern for social policy and social justice issues that affect our clients and that underpin our professional value system."<sup>11</sup> Francis Turner describes theory building based on empirical research as "a stance still greatly neglected by our field." He writes:

In this mode, various concepts related to our field are operationally defined and tested through the formulation of hypotheses and the examination of resultant data. . . . Many more projects of this type are needed and can be expected in the next few years.<sup>12</sup>

Turner identifies a variety of different approaches that have been used to build theory in the profession. These include a study of components and concepts of processes, formulation of models and theoretical frameworks, comparative studies of theories, conceptualizations of the nature of theory and theory building, descriptions of practice approaches drawn from practice experience and reflection, efforts to develop an integrated or eclectic model of theory, and empirical research.<sup>13</sup>

Social work has been described as both an art and a science since its inception as a profession. This duality within the profession continues to be reflected in the debated approaches used to pursue knowledge and secure professional identity. A review of the history of social work reveals an interesting cyclical progression in the development of knowledge, moving from a morality

base to practice wisdom, to empirical research, to an encompassing integrated effort that accepts diversity in approaches, to a questioning of the need for any theory, to a return to and recalling of the morality of social work. Limiting the acquisition of knowledge, both descriptive and prescriptive, for the multifaceted profession of social work to any one approach may certainly be questioned. To find a holistic perspective that comprehensively reflects the duality and diversities within the profession is an ongoing challenge.

### History of Theory in Social Work

The idealism of the founders of the profession influenced the early development of thought and action in social work. Originally, the theory used in social work was based on morality. The writings of the leading spokespersons for organized charity before 1900, such as Josephine Shaw Lowell or Alexis de Tocqueville, were centered on a series of moral arguments.<sup>14</sup> In the early 1900s, social work leaders, such as Mary Richmond and Edward Devine, emphasized the value of practice wisdom as the professional knowledge base instead of the prevailing application of individual moral judgments.<sup>15</sup>

Schools of social work in the early 1900s grew out of in-service training programs of charity agencies. An early debate in the formation of the curriculum of the schools was in regard to its focus on either (1) fundamental social policy issues based on social theory with a reform orientation or (2) individual and family issues based on practice wisdom with a casework orientation. In the beginning of the New York School of Philanthropy, prior to 1912, emphasis was placed on social theory, with courses in direct practice offered only as electives. Social work, along with sociology and economics, identified with a concern for social problems and a commitment to social reform. After 1912, the influence of Mary Richmond predominated and the school developed a two-year curriculum emphasizing preparation for direct practice. In addition to knowledge about social institutions and legislation, Richmond stressed the need to know about the spiritual and physical well-being of persons as endemic to social work.<sup>16</sup>

Abraham Flexner in 1915 spoke at the National Conference of Charities and Correction in Baltimore. He disparaged the use of practice wisdom for a profession's body of knowledge, stressing the need for theoretically coherent scientific knowledge, as found in medicine.<sup>17</sup> Turning to the field of psychoanalysis in the 1920s, social workers attempted to become more scientific in their thinking as they developed the diagnostic schools of learning. Further searching for understanding and direction in practice led them to study classical behaviorism and Rankian theory. Functional schools of social work emerged in the 1930s and 1940s. Whereas Freudian theory stressed the unconscious and ego and behavioral theory focused on the conditioning of behavior, Rankian theory emphasized such concepts as the human will, relationship, and process.<sup>18</sup>

In the 1950s, social workers relied heavily on the social and behavioral sciences to develop their theory base.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, the profession encouraged the use of a variety of theoretical approaches and conceptual frameworks. Attempts were made to reconcile the diagnostic and functional schools and to move toward a more unified practice that encompassed diversity in thought and action.

In the 1960s, questions of the profession's legitimacy, status, and survival emerged. Social work educators and practitioners began to stress the need for more empirical research to validate the theoretical base of social work. Knowledge acquired through quantitative design and analysis began to be seen as superior to knowledge from practice wisdom or qualitative study. Although social work education was intrinsically tied to professional practice, pressures from outside led educators to give priority to scholarly research over teaching and service. As described in a monograph of the National Association of Deans and Directors of Schools of Social Work:

The sense of urgency regarding an augmented scholarly enterprise in social work education derives from the 1960's and 1970's, when it became clear that the profession's normal and accustomed approaches to problem solving were often not effective; that social welfare programs were at risk of losing out in the struggle for scarce societal resources unless a better case could be made for their efficacy; that the profession itself would lose its place in policymaking councils unless it had new ideas for addressing problems; and, that the mechanisms for developing, testing and disseminating practice knowledge were weak.<sup>20</sup>

In the 1980s, a major development was the integration of practice and empirical research through the use of single-system design. This research methodology is a systematic study of a single case, utilizing operationalized goals and techniques for measuring progress and outcomes. Clinical relationships are reduced to component parts for standardization and objective measurement.<sup>21</sup>

In recent years, questions have been raised about the appropriateness of relying on objective instruments and mathematical techniques to assess clinical relationships and human progress.<sup>22</sup> Followers of the critical theory of Habermas argue that empirical methods should be joined with a hermeneutic approach that reflects on the impact of motives and self interests in framing a problem and calls for a consideration of alternatives and possible reformulation of research questions.<sup>23</sup> In addition, as pointed out by Ruth Dean and Barbara Fenby, critical theory "considers humanity's ability to reflect on history to be an agent of societal change." Dean and Fenby also suggest the use of "deconstruction fiction," which questions the validity of existing structures, as a valuable theoretical position for knowledge development.<sup>24</sup> Social workers have begun to use qualitative and quantitative research techniques during practice assessment, intervention, and evaluation. This type of "multiple triangulation" is seen as providing "the tools required to get at the interactions and

transactions constituting the reality of the phenomena" that is "the heart of social work practice, a reality that is filled with concrete acts and symbolic meanings."<sup>25</sup>

Howard Goldstein questions the "underlying assumption . . . that effective or "good" practice must be rooted in an established theoretical foundation."<sup>26</sup> He proposes a "humanistic approach" to professional knowledge that emphasizes "the real-life nature of the helping experience."<sup>27</sup> In her article entitled "Social Work: A Profession Chasing Its Tail," Marion K. Sanders suggests that social work "may have gained a profession by forfeiting a mission."<sup>28</sup> Alan Keith-Lucas points out the limitations of empirical research for contributing "useful new knowledge" to practice and stresses his concern that "Social work today has virtually deserted the poor."<sup>29</sup> Several contemporary writers are encouraging the profession to recall and return to "The Moral Purposes of Social Work," which was the original basis for theory in the profession.<sup>30</sup>

