

CHAPTER 2

Discussion of Theories

Introduction

In this study, theories from the systems theory perspective outside the field of CT and social psychological theories that are used within the CT field were reviewed to develop a theoretical framework to be used in the future. Reynolds (1971) stated the importance of looking at existing theories in order to develop a new theoretical framework. A review of the systems theory perspective outside the field of CT was made to identify systems theories that apply to the social sciences, and an overview of the variety of applications found for systems theories will be given. A discussion of the systems theories was organized by the six metaframeworks of *internal family process*, *sequences*, *organization*, *development*, *gender*, and *multicultural* as suggested by Brenmlin, Schwartz, and Kune-Karrer (1992). Within the field of CT, a review was made to discover the prevalent theories used for understanding and researching the issues of dress and appearance of individuals, societies, and cultures. The theories were symbolic interaction, cognitive theory, and cultural theory (Kaiser, 1990), and the human ecological model (Bubolz & Sontag, 1988; Pederson, 1984; Sontag, 1979). These social psychological theories and relevant research studies pertaining to the theories that were found in CT are discussed. An overview of body image and eating disorders in women is also given. First is an overview of the systems theories found outside the field of CT, followed by an overview of the theories found within the CT field, and then an overview of body image and eating disorders in women.

An Overview: Systems Theories Outside CT

Theory origin. Simply defined, a system is “a grouping of parts that operate together for a common purpose” (Forrester, 1968, p. 1-1). A systems view “looks at a number of different and interacting things and notes their behavior *as a whole* under diverse influences” (Laszlo, 1972, p. 6). It is a view “of organized complexity, one step beyond the Newtonian view of organized simplicity, and two steps beyond the classical world views of divinely ordered or imaginatively envisaged complexity” (p.15). Ludwig

Bertalanffy (1968), physicist, first introduced *general system theory* in 1928. He had seen two World Wars in his lifetime and the results, both good and bad, of technology and a scientific field that had become specialized. Laszlo (1972) described this period as “a time of dissent, upheaval, revolutions, and struggle, frequently aimed at mutual destruction” (p. 185). The conceptualization of general system theory was an effort “to preserve human values and dignity” (Laszlo, p. 191), by not viewing *man as machine*, but as a system interacting with other systems. When something is viewed in parts (man as machine), the process of the whole system and its interaction with other systems is not observed. In studying human issues, using a holistic perspective can be critical in understanding the true nature of a problem.

Bertalanffy’s (1975) concepts were incorporated into many fields by the 1970s. On his seventieth birthday, an interdisciplinary symposium was held at the State University of New York College of arts and science at Geneseo in honor of Bertalanffy’s contribution of a New World view. Contributors influenced by his work represented the fields of biology, physiology, psychology, psychiatry, economics, communications, mathematics, and education (Laszlo, 1972). These disciplines, and others, continue to be changed forever by gaining a systems theory perspective to view complex phenomena.

Sciences. The physical sciences, particularly physics and biology, have been the leading fields in applying the concepts of the systems theory to the study of an organism. The social sciences have also adopted many of these concepts of organisms to deal with *human* systems (Cairns, 1998). In primitive society, humans simply adjusted themselves to the natural system (nature), but in the industrial society of the 1800s, complex systems began to emerge and dominate. “Systems began to dominate through economic cycles, political turmoil, financial panics, fluctuating employment, and unstable prices” (Forrester, 1968, p. 1-1). Behavior of the systems was confusing, and researchers lacked a general theory to express the universal principles and to explain the cycles of the systems of which people were a part. A structure (theory) to understand “the essential realities of our important social systems” was needed (Forrester, p. 1-2). Since the 1800s, many of the scientific disciplines have adopted a systems theory perspective, linking humans to

the world in which they live. Humans were “a natural entity and inhabitant of several interrelated worlds” (Laszlo, 1972, p. 79). The systems theory offered an explanation of the interaction of the complex systems found in humans, animals, and the world.

Technology. Technology has produced complex physical systems (Forrester, 1968). Today in many technological fields, a systems approach is used to deal with the complexity of society. Examples of the use of systems theory were found in the fields of engineering, economics and management, mathematics, and computer technology.

Gorokhov (1985), a Soviet systems engineer, stated:

A specific feature of modern scientific and engineering disciplines, in particular systems engineering, is that they are systems oriented. In other words, all of them (systems engineering, ergonomics, engineering cybernetics, systems analysis, etc.) operate according to a certain *universal* ontological scheme represented by different versions of the general systems theory and methods and tools of systems approach. (p. 188).

