

Editors' Preface

“Why?” When asked by a curious observer of human behavior, this question, more often than not, brings responses characterized as “maybes” rather than “absolutes.” Human behavior is complex. Observers of human behavior have drawn inferences and interpretations, and some have developed these into hypothetical constructs and theoretical models—all in the hope they will conform to the real, empirical world of the behavior being observed.

For counselors, theories of human behavior need to be more than just points of intellectual curiosity. Counseling theory is an invaluable tool essential