It appears, therefore, that social workers have gone full circle in a cyclical progression as they consistently strive for enriched and expanded professional knowledge for understanding and direction. A variety of methods continue to be used in the pursuit of an identifiable body of theory. Practice wisdom, empirical study, existential learning, moral direction, and other approaches have all served as valuable sources for acquiring knowledge. The use of diverse methods and approaches has helped to advance knowledge and to renew the interest and commitment of professionals. As Robert Perlman and Arnold Gurin write:

While definitions and boundaries are necessary in the clarification of a professional field, they can, if used excessively, or prematurely, prevent that field from discovering its own potentialities. The diversity that now exists is an asset in enabling this field of practice to engage in experimentation and innovation.<sup>31</sup>

### *The Search for Theoretical Holism*

"Holism" is defined as "a totality in perspective, with sensitivity to all of the parts or levels that constitute the whole and to their interdependence and relatedness."<sup>32</sup> Throughout the history of social work, there has been frequent reference to the desire for a unifying theory, sometimes referred to as a macro, integrated, grand, or holistic theory. In the past, theories that have been offered as hopeful possibilities have included Lewin's Field Theory, Von Bertalanffy's General Systems Theory, Blumer's Symbolic Interactionism, or the Planned Change Theory as developed by Lippitt, Watson and Westley.<sup>33</sup> The desire for a single theoretical base for social work is understandable in the light of the vast array of theories and research studies currently used by practitioners. Students often find the extensive realm of possibilities in theory selection confusing and overwhelming.

The creation of a holistic theory that would enable a social worker to comprehend the distinctive elements of practice as they interact within the context of the whole may be a continuing quest throughout the life of the profession. Whereas some leaders in the profession have supported this quest with urgency, others have strongly opposed it, seeing the endeavor as narrowing and futile. Shulman, for example, stresses the need for "an integrated, method-focused, empirically based theory of practice" and describes his "sense of urgency that a beginning is needed."<sup>34</sup> Harry Specht, on the other hand, writes, "Whether it is systems theory, social exchange theory, organizational theory, or some other theory, professionals who are educated primarily in the use of one theory to explain and guide their practice will necessarily have an exceedingly narrow vision of the people with whom they deal and the contexts in which they practice."<sup>35</sup>

Instead of creating a single, all encompassing theory for practice, some writers have attempted to discover a holistic framework to serve as a guide for organizing or clustering theories into a systematic pattern to show commonalities and relatedness. Pearman, for example, categorized theories in the behavioral and social sciences for social work under the headings: Psychological Sciences, Anthropology, Sociology/Social Psych, Economics, and Political Sciences (Diagram 4-1).<sup>36</sup> Francis Turner organized 21 social work practice

DIAGRAM 4-1 Behavioral and Social Sciences

PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCES	ANTHROPOLOGY	SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY	ECONOMICS	POLITICAL SCIENCE
Psychoanalytic theory	Value concepts	Social organization and basic systems	Systems orientation	Systems orientation
Other theory from psychiatry, e.g., reality theory	Dominant culture	Power structure	Macro-economics and employment	Political science theory
Other psychological theory, e.g., learning theory, operant psychology	Relationships to individual behavior	Community concepts	Public finance	Compensatory policies for disadvantage in the economic system
Research technology	collective behavior	Social change concepts including conflict theory	Monetary theory	Political realities
Personality theories	Culture conflict	Demography	Welfare theory	Relation of public and private agencies
Human growth	Research technology	Small group theory	Distribution theory	Check-and-balance concept
Psychological theory related to impact of client participation	Relationship between values and social systems	Research technology	Cost-benefit analysis	Techniques for political intervention
		Role theory	Human resources investment	Research technology
		Social stratification	Equilibrium concept	
			Research technology	

theories according to six categories with 33 selected attributes. The six categories are (1) general attributes, (2) perception of person, (3) perception of functioning, (4) therapeutic qualities, (5) the therapist, and (6) therapeutic application.<sup>37</sup> Max Siporin identified seven major theoretical helping frameworks which, although "relatively underdeveloped," are being utilized in social work practice. They are "social provision, interactional, psychoanalytic, sociobehavioral, existentialist, problem-solving, and ecological-systems theory." He described ecological systems theory as a "general theoretical model," and "a generic framework for social work practice." Problem solving is seen as ideally requiring "rational planning and decision procedures with individuals and groups, involving a phased sequence of tasks."<sup>38</sup>

The search for holistic framework for identifying relevant theories has been an endeavor common also to the field of generalist practice and advanced generalist practice. The field clearly embraces and integrates two of the approaches described by Siporin, namely, the problem-solving approach and ecological systems theory. Both approaches serve as guiding frameworks for the identification and selection of theories for generalist and advanced generalist practice as developed in this chapter.

**Knowledge in Generalist Practice**

A key element of generalist practice has been identified as "an open selection of theories and interventions" (see Chapter 1, Diagram 1-7). Depending on the problem in focus, the generalist may be eclectic in choosing theories and approaches as needed for effective intervention. At the same time, the worker keeps in mind basic parameters of eclecticism. As brought out by Siporin,

Being eclectic means to select what is best from various doctrines. Eclecticism does have a basic requirement, that whatever is borrowed or developed needs to be consistent with other elements of social work's body of values and knowledge.<sup>39</sup>

The theories selected by generalists need to be appropriately matched with their values, roles, and skills. Whereas social work generalists rely heavily on practice theories of a cognitive nature (e.g., problem solving, task centered, reality, cognitive theory), they would not by their nature and education select highly specialized practice theories and interventions (e.g., Gestalt, psychoanalysis, hypnosis). When needed, the generalist would make a referral to an advanced worker or specialist with the necessary expertise.

There are two central paradigms that guide social work generalists in their knowledge development and theory selection. A paradigm is a basic assumption or illustration that guides a discipline in its application of knowledge in a particular area. It is a "disciplinary matrix" that shares symbolic gen-

eralizations, models, values and examples.<sup>40</sup> A paradigm is not as inclusive as a theory, but may serve to explain a central idea of a theory. An example is the medical model of "study, diagnoses, and treatment," which was used extensively as a guiding framework for practice in the early history of social work. Two paradigms used in generalist practice are: (1) the ecological systems theory perspective and (2) the problem-solving process of the general method.]