Systems engineers integrated different types of knowledge and methods from many disciplines to solve complex problems. Due to the complexity of the problems, they could not be solved by one simple discipline. Blanchard and Fabrycky (1990) confirmed the need for addressing complexity with a systems approach in the manufacturing of products.

Economics and management. Ken Boulding, in the field of economics and management, encouraged an integration of the behavioral sciences and general system theory through faculty seminars (University of Michigan) and founded, with his contemporary Ludwig von Bertalanffy, the Society for General Systems Research (Hammond, 1995). Boulding (1984) supported an interdisciplinary approach in order to break down the barriers between specialties. Laszlo (1972) agreed with Boulding and stated that specialists could look at two levels of phenomena that gave one level of causal understanding, but they could not determine how a number of different things acted together when exposed to a number of different influences at the same time. Broekstra (1991) also argued that Western specialization of separate disciplines stemmed from a

mechanistic/materialistic worldview and that the field of organization and management offered an example of the adoption of Eastern ideas of balance or *undivided wholeness*. As ascribed by these authors, this balance serves to give a more complete picture of a phenomena.

Mathematics. Forrester (1968) said the field of mathematics could not adequately handle the “essential realities” of important social systems (p. 1-2). Systems theory was a way to structure the “fragments of knowledge” (Forrester, p. 1-2). With a change in scientific views of *truth* in the last half of this century, the dominance of a quantitative proof of theories is challenged. Qualitative theories were as important as quantitative, because many phenomena were singular and “cannot be represented by analytic functions (fractals)” (West & Deering, 1995, p. 15). Cybernetic feedback principles, a systems theory perspective, were used by mathematics to formulate information theory from telephone technology, and game theory. Computer technology was developed in conjunction with cybernetics, including feedback loops and information processing theory (Forrester). Fourali (1997) stated, “In opposition to our world of greyness we find that much of our science, math, logic and, consequently, culture is based on a black or white interpretation of our world” (p. 132). Fuzzy logic was described as a way to deal with the uncertain characteristics of individual cases, as opposed to the traditional predictions of the population (Fourali).

Education. The educational field has benefited from applications of the systems theory perspective. Gagne’s (1962) early work focused on planning for humans as a component of the man-machine system. Educational psychology used the systems theories to expand the understanding of learning beyond mechanistic, behavioral models, such as classical and operant conditioning (Ormrod, 1995). A systems theory perspective viewed the entire educational process at all levels, improving instruction and implementation of the programs (Banathy, 1968, 1990; Scileppi, 1988). Banathy applied systems principles to instruction, learning, and the design of instructional systems to improve curriculum development. He encouraged a transformation of education, over simply improvement, by designing new perspectives of education to *create* the future

(Banathy, 1991). Fuzzy logic was also presented as an appropriate measurement tool for educational situations (Fourali, 1997).

Systems theory has been applied to research in many fields as a way to address the complex systems interacting with our human system. Several scientific and technical disciplines recognized the need to understand the human element operating within their systems. This holistic perspective served to expand the understanding of humans and their world. Next, the systems theory perspective was discussed using metaframeworks to organize the various systems theories.

Metaframeworks and Systems Theories

Metaframeworks are the underlying principles (presuppositions) found in systems theories, such as cybernetics and general system theory. Brennlín et al. (1992) described using *metaframeworks* to organize the systems theories that deal with human issues. The authors stated, “A human system, then, is not just a collection of individuals, or an individual with a set of attributes; it is a complex entity wherein interactions are just as important as the interacting parts. In any human system, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts” (Brennlín et al., p. 24). The six metaframeworks that were used to organize the ideas of systems theories were *internal family process, sequences, organization, development, multicultural, and gender*:

Sequences and *organization* are fundamental properties of systems, just as *development* is fundamental to living systems. To understand a human system, we must also have knowledge about its objects—the people who make up the system—and we gain this knowledge through the domain of *internal process*. We have found it impossible to understand human systems without serious consideration of *gender*, the core attribute that distinguishes males from females.

Finally, at the broadest level, human systems are defined by *culture*. (pp. 44-45)
Metaframeworks were used to frame the discussion of systems theory models. These metaframeworks and systems theories outside CT were reviewed because they support the purpose of this research study and provide guidance for studying complex human systems and their interaction with other complex systems.