The ecological systems perspective of "person in environment" has served as an organizing paradigm for clustering the foundation theories commonly used in practice. In the ecological systems paradigm, depicted in Diagram 4-2, the three headings used are "Person," "In," and "Environment." The theories placed under the three headings are primarily theories for understanding. They inform the practitioner rather than guide the actions of the practitioner, as found in practice theories.

The General Method, a six-stage problem-solving process, serves as a paradigm for guiding a worker in the selection and use of practice theories and techniques for generalist practice. Within each stage of the process, a worker's actions may be directed through input from diverse theories. For example, in engagement, generalists may use the practice theory and communication skills developed by Robert Carkhuff and William Anthony.<sup>41</sup> If working with a family, theory about dysfunctional communications patterns as proposed by Virginia Satir may assist with data collection.<sup>42</sup> When selecting a planned intervention for work with a community, the worker may consider Jack Rothman's practice models of locality development or social action.<sup>43</sup> During assessment, the worker may find support from task-centered practice, described by William Reid and Laura Epstein, as contracts are developed listing tasks to be accomplished for problem resolution.<sup>44</sup> Throughout the process, the problem-solving theory of Helen Harris Pearlman may provide the worker with guidance and understanding in the process of helping.<sup>45</sup>

It is apparent that generalists use a variety of sources for acquiring and using knowledge in the profession. In addition to theories that have been sci-

**DIAGRAM 4-2** An Ecological Perspective of Foundation Theory for Social Work

ECOLOGY		
PERSON	IN	ENVIRONMENT
Ego psychology	Role	Organizational theory
Developmental theories	Socialization	Political science
Biological	Behavioral theory	Economic theory
Sexual	Communication	Cultural anthropology
Psychosocial	Stress theory	Systems theory
Cognitive	Ecological-systems theory	
Moral		
Spiritual		
Self-actualization		

entifically verified, such as those from the behavioral sciences, several theories used, such as those taken from the field of family treatment, may be based more on practice wisdom and experience. The problem-solving and task-centered practice theories used in the six-stage process paradigm have been supported by empirical research. Ecological systems theory, which is the fundamental theory in the advanced ecological systems paradigm, has minimal scientific data to support it.<sup>46</sup> As a subsystem of general systems theory, it has been adopted by several disciplines because of its effectiveness in explaining complex phenomena.

## KNOWLEDGE IN ADVANCED GENERALIST PRACTICE

At the advanced generalist level, the practitioner acquires knowledge of advanced theories for application to complex problems. Advanced generalists build on the paradigms and related theories used in generalist practice. Through further study, they extend their knowledge for greater understanding and skill. A variety of theories are applied to multilevel situations in both their direct and indirect practice roles of front line service provider, middle manager, supervisor, administrator, and policy maker.

### The Advanced Ecological Systems Paradigm

For the advanced generalist, the advanced ecological systems perspective pictured in Diagram 4-3 serves as a paradigm to guide practitioners in their identification and selection of theories. All the systems in the paradigm are perceived of together as an interdependent and integrated whole. At the same time, each system is seen as separate with its own subsystems. There is a broad range of theories available for each system and subsystem in the paradigm. A worker may select for advanced study theories about "person" (with the six subsystems of educational, economic, political, psychological, physical, sexual, social, and spiritual) and theories about the triplex environment: the nurturing environment (family, friends, culture, community, and significant others); the sustaining environments (society's institutions, programs, and services); and the global environment (people, problems, policies, and programs of different countries).

The study and selection of theories for knowledge development in advanced generalist practice are individualized according to the needs of each person preparing to become an advanced generalist. An individualized learning assessment is made to ascertain which systems or subsystems are most in need of further development by the individual for effective advanced generalist practice. Depending on the individual's life and work experience and acquired knowledge, there may be gaps or weaknesses in particular areas of knowledge to be addressed through advanced study. An example of how each

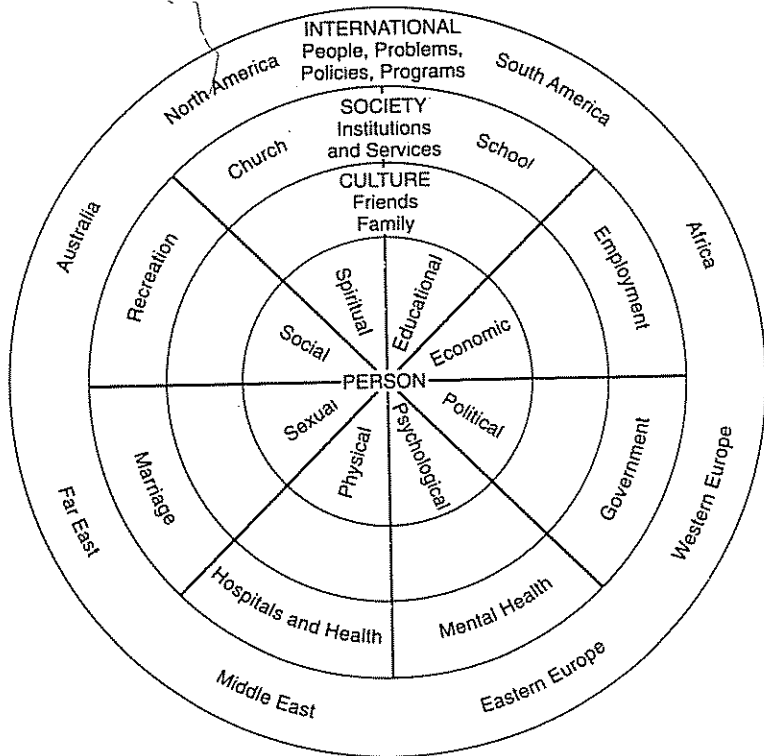
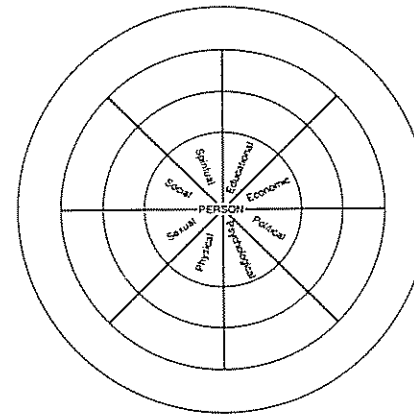


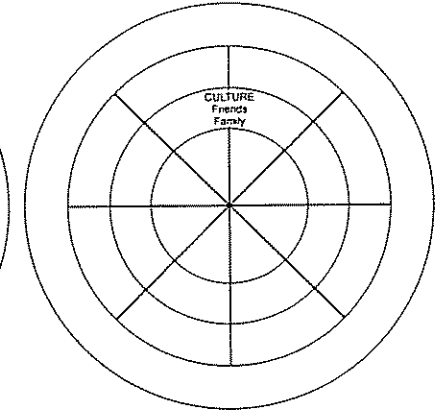
DIAGRAM 4-3 Advanced Ecological Systems Paradigm

system is considered for identification of knowledge gaps or needs is found in Diagram 4-4. As each system within a circular boundary is highlighted, the basic questions are: (1) What does this worker know about this system and its subsystems and (2) What does this worker need to know about this system and its subsystems for effective practice as an advanced generalist? Following a learning assessment for each of the systems in Diagram 4-4, the worker returns to the holistic advanced ecological systems perspective of Diagram 4-3 and asks: What knowledge do I have and what do I need to develop to understand the interrelationships among these systems.

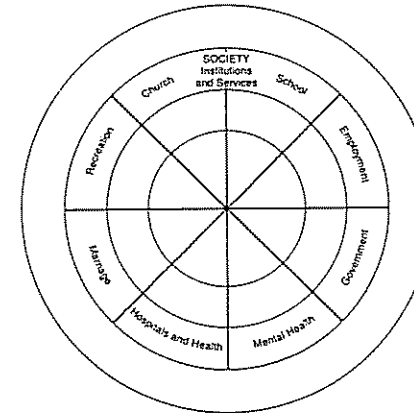
**Knowledge about "Person"** Advanced generalists build on generalist knowledge of "Person" and acquire broader and deeper knowledge for greater understanding. In order to identify which theories about "Person" should be selected for study in advanced generalist practice, the concept of "Person(s)" and the various subsystems of "Person," as identified in Diagram 4-4 A, are considered separately. Again, the question asked for each is: "In this area, what



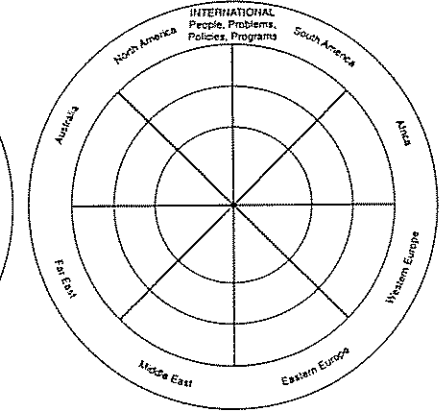
A. Knowledge of Person



B. Knowledge of Nurturing Environment



C. Knowledge of Sustaining Environment



D. Knowledge of International Environment

DIAGRAM 4-4 Individualized Knowledge Assessment

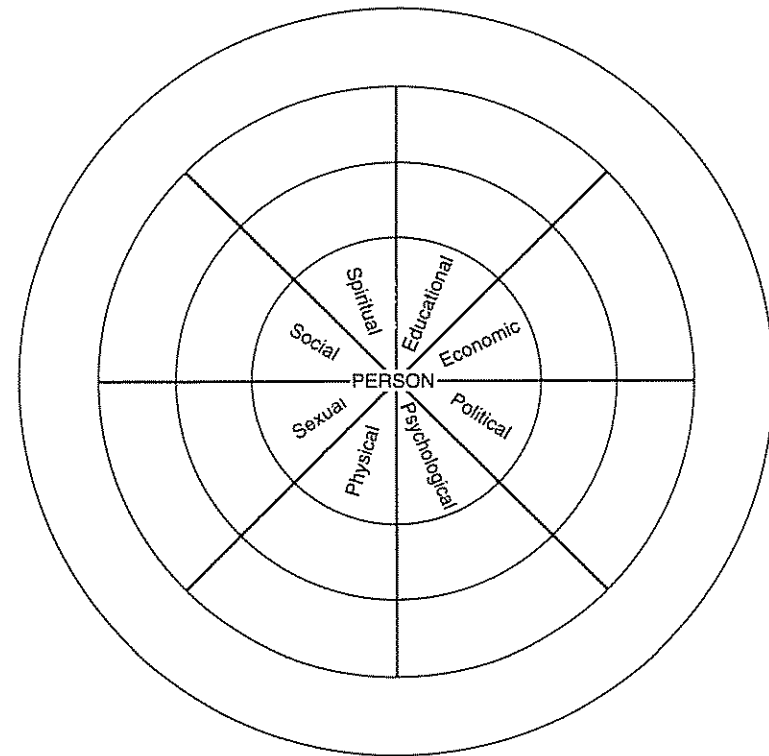
further knowledge do I need to develop for effective practice as an advanced generalist?" Turner<sup>47</sup> aides in the selection of theories ("Thought Systems") in several distinguishing areas of "person" as found in Diagram 4-5. The thought systems listed in the diagram include theories that both inform and guide social workers. The identified areas have commonalities with those dimensions of person as found in Diagram 4-4 A. The worker may select some of the theories identified in Turner's framework or seek out other theories or sources of knowledge relating to specific areas of person. For example, the worker may know little about AIDS and need to turn to the literature from medical disciplines for this information. An example of an individualized assessment of

DIAGRAM 4-5 Knowledge about Person

DISTINGUISHING AREA OF FOCUS	RELEVANT THOUGHT SYSTEM
Person as a psychological being (psychological)	Psychoanalytic Functional Gestalt
Person as thinker (educational)	Cognitive
Person as learner (educational)	Behavior modification
Person as contemplator (spiritual)	Meditation Existentialism
Person as communicator (social)	Communications
Person as doer (economic)	Problem-solving Task-centered Crisis
Person as biological entity (biological)	Neurolinguistics
Person as individual (psychological)	Ego-psychology Client-centered
Person as family member (sexual, social)	Family Transactional analysis
Person as group member (social)	Group
Person in relation to society (political)	Psychosocial Systems Role Feminism Marxism
Person in relation to the universe	Ecological

"Person" knowledge for an advanced generalist student is found in Diagram 4-6.