Internal family process metaframework. Internal family process is an individual's inner dynamics of mind and self. Internal family systems model (IFS) of family therapy was focused on understanding the individual system. "...The view of the mind, rather than being a unitary entity, is a collection of subminds or subpersonalities, each of which operates with relative autonomy and whose characteristics, intentions, and feelings are different from those of the others" (Breulin, et. al, 1992, p. 64). The field of family therapy traditionally avoided focusing on the individual, but now recognizes the part individuals play within the family. Examples of an individual focus were also found in studies of other fields. Schwartz (1987) found this multiplicity of mind and self when working with bulimic patients and interviewing them about their inner selves. The theoretical model used by the field of social work incorporates biopsychosocial components of human systems (Zastrow, 1989). The field of human development focused on the individual, their complexity (Csikszentmihalyi & Rathunde, 1998), the significance of their biological component (Gottlieb, Wahlsten, & Lickliter, 1998), and their ability to take action to contribute to their own development (Brandtstadter, 1998).

Maslow (1971) focused on the individual system by integrating three groups of human psychology, behavioral, psychoanalytic, and humanistic, to develop *transcendence* that focused on peak experience and self-actualization. Krippner, Rutenber, Engelman, and Granger (1985) applied general system theory (Bertalanffy, 1928, 1968, 1975) to humanistic psychology, showing "the human being within the context of individual uniqueness, supported by structures of values, goals, and intentions" (p. 105). As an alternative to humanism and its concept of boundaries, Midgley (1994) proposed the ecological systems perspective.

Sequence metaframework. Sequences are the interactional component of systems, the patterns. Sequences involved more than just patterns of action. They "involve both action and meaning, with each recursively contextualizing the other" (Brennlin, et al., 1992, p. 96) Interaction was "an interlocking web of sequences that constitute the real-time living of a system (Brennlin, et al., p.113). Interactions in a system included, longer

sequences (face-to-face routines), across time (ebb and flow), and between generations (transgenerational).

Cybernetics dealt with sequences through the use of inputs, outputs, and feedback loops, which were a type of information processing (Bateson, 1972; Keeney, 1983; Wiener, 1948). Keeney (1983) applied contemporary cybernetic thought to family therapy to understand the concept of change. Magnusson and Stattin (1998) discussed the person-context interaction theories, discussing the importance of the individual and their environment.

Organization metaframework. An organization of an organism is “how it fits together” (Breunlin, et al., p.125). Structural family therapy models (SFT) focused on levels and subsystems in a family system. Therapy viewed the system as offering opposite positions in a complementary fashion. Strategic models of family therapy focus on the distribution of power in systems, using intervention strategies to correct imbalances and destructive patterns of interaction (Haley, 1976; Madanes, 1981). In a study of psychological structures of action and thought, Fischer and Bidell, (1998) used a dynamic structural approach by putting a person at the center of a web, with multiple strands forming the psychological structures. Bronfenbrenner (1989) conceptualized an individual in his/her environment in a nested system from micro to macro. Recently, he added a bioecological component that involved interactions with objects and symbols, not just people. Constructivism was the belief that one changes the structure to change organism (Anderson, Goolishian, & Winderman, 1986; Maturana, 1988; Maturana & Varela, 1987; Minuchin, 1974). Others with work in the area of organization were Forester (cited in Watzlawick, 1984), Glasersfeld (cited in Watzlawick, 1984), Piaget (1952), and Watzlawick (1984). Graves (1970) wrote about levels of existence and an open system of values.

Development metaframework. Development is the transition of an organism through a series of stages. For humans, development occurred across biopsychosocial levels and with the interaction among those levels for individuals, families, societies (Breunlin et al., 1992; Falicov, 1988b). The field of Family Therapy first recognized the

development concept in the early 1970s. Traditionally, the field had focused on pathology- and deficit-based views of individuals and families. Since the 1970s, development has been the focus of human development/developmental psychology and educational psychology, and has been conceptualized in a variety of ways. Thelen and Smith's (1998) dynamic systems theory was based on general systems theory, but addressed complexity more specifically. It included continuous interaction of all levels of a developing system that change over time. Csikszentmihalyi and Rathuande (1998) explained conditions needed for optimal development, including optimal experience/flow, and the complexity of personality. Educational psychology emphasized the way an individual develops through the learning process (Piaget, 1971; Tolman, 1959; Vygotsky, 1981;).

Multicultural metaframework. The multicultural perspective is the experiences of an individual that are intracultural (within the culture that they live), intercultural (between culture groups), and universal (commonalities among all the world's cultures). Bertalanffy (1975) and Cohen (1987) discussed a systems approach to culture by viewing culture as a system that interacts with the human system. "Cultural psychology is the study of all the things members of different communities think (know, want, feel, value) and do by virtue of being the kinds of beings who are the beneficiaries, guardians and active perpetrators of a particular culture (Shweder, Goodnow, Hatano, LeVine, Markus, & Miller, 1998, p. 867). Understanding the multicultural influences on an individual was important when studying human issues in order to address the complex layers of interaction taking place.