**Knowledge about Environment** The triplex environment of the advanced ecological systems paradigm (Diagram 4-4, B, C, D) serves as a guide for identification and selection of knowledge about the environment needed for advanced generalists. Each environmental system (nurturing, societal, international) is considered separately with its component parts. Again, the individual workers asks: What do I know; What do I need to know in this area to be prepared for advanced generalist practice? In looking at the nurturing environments, there may be certain cultures or family types that a worker knows little about. Greater study of communities in rural or urban environments may need to be undertaken. In considering sustaining environments, there may be programs, policies, services, or processes that need to be understood. The worker may know little about federal laws, grants, or funding procedures. During an analysis at the international level, the worker may recognize a deficiency in knowledge about foreign policy or global needs. There may be the expectation that upon completion of a program to prepare for advanced generalist practice, the student will work with a number of people from a country about which

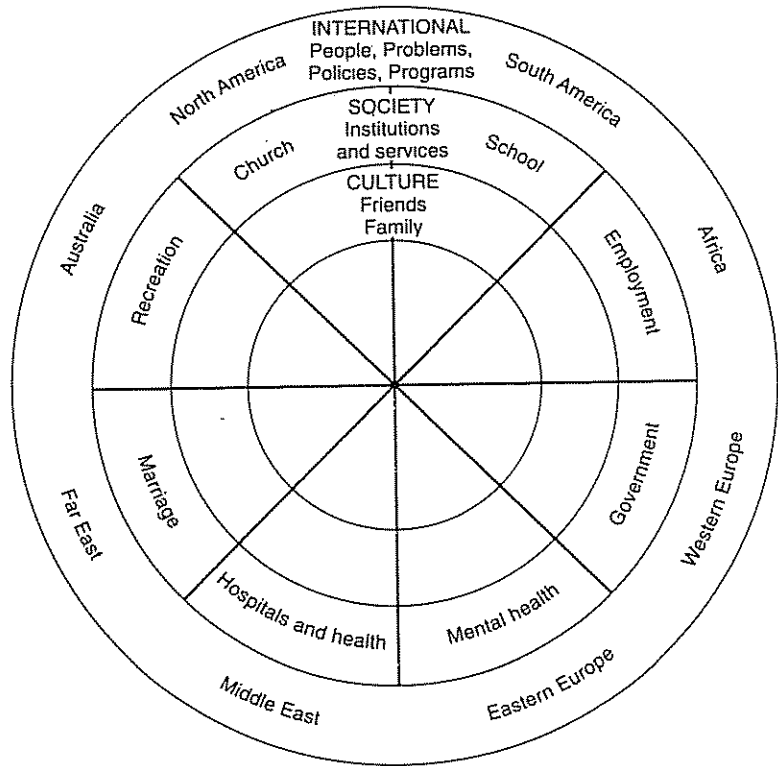


Subsystem Area	Knowledge Needs
Education	Learning Styles, Motivation Theory
Economic	Money Management Theory
Political	Marxism, Feminism
Psychological	DSM III R, Ego Psychology, Psychopharmacology
Physical	Disease: AIDS, Cancer, Addictions
Sexual	Sexual Impotence
Social	Work/Leisure Theory
Spiritual	Spirituality, Meditation
Person	Humanistic Psychology, Self-Actualization

DIAGRAM 4-6 "Person" Knowledge Needs Assessment

he or she knows very little. Diagram 4-7 offers an example of a triplex environmental knowledge assessment.

The knowledge identified as needing further development for an individual may be so extensive that the individual may need to prioritize theories and create an ongoing learning plan that could extend beyond the period of time for formal learning in a degree program. Advanced generalists along with other human service professionals know that professional learning is a life-long process. An example of a prioritized, individualized learning plan for an



Nurturing Environment

- Creative Learning Environments
- I.Q. Stimulation
- Co-ops, Credit Unions
- Family/Town Law
- Symbolic Interaction
- Community Health
- Divorce Law
- Family Violence
- Spanish Language
- Cults

Social Environment

- Cybernetics
- Laws re. Schools
- Macro Economics
- Poverty in U.S.A.
- Social Control Theory
- National Institute of Mental Health
- Wellness Theory
- Conflict Theory
- Psychiatric Nursing
- Buddhism

International Environment

- Political Ideologies
- World Health Organization
- World Bank Trade
- International Law re: Child Custody, Illegal Aliens
- Viet Nam—Status Systems
- Yugoslavia
- Cross-Cultural Studies

DIAGRAM 4-7 Triplex "Environment" Knowledge Needs Assessment

advanced generalist student using the advanced ecological systems paradigm is found in Diagram 4-8. Although there were several areas identified as needing further study, the student selected those knowledge areas assessed as most in need of understanding upon completion of an advanced generalist social work program and prior to entry into an expected service delivery system. Other

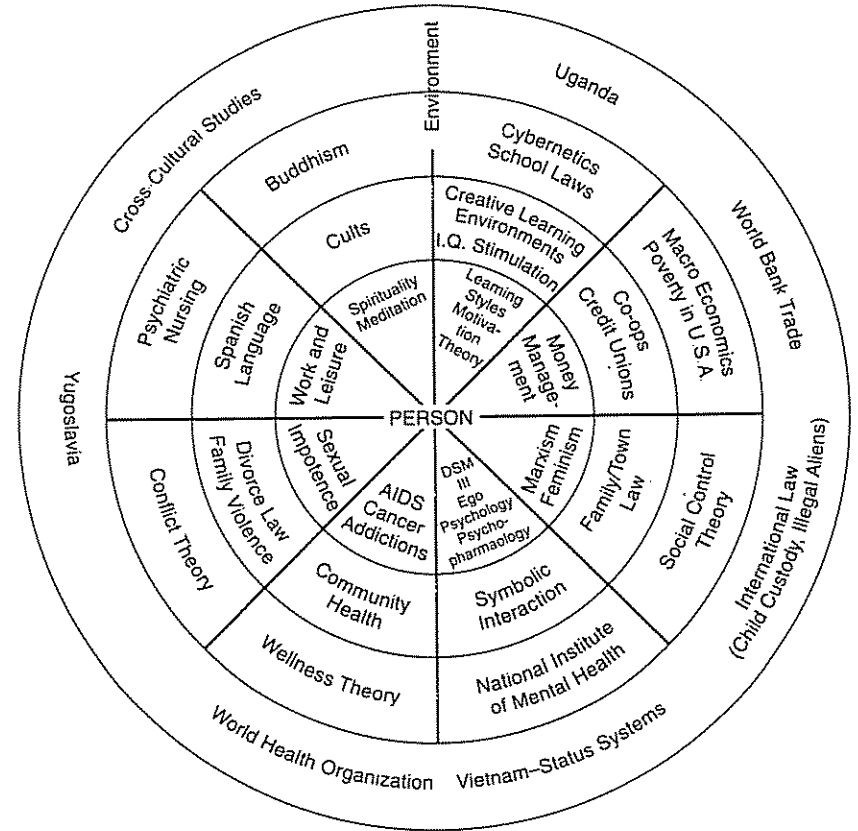


DIAGRAM-4-8 Advanced Ecological Systems Paradigm: Individualized Selection (Needs Assessment) of Advanced Knowledge for Understanding

areas of knowledge seen as desirable would need to be pursued through post-graduate continuing education opportunities.