Gender metaframework. Gender is the sex of an individual, male or female. In this metaframework the differences of males and females in regard to life cycles, opportunities, development, choices, and power were addressed. Capra (1982) and Eisler (1987) focused on the evolution toward partnership-based society to encourage the development of all people in a family unit, creating balance instead of polarization. The role gender plays in a therapy and differences in treatment for males and females have been examined (Kaplan & Yasinski, 1980; McGoldrick, Anderson, & Walsh, 1989;

Sherman, 1980). Travis (1988) studied the psychology of gender and its effects on mental health services to women. Studies on males are less prevalent in the literature. Gilligan (1993) and Magnusson and Stattin (1998) studied development and how gender difference influences individual functioning and long-term developmental outcomes. Recognizing gender issues in research encourages meeting the unique needs of individuals and an opportunity to grow into a partnership-based society.

Summary

The overview of the systems theory perspective found an emphasis on a balance of scientific and philosophical paradigms, even in the areas of technology. Looking at the whole became the focus, using a holistic perspective to see the interaction and process between the parts of a system, not each parts separately. Many fields have benefited from using this systemic perspective. Human values were considered essential by many researchers (e.g., Bertalanffy, 1968; Gagne, 1968; Laszlo, 1972) which gave a new focus to the view of humans. The system theories were organized by metaframeworks of individual family process, sequence, organization, gender, and multicultural. In the 1960s, people viewed the earth from a new perspective—from space. This gave a new view of its relative small size and limits, and human's place on it and resulted in a concern for conserving energy sources, and the ecology of systems. This expanded view of the world, showing the complexity of phenomena, made it clear that simplistic methods and answers would no longer adequately address problems in modern society.

An Overview: Clothing and Textile Theories

In this section, an overview is given of the theoretical frameworks commonly used in the field of CT. The theories from the field of CT are symbolic interaction, cognitive theory, and cultural theory (Kaiser, 1990), and the human ecological model (Bubolz & Sontag, 1988; Pederson, 1984; Sontag, 1979). The text, Social Psychology of Clothing, focused on the social aspect of appearance and dress and is currently used in the CT field (Kaiser, 1990). In this book, Kaiser discussed three theories: symbolic interaction, cognitive theory, and cultural theory and described them as a contextual perspective. This perspective recognized the context, or environment, as playing a part

with human situations. This approach was similar to systems theory but was not as comprehensive. These theories have been used extensively in CT research.

Symbolic interaction theory. Symbolic interaction theory is the two-way interaction between people, focusing on appearance perception and appearance management. Stone (1962) authored a historical work in which symbolic interaction theory was applied to appearance and dress. The work was an attempt to show that appearances of individuals in social interactions possessed communication equal to discourse. Hunt and Miller (1997) stated that Stone's discourse referred to only verbal communication. Hunt and Miller's study focused on developing the discourse of appearance to include visual communication and "larger cultural idioms that reflect prevailing norms, values, and beliefs" (p. 70). This research was a joint venture between sociology and the field of CT to "clarify how identity construction occurs in broader cultural contexts" (p. 70).

Many studies on appearance and symbolic interaction have been conducted in the field of sociology from which the field of CT has borrowed. Examples of these studies include socialization into a fantasy role using dress (Hickey, Thompson, & Forester, 1988), use of visual symbols by sorority pledges to express social roles (Arthur, 1997), the stigmatization of red hair (Heckert, 1997), the role of dress in social and personal identity construction (Michelman, 1997), and status ambivalence in a study of maid's uniforms and blue jeans (Davis, 1989). The research studies from sociology have influenced the research in CT in the use of symbolic interaction theory and methodology.

Within the CT field, Kaiser (1996) expanded The Social Psychology of Clothing, from the 1990 edition to include a chapter on "Symbolic Appearances in Diverse Contexts: Emerging Insights, Expanding Possibilities." Davis (1992) stated "We cannot separate the concept of identity from interactions with others, because through expressions of identity, individuals symbolically communicate personal qualities to and with others" (p. 540). Burns and Lennon (1993) studied the effect of clothing in forming first impressions of other people. Symbolic interaction was used to explain differences in male and females in appearance management (Johnson, Crutsinger, & Workman, 1994;

Kaiser, Freeman, & Chandler, 1993) and in reasons of dressing in costume (Miller, 1998).

Kaiser, Nagasawas, and Hutton (1995, 1996) discussed theory development with the construction of a symbolic interaction theory of fashion. “The negotiation of meaning is especially critical on an interpersonal level and ideas about fissionability tend to be negotiated in group- and subcultural-level processes” (p.181), because of cultural ambivalence and intensified symbolic ambiguity. Their theory of symbolic interaction was used to promote discussion and stimulate thinking about the theory of fashion in the field of CT. Kean (1997) proposed that the apparel industry was the most powerful change agent in the fashion system, not the consumer. Kaiser, Nagasawas, and Hutton (1997) responded that a system could not be complete without including the consumer and encouraged an integrative approach to understanding the industry-consumer link. Hamilton (1997) argued symbolic interactions alone could not be a reliant theory to explain the interaction between micro and macro level phenomena in consumer acceptance of new fashion and its meaning. The role of the cultural and fashion systems must be understood to have a whole picture of how individuals generate fashion meanings. In response, Kaiser et al. (1997) stated that Hamilton amplified their theory by adding the dimension of “structural conditions of the marketplace” (p. 186). Pannabecker (1997) pointed out the need for use of narrative (stories) to understand fashion and its meaning. The formalization of theory, while providing a stimulus for thought, did not give a clear picture of the meaning of fashion. In response, Kaiser et al. stated that a new dimension had been added that must be addressed. The new dimension included globalization and the growth of technology over the past twenty years.

Symbolic interaction theory has been used to study dress and appearance. The incomplete development of this theory was noted by the dialog among Kaiser, et al. (1996), Kean (1997), Pannebecker (1997), and Hamilton (1997). Recognizing the use of symbols and impressions to form perceptions of other people and many times ourselves was part of human interaction. This interaction occurred in social situations and context; however, an individual’s perception formation was addressed by the cognitive theory.

Cognitive theory. Cognitive theory in CT explains how a person forms impressions about another person, and also about themselves (appearance perception). Cognitive theory focused on individual thought processes and appearance perception by use of visual cues (Kaiser, 1990). Cognitive theory could describe consumer's formations of schema that affect their responses to an apparel product (DeLong, Minshall, & Larntz, 1986). Individuals used cues to perceive ideas about others as well as themselves. Clothing cues were found to provide personal and social information within a social context in pictures of different work situations (Damhorst, 1984-1985). Appearance and proper attire were found to enhance the self-perception of types of occupational attributes, especially in men (Kwon, 1994). The self-concept of fashion leaders was unique—"more excitable, indulgent, contemporary, formal, colorful, and vain than followers" (Goldsmith, Flynn, & Moore, 1996, p. 242). Adolescents' self-esteem could be enhanced by clothing choices (Daters, 1990), and it is many times overlooked in enhancing self-concept of people with a psychical impairment, such as scoliosis (Liskey-Fitzwater, Moore, & Gurel, 1993).

Body image, or how an individual perceived his/her body, was a cognitive function of an individual. The importance of clothing functions varied according to a woman's perception of being in a fat or slender state (Kwon & Parham, 1995). Body image was developed in the mind and may or may not be the same as physical measurements. Body cathexis was the degree of satisfaction with the parts or processes of the body. In body cathexis, an individual evaluated his/her own body image or perception of his/her body within some standard. In western societies, the ideal female body was one of thinness. For this reason many females were dissatisfied with their bodies and have a negative body cathexis. Lennon (1997) confirmed the cultural ideals of thinness and youth were held by middle-aged women.

Attitudes toward apparel determines the shopping behavior and other apparel choices. Body cathexis and attitude towards clothes also were found to differ among college business and agriculture majors. If the students had a positive clothing attitude and a positive body cathexis they were inclined to be fashion leaders, have a positive

attitude towards retail products, and spend more on clothing (Shim, Kotsiopulos, & Knoll, 1991). The researchers hypothesized that this research occurred because business majors were more affected by social pressures and were more concerned with the cultural ideals of physique than the agriculture majors (Richards & Hawthorne, 1971). Tatarka's (1995) interview with women in exercise programs found similar results. Appearance management behavior was related to body-self concept. She found that women tried to cover or expose their bodies as they tried indicating to create an ideal appearance" (p. 196). In CT research, appearance management and the manipulation of body appearance was related to body image, self-concept, and evaluation of one's own body relative to societal standards.

Information processing by an individual is part of cognitive theory. Lennon and Davis (1989) wrote a summary of clothing and human behavior from a social cognitive framework. The summary viewed the way a person processes his/her perceptions in social situations. Theoretical perspectives that were discussed included social perception, categorization, attribution theory, and impression formation. The stages of social cognition are pre-processing, processing, and post-processing. These stages integrate theory and research of the social cognitive perspective with the field of CT and human behavior.