The use of the advanced ecological systems perspective as a paradigm for theory selection as proposed in this chapter is an expansion of ideas proposed by earlier writers in the field. For example, Carol Meyer described the ecosystems perspective in relation to theory selection as follows:

At the theory level, the perspective can provide for various means of organizing and structuring the unit of attention and the environment. This structuring is necessary to understand the transaction taking place at the interface; it is left to the practitioner and client or client group to choose a frame of reference within which to work. In doing this, the perspective augments each practitioner's per-



ception of the world and respects the multitude of conceptualizations that are often necessary to account for the phenomena.<sup>48</sup>

Siporin describes the ecosystems perspective in this way:

The ecological systems model is not a unitary theory but it is a basic framework, an umbrella-like structure we need for assessment and interventive purposes. It accepts behavior and personality theories.<sup>49</sup>

The paradigm as proposed in this chapter serves as "an umbrella-like structure" for "organizing and structuring the unit of attention" for the knowledge development of advanced generalists in relation to the various theories and bodies of information that are available about the units of person and environment. In addition to the use of the advanced ecological systems paradigm for the selection of theories primarily for *understanding*, advanced generalists use a second paradigm, with an advanced problem-solving process perspective, for the identification and selection of *practice* theories to guide their actions and interactions.

**The Advanced Problem-solving Paradigm**

As stated earlier, essential elements of generalist practice include (1) a problem-solving process, (2) a multilevel approach, and (3) an open selection of theories and interventions (Chapter 1, Diagram 1-7). Framing the six-stage problem-solving process of the general method with the eight-system levels as shown in Diagram 4-9 provides a paradigm for selection and study of practice theories and techniques that guide the actions of the advanced generalist.

**DIAGRAM 4-9** Advanced Problem-solving Paradigm: Individualized Selection of Theories, Models, and Techniques for Advanced Generalist Practice

		MULTILEVEL SYSTEMS (clients, employees, agencies, other)						
		Individual	Family	Group	Community	Institution	Society	World
PROBLEM-SOLVING PROCESS	Engagement							
	Data Collection							
	Assessment							
	Intervention							
	Evaluation							
	Termination							

**Problem-solving Process** Using the problem-solving process is generic to the nature of generalist and advanced generalist practice. The six-stage process of the general method is a thread or theme that may be used in multiple ways to support workers in their movement toward accomplishing goals. It serves as the iron beams to provide a basic structure for adding the walls and materials of theories and techniques to build an effective service delivery. The practitioner is not constricted by any one theory or intervention. The proposed problem-solving paradigm in Diagram 4-9 stimulates thought and discussion about the use and fit of various theories within advanced generalist practice.

**Multilevel Systems** Advanced generalists use the problem-solving process while working with individuals, groups, or larger systems in their roles of direct service provider, supervisor, manager, administrator, or policy maker. In selecting a program of study to prepare for advanced generalist practice, the individual under academic advisement uses the paradigm to identify gaps and needs in practice knowledge for work with a variety of systems. The vast array of available practice theories, such as those listed in Diagram 4-10, are surveyed, and selection for further study is made in the light of spaces on the paradigm that are identified as voids in the student's practice knowledge. If students, for example, recognize a need to know how to help a community prioritize their problems, they may select to study the nominal group approach.<sup>50</sup> If there is a need to know how to help family members engage in sharing their perception of the family (problem) and

**DIAGRAM 4-10** Direct and Indirect Practice Theories

PRACTICE THEORIES AND APPROACHES	
DIRECT	INDIRECT
Behavior modification	Control/power theories
Bioenergetics/biofeedback	Cybernetics/information theory
Client-centered practice	Decision-making models
Cognitive therapy	Econometrics
Crisis intervention	Exchange theory
Existential psychotherapy	Expectancy theory
Gestalt therapy	Incremental planning
Life skills counseling	Inequality theory
Mediation	Interactional management
Meditation	Management by objectives
Neurolinguistic programming	Organizational management
Play therapy	Policy science
Psychoanalytic theory	Political economy theory
Psychodrama	Redistribution theory
Psychosocial therapy	Scientific management
Primal theory	Situational leadership
Reality therapy	Social change theory
Task-centered practice	Theory X and Y
Transactional analysis	Theory Z

of what they would like to see the family become (goal) they may select to study such techniques as sculpturing or cluster analysis, found in theories of family therapy.<sup>51</sup> If the individual knows little about management and how to work differentially with employees, situational leadership theory may be of assistance.<sup>52</sup>

**Vertical and Horizontal Selection** As the use of a theory or technique is explored, the individual is encouraged to consider the theory both vertically and horizontally. One theory may be selected for use in guiding the actions of the worker throughout the six-stage process (vertical). Another theory may offer techniques or an approach to practice that can be carried across system levels (horizontal). For example, behavioral theory may be found valuable for guiding the actions of the worker throughout the entire six-stage process while working with an individual (vertical). The technique of eco-mapping, on the other hand, may be used during data collection while working with an individual, a group, a family, a community, and an organization or larger system (horizontal). In some situations, an advanced generalist may use several theories (vertical and horizontal) to carry out the six-stage process. Diagram 4-11 depicts the use of the advanced problem-solving paradigm for an individualized assessment and selection of practice theories and techniques for advanced generalist practice.