Kaiser (1983-84) called for an emphasis on a contextually situated social psychology of clothing by synthesizing symbolic interaction and cognitive theoretical perspectives. Later this idea was expanded to include the four models of cognitive, behavioral, bio-volitional, and symbolic, presented as metatheories as they related to the field of CT (Nagasawa, Hutton, & Kaiser, 1991). A study by Koch and Dickey (1988) was an example of a contextual study of dress using symbolic interaction and cognitive attribution theories. Personal values (feminist orientation) and situational factors (occupational situations) both influenced attitudes toward dress. The theories of symbolic interaction and cognitive theory have been used separately and combined in a contextual perspective.

Cultural theory. Cultural theory states that people have a context in which to experience and evaluate their lives. Evaluation is done using symbolic meanings and codes. The cultural theory used by the field of CT was interdisciplinary in origin. Cultural theory gave a larger framework than symbolic interaction and cultural theory in which to view the study of clothing and appearance (Kaiser, 1990). A cultural model (metatheory) provided a view of a broad, dynamic, complex, and interacting system (Eicher, 1995; Hamilton, 1987).

This theory was used to research consumer behavior differences between age groups and ethnic groups (Lee & Burns, 1993; O'Neal, 1998; Wilson & MacGillivray, 1998). Many studies showed the cultural influence on body image, self-esteem, and appearance management behaviors (Feather, Ford, & Herr, 1996, 1997; Hamilton, 1994; Kaiser, 1994; Lennon, 1992, Lennon & Rudd, 1994). A study of early, middle, and late adolescents showed a significant difference between those with a rural residence and those with an urban residence, in clothing use, satisfaction, and body image. Rural youth were more conforming in clothing use, not using clothing to gain approval, while urban youth use clothing to gain social approval (MacGillivray & Wilson, 1997).

Non-American cultures were studied using cultural theory. Hamilton and Hamilton (1989) discussed the way dress can interact with ritual to maintain cultural continuity. In the Karen tribe of Thailand, ethnographers found life rituals that included specific types of dress. Dress was a powerful medium through which people were socialized and away to have individuals do what is required "for continuation of their social reality" (p. 22). Similarly, Lynch, Detzner, and Eicher (1996) found dress was used in Hmong American New Year's celebrations to express and partially resolve cultural conflict in the community. Other studies (e.g., Arthur, 1997; Jirousek, 1997) focused on the "cultural authentication" (the process of assimilating an artifact or idea) of an external object into a culture (Arthur, p. 129). Clothing values were studied in Middle Eastern culture by interviewing women of Saudi Arabia and Qatar to gain understanding of values across cultures. The order of five values (aesthetic, social I, political, economic, and social II) fell the same for both Saudi Arabian and Qatari, with the first two values

(aesthetic and social I) significantly higher for more Qatari women than Saudi Arabian (Forney & Rabolt, 1990). The findings indicated the cultural affects of the social object of clothing and the differences among cultures. Cultural theory views a bigger picture than does symbolic interaction or cognitive theory, and is similar to a systems theory perspective in that it recognizes the influence of the group system on an individual.

Human ecology theory. In the field of CT a systems theory was found--the human ecology theory. Human ecology theory views an individual as a dynamic, complex system, interacting with the complex systems around them. The theory of human ecology was first introduced to the field of CT in the late 1970s and early 1980s by Sontag (1979), and Pederson (1984) but has had limited usage by other CT researchers. Most CT researchers have used symbolic interaction, cognitive, or cultural theory. These theories have been promoted in the major textbooks used for social/psychological courses in CT. The human ecology theory has had exposure only in a few studies and journal articles. Pederson discussed the human ecological model in order to add to the field a tool that incorporated human values into the design of research projects. An importance of respecting a balance of the earth systems, natural, scientific, and human, was emphasized. Olson (1982) used a systems theory perspective, based on Laszlo's (1972) valuing process model, to conduct an empirical study of the interaction of human's with their environment. Although these were not CT researchers, apparel was included in the study. The model Laszlo developed consisted of four basic elements (designated by the letters E, P, R, and C) and their interactions—Information of the environment [E], the precept [P], the behavioral response [R], and the coding [C] of the expectations of the people involved.

Bubolz and Sontag (1988) recognized the need for using a more systemic perspective to address the *human factor* in research. Sontag and Schlater (1995) proposed a subject-object interactive approach to human values measurement, studying the interaction between relationships, and Morgado (1995) suggested a reassessment of the Allport-Vernon-Lindzey Study of Values (AVL) instrument that has been used in research in the field of CT. This instrument addresses systems because it was used to

measure six values: theoretical, economic, aesthetic, social, political, and religious. Morgado concluded that the study of the relationships between personal values and their expression in dress were probably more complex than this instrument can address. A holistic systems theory perspective was suggested for CT research because it would address complex human problems by looking at the interaction of socioeconomic, social psychological, sociocultural, and other environmental factors (Sontag & Schlater).

Other more recent studies found in the field of CT that used a systems theory perspective were Pederson (1991) and Eicher and Erekosima (1997). Pederson encouraged the use of an ecological approach as a framework to the study of historic costume, expanding the studies by using a more holistic view. Eicher and Erekosima used a holistic systems theory perspective by using Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model to understand the interconnecting systems of Kalabari life, by a study of an important textile used in their culture.

Human ecology theory and human resources. The field of CT is an area within the discipline of Human Resources (formerly Home Economics). The use of human ecology theory has been limited in the area of CT, although the theory was used to discuss the mission and the goals of Human Resources. Family and Child Development (Human Development), a source of many systems theories, is also an area within Human Resources. The field of Human Resources was one of the first to embrace a human ecological perspective (Baldwin, 1991; Bubolz, Eicher, & Sontag, 1979; Bubolz & Sontag, 1988). This discipline grew out of a goal in the late 19th century to strengthen families (or home), from a concern for the individual influenced by the family, and with the society that affected both (Bubolz & Sontag). Compton and Hall (1972) described the foundations of Home Economics research, based on the human ecology approach as “the study of man in interaction with his *near environment*—housing, home furnishings, household equipment, clothing and textiles, food, and family. Man is viewed as an organism that responds to varied stimuli in this environment” (p. vi).

Bubolz et al. (1979) described a model of the human ecosystem. This framework “evolved while designing a research project on stability and change and the quality of life

in a rural Michigan county” (Bubolz et al., p. 28). This Michigan State university project was a case study of two farm families beginning in 1983 (Sontag & Bubolz, 1996). Using a human ecological perspective, the interdependence of a family—farm ecosystem was described and explained. The methodology was used

...for identification and study of the complexity of the human ecology of small farms. The strong interplay of personal values, goals, economic stability and stress, interpersonal relationships within the family and the community, support persons and groups, and the physically and emotionally competing demands of multiple jobs (employment), form a complex web that defines small farm life. (Sontag & Bubolz, p. xviii)

The goal of strengthening families, the individual, and the society with which both interact has continued to be important to the discipline of Human Resources. McGregor and Goldsmith (1998) discussed expanding the understanding of the concepts, quality of life, standard of living, and well being. They stated,

Understanding and collectively agreeing to the meaning of these concepts and how each is inherently related to the others ensures that we have a powerful perspective for generating theory and research that influence practice, policy, curricula, and programs. Collective agreement on these concepts will provide strength and focus with a unique approach to families. (p. 2)

Baldwin (1991) called for a *new* integrative paradigm for the Home Economics movement to restore the vision of focusing on family well being.

The American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences’ conceptual framework for the 21st century agreed with this vision. It focused on an integrative approach to the relationships among individuals, families, and communities and the environments in which they function. Other concepts included a concern with the health of families, a plan to build on the sciences, arts, and humanities, to have a global perspective, to use diverse modes of inquiry, and to use a systems approach in professional practice (The Conceptual Framework For the 21st Century, 1995). In reviewing the goals and missions of Human Resources discipline, the area of CT could

renew its vision and provide leadership for research. Several complex societal problems are researched in the CT field, including the subject of body image. A theoretical perspective that addresses the complexity of this issue and the recognition of the requirements for human optimal development was needed to meet the challenges of this, and all other human issues.

An overview of the field of CT found several social psychological theories, including symbolic interaction, cognitive theory, cultural theory, and human ecology theory. These theories were used in systems related research, but the field was not united in using a holistic perspective to address its future direction. With increasing complexity of societal issues, a holistic view would be helpful in the study and resolution of research problems and in the improvement of the quality of human life. An example of a current complex, societal issue that needed a holistic perspective was the subject of body image and appearance management, specifically disordered eating behaviors. The field of CT has researched the subject of body image because of its relationship to dress and appearance

An Overview: Body Image and Eating Disorders in Females

A need existed for a theoretical framework to address the complex, dynamic nature of the issue of body image and eating disorders in females. Facets of this issue are closely related to components of CT: dress, fashion, marketers, body image, and appearance management. Pipher (1994) stressed the importance of understanding the societal influences and other factors that produce unhealthy results in a growing number of our young girls that are producing unhealthy results. A healthy body image is essential to the optimal development of humans, including our girls and women. Hutchinson (1982) stated,

When the body image is negative it can manifest on a continuum from complete disassociation or denial of the body to open warfare with the whole or parts of the body. The body has become the symbol of target for everything that is wrong in life and the object of intense judgement, contempt, and shame. (p.59)

The problem of a negative body image and how the cultural body ideal of thinness contributes to it is a complex one. Several researchers have studied the relationship of body image and eating disorders in females in an attempt to understand a growing problem in our society (Akan & Grilo, 1995; Brownell & Napolitano, 1995; Hutchinson, 1982; Silverstein, Peterson, & Perdue, 1986; Stice & Shaw, 1994; Striegel-Moore, Schreiber, Pike, Wilfley, & Rodin, 1995; Striegel-Moore, Silberstein, & Rodin, 1986; Thelen & Corimer, 1995).

Studies indicated that people were exposed to a thin body ideal in our culture and that exposure could have negative impact on the self-esteem and body cathexis of women. Jaffe and Lutter (1995) found that girls with low body image were more influenced by media images and older girls with *perfect* (thin) figures, than girls with high body image. Some studies found the exposure to a thin body ideal could contribute to disturbed eating behaviors (Brownell & Napolitano, 1995; Stice & Shaw, 1994; Striegel-Moore et al., 1995). A historical analysis was made to explore whether the incident of eating disorders increased from the mid-1920s to the present (Silverstein et al., 1986). Conclusions were that an increasingly thin body standard was correlated with a change in eating behaviors in women, due to strong societal influences. Other studies also showed this link (Akan & Grilo, 1995; Brownell & Napolitano, 1995; Thelen & Corimer, 1995). This body standard is perpetuated in the marketing done to promote clothing purchases.

A thin cultural body ideal influences eating behaviors of people, especially females. Feminine, curvaceous bodies were associated with less competence and intelligence, encouraging disturbed eating behaviors (Silverstein, Perdue, Peterson, Vogel, & Fanatini, 1986). A link was found between dieting and the Body Mass Index (size of body) of females (Thelen & Corimer, 1995). Women with a higher Body Mass Index (BMI) dieted more than women with low BMIs. Families' attitudes and the adoption of the cultural ideal by the parents were correlated to low body image and dieting behaviors in girls, while boys were less affected by the same factors (Hutchinson, 1982; Thelen & Corimer). A mass-market weight control industry existed that

encouraged unhealthy eating behaviors and perpetuates myths and discrimination of *overweight* people (Freedman, 1992; Miller, 1996; Striegel-Moore, et al., 1986).

Sociocultural factors on eating behaviors were considered in several research studies. Akan and Grilo (1995) found that, while African-American females had a higher Body Mass Index. Caucasian women had the highest levels of eating disorders, dieting attitudes, and body dissatisfaction. A study by Striegel-Moore, Schreiber, Pike, Wilfley, and Rodin (1995) contradicted these findings, with results showing black girls, (ages 9-10 years) reported a significantly greater “Drive for Thinness” than white girls. The authors acknowledged the discrepancy with common assumptions, stating further research could reveal whether the younger group of black girls would grow to show similar rates of eating disorders as the white girls, or show a decline in a “Drive for Thinness” and an acceptance of weight at older ages.

Prevention was seen as important to combat the negative affects of the cultural expectations of a slim figure (Wooley & Wooley, 1980). Silverstein et al.(1986) concluded by asking the question of how to change the standard to “reflect the diversity of body types manifested by women” (p. 904). School prevention programs were seen as a way to challenge the thin-ideal stereotype and promote higher body satisfaction (Stice & Shaw, 1994). Akan and Grilo (1995) stated in prevention and intervention efforts the need to be aware of possible racial differences and variability with racial groups. Attention to this problem must also be made in CT where the body and the clothing on the body are the focus of the discipline. The growing problem of low body image and eating disorders in females exists, as does the need for a theoretical framework that addresses the complexity of the problem.

Summary

An overview of the systems theory outside of CT and the theories from the field of CT provided a glimpse of the past and present research studies, in order to discover meaning that can be applied and improve future practices. The overview of body image illustrated the problem of eating disorders in women. Human issues addressed by this research fit within the mission and goals of the Human Resources disciplines. Analyzing

the theories within the field of CT and the systems theory perspective outside the field expands the theoretical perspectives that are used to deal with the multifaceted challenge of human issues in all areas within the field of CT.