### THE STUDY OF A THEORY

In using the suggested paradigm, once a theory or technique has been identified as desirable knowledge for an individual preparing for advanced generalist practice, a range of frameworks is available to guide in the study process. For

**DIAGRAM 4-11** Advanced Problem-solving Paradigm: Individualized Selection of Theories, Models, and Techniques for Advanced Generalist Practice

		MULTILEVEL SYSTEMS (clients, employees, agencies, other)						
		Individual	Family	Group	Community	Institution	Society	World
PROBLEM-SOLVING PROCESS	Engagement	Neuro-Linguistics Programming (NLP)	Cluster Analysis	Nominal Group Approach		Interactional Management		
	Data Collection		Sculpturing Ecomapping					Information Search Skills
	Assessment				Social Change Theory			
	Intervention	Stress Management Behavior Modification		Case/Load Management		Situational Management PPBS	Policy Development	
	Evaluation					MBO		
	Termination							

a cursory view of the theory, a basic framework may be followed consisting of five subheadings:

1. Definition (define the name given to the theory)
2. Sources (primary references)
3. Statements (central ideas, descriptions, and relationships of concepts in the theory)
4. Concepts (main concepts found in the theory)
5. Practice example (use of theoretical statement or concept in practice)

Diagram 4-12 illustrates the use of this approach in an initial study of role theory.

For a more in-depth study of a practice theory, the Framework for Analysis of Practice Models provided by Carol Meyer may be followed. It consists of the following set of questions to be asked about a theory:

1. Ideological biases. What nonempirical commitments are held by the model?
2. Values. What beliefs relevant to social work are expressed in the model?
3. Knowledge base. What theories and ideas does the model draw upon?
4. Unit of attention. Is the model to be used with individuals, families, groups, communities, organizations?
5. Problem definition. How does the model determine what is a problem for its attention?
6. Congruent and explicit interventions. Is the interventive methodology consistent with the other parts of the framework, such as those mentioned in numbers 1 to 5? And are the model's techniques of a specific or a general design?
7. Uses of the professional relationship. To what degree is the professional relationship used as context and/or process in the model? Is it used as means or ends in interventions?
8. Desired outcomes. What does the model define as its goals of intervention?
9. Uses of time. Does the model suggest or require short- or long-term interventions? Is time used as a dynamic in assessment and intervention?
10. Differential use of staff. Does the model require that only graduate social workers can practice it, or can it be used by a variety of staff levels and types?
11. Work with self-help groups. Can the model be made applicable to nonclient groups?
12. Availability to effectiveness research. Is the model explicitly defined, so that its use in practice can be evaluated empirically?<sup>53</sup>

Examples of the use of this framework as applied to psychosocial theory, problem-solving theory, behavioral theory, and crisis intervention may be found in Meyer's book entitled *Clinical Social Work in the Eco-systems Perspective*.<sup>54</sup>

**DIAGRAM 4-12** Framework 1: Role Theory

- I. Definition:  
Role refers to an expected pattern of behavior performed by a person in an interaction situation (Sarbin & Allen).
- II. Selected Sources:  
Bruce J. Biddle, *Role Theory: Expectations, Identities, and Behaviors* (New York: Academic Press, 1979).  
Liane Vida Davis, "Role Theory," in Francis J. Turner (ed.), *Social Work Treatment: Interlocking Theoretical Approaches*, 3rd ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1986).  
Helen Harris Periman, *Persona: Social Role and Personality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).  
Theodore Sarbin and V. L. Allen, "Role Theory," in Gardner Lindzey and E. Aronson (eds.), *Handbook of Social Psychology* (Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1968).
- III. Basic Statements:
1. The focus of role theory is on behavior.
  2. Role is interactional. It occurs in the social context of complementary roles.
  3. Role enactment is dependent on role expectations.
  4. Role relates to and derives from status. Through occupying status, one can assume a role.
  5. Individuals occupy more than one role at a time. The collection of roles a person occupies is called a role set.
  6. Persons are taught roles through the process of socialization.
  7. When an actor is confronted with incompatible expectations within one role or between roles, role conflict may be experienced.
- IV. Basic Concepts:
- |                      |                   |               |
|----------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Role enactment       | Gender roles      | Status        |
| Role complementarity | Role expectations | Role set      |
| Role skills          | Role location     | Socialization |
| Self-role congruence | Role conflict     | Norms         |
- V. Case Example:  
Mrs. K. came to the Employee Assistance Office to talk about the pressures she was experiencing as a single mother and a business executive. Her current position required extensive travel to meetings out of town. Her two children were active in school and sports. She frequently missed parent-school meetings and events of significance to her children. She was experiencing headaches and occasional chest pains. Her doctor recommended counseling. The EPA counselor, an advanced generalist, recognized Mrs. K.'s role conflict and resulting stress.

If an extensive examination of a theory is seen as desirable, the student could follow Turner's framework for comparing social work practice theories calling for an exploration of thirty-three attributes. Framework 2 is an example of this approach as applied to Existentialism<sup>55</sup> (Diagram 4-13).

### THE HOLISTIC APPROACH IN ADVANCED GENERALIST PRACTICE

A worker may use the two paradigms (advanced ecological systems and advanced problem solving) as tools for identifying the theories or techniques that would be helpful to providing service for a particular case or work assign-

ment. Often, a number of theories or techniques may be used. In the case described in framework 1, for example, the worker saw the need to use role theory and stress theory during assessment and intervention with the client system. A key point to describe advanced generalist practice is the fact that the practitioner is not limited to the use of only one of a few theoretical approaches. Depending on the situation of service, creative combinations and innovations are applied as each step of the process is planned and executed.

Advanced generalists think and act holistically. They see the whole and the interrelationship of past with present and future. Some theories emphasize the past, focusing on memories, repressed experiences, or earlier traumas. Examples of past-oriented theories include psychoanalytic and primal theories. Uncovering the past is seen as a source of cure and release of energy. Some theories are present oriented, with concentration on one's current life-space and choices, such as reality therapy and existentialism. Other theories stress the future, using imagination and imagery, or emphasizing articulated goals as a source of motivation and reality change. Cognitive and psychosocial theories, for example, emphasize the future.

Sometimes theories contrast with each other due to a difference in ideological or philosophical views of human nature. In client-centered and functional theories, for example, a basic proposition is that human beings are innately good with motivation and potential for change. In psychosocial theory, although persons are seen as fundamentally good, they are believed to be easily influenced negatively. In other theories, such as general systems, communication, and Gestalt, human beings are seen as neutral—neither good nor bad. Advanced generalists strongly adhere to the value system at the origin of the social work profession namely, Judeo-Christian, which views human nature as neither good nor evil, but with the potential for both.<sup>56</sup> Depending on the problem and the timing in the process, theories and techniques are carefully selected by the advanced generalist and juxtaposed for comprehensive understanding and intervention. When it is apparent that theories do not "fit" with each other, the worker is eclectic and selects the most appropriate theory based on an individualized assessment of the context for each particular problem-person-environment situation.

### SUMMARY

Although some social work students in graduate programs may select a concentration in one pie slice area of Diagram 4-7 or in one type of intervention (e.g. casework, group work, community organization; direct or indirect; micro or macro) and focus on theories related to that area of practice, students selecting an advanced generalist concentration use fundamental paradigms that encourage the use of multiple approaches and techniques for holistic practice

DIAGRAM 4-13 Framework 2: Existentialism

SYSTEM ATTRIBUTES	EXISTENTIALISM
<b>I. General Attributes</b>	
A. Historical roots and connections	i. Originated from philosophy: Kierkegaard, Buber, Sartre, Marcel, May, Frankl ii. Principal social work authors: D. Krill, D. Weiss, R. Sunshemer
B. Level of development	i. Philosophical base well developed, rich literature ii. Interventive base moderately well formulated
C. General theory or Single domain theory	General: Applicable to all life situations; specific emphasis on place of anxiety, freedom, and choice
D. Focus on general laws or specific behavior	General
E. Basic assumptions	i. Equality of persons ii. Persons are free agents iii. We are responsible for our choices iv. Our capacities are unlimited v. Suffering and anxiety are part of reality
F. Empirical base	i. Strong commitment to research ii. Growing body of phenomenological research
<b>II. Perception of Person</b>	
A. View of basic human nature	i. Individuals are essentially good and noble ii. We cannot escape our natural state, which is anxiety created by disillusion; and the reality of suffering and death
B. View of person's activity orientation	i. Operates in present ii. Existence is being and being is becoming iii. We accomplish through experiencing
C. View of relational orientation	i. Basic emphasis is the individual ii. Dialogue and encounter with others and world are necessary iii. Societal responsibility is to value others as equals
D. View of person's time orientation	i. Reality is here and now, but the future is important ii. The immediate moment is the most genuine way of discovering person's identity
E. Perception of person as rational or irrational	i. Strongly rational in as much as we are is free to make own choices ii. We are not just rational, though we need to be in touch with experiential self
F. Perception of person as mechanistic or purposive	i. Purposive ii. Responsible for own uniqueness iii. Strongly anti-mechanistic
<b>III. Perception of Functioning</b>	
A. Nature and importance of conscious-unconscious	Person is in control and free to make choices; unconscious is not relevant
B. Importance of heredity	Minimal: We are all equal in worth, dignity and uniqueness
C. Importance of person's history on current functioning	Downplay past: It is seen as an excuse for actions and denial of responsibility
D. Importance of a developmental view of human personality	Development is seen as movement toward becoming; little emphasis on formal developmental stages
E. Nature of mature functioning	i. Authenticity is the basis of maturity ii. Discovery of personal uniqueness through relating to subjective experiences and in respecting authenticity process in others

DIAGRAM 4-13 (Continued)

SYSTEM ATTRIBUTES	EXISTENTIALISM
<b>III. Perception of Functioning (continued)</b>	
F. Principal motivators of behavior	i. Anxiety causes movement ii. Persons have freedom to choose iii. Integrating, creative force for growth, is core of personality
G. Nature of personality change	i. Movement toward reaching potential ii. Never fully achieved iii. Always becoming iv. Person has capacity to radically shift v. Influencing of others is a strong agent of change
<b>IV. Therapeutic Qualities</b>	
A. Targets	Individual, couple, family and group; emphasizes the individual
B. Range and importance of change agents	i. Intrapersonal insight ii. Encounter with therapist and group
C. Place of relationship in planned change	i. Essential heart of therapy ii. Feedback gives basis for subjective understanding iii. Encounter is a meeting between equals—a coming together in a meaningful way
D. Importance of setting	Unimportant as long as it does not hinder equality
E. Specific techniques	i. Techniques designed for here-and-now heightening of awareness ii. Self-understanding through reflective thinking iii. Techniques borrowed from other disciplines iv. Encourages rich use of techniques from all sources
F. Problems and situations for which theory is useful	Best suited for clients whose problem involves loss of direction, value confusion, shaken identity, life changes, post-crisis
<b>V. The Therapist</b>	
A. Knowledge required by therapist	Acceptance of own being and dignity and worth of other, plus knowledge of experiences of others
B. Skills required by therapist	i. Relating; empathy; encouraging worth; finding meaning in suffering; openness ii. Strong emphasis on respect for uniqueness of other therapists
<b>VI. Therapeutic Application</b>	
A. Precision of application	i. Nonspecific ii. Each person unique and application is specific to individual iii. Eclectic in technique
B. Focus of therapy	i. Stresses unique perception of each person's inner world ii. Looks at past and its effect on present iii. But essentially present oriented
C. Incorporation of existing knowledge	Philosophical base specific and can incorporate knowledge from similar theoretical bases, but tends to be isolated from other theories
D. Goal setting	Goals unique to each person; these are worked out mutually between client and therapist
E. Interdisciplinary utility	Used across disciplines and helps bring disciplines together
F. Therapeutic terminology	i. Counsellor ii. Counselee iii. Encounter iv. Dialogue v. Authenticity

in any area of the field of human service. As members of a profession founded in diversity of thought and action, social workers continue to be challenged with the task of building a body of knowledge that contains the general and specific theories and techniques they need for effective practice.

In this chapter, the meaning of knowledge and the history of theory in social work have been presented. Particular attention has been given to the identification and selection of knowledge for advanced generalist practice. Two paradigms were presented as guiding frameworks for advanced generalists. The paradigms may be used, in general, to identify learning needs and, in particular, for application to a case or work assignment.

The advanced generalist selects from an extensive range of descriptive and prescriptive theories for both direct and indirect practice with multiple systems. The knowledge selected may come from a variety of disciplines and diverse approaches to knowledge development. The advanced generalist uses, applies, and contributes theory to the profession's body of knowledge. A holistic perspective and commitment to life-long learning are central to the professional socialization of advanced generalists.

The holistic practitioner needs to have a clear service mission and commitment, comprehensive knowledge, and flexibility in methodology for effective direct and indirect practice. Following the study of *values* and *knowledge* for advanced generalists, attention will be given in the next chapter to the third essential dimension of practice, namely, *methodology*.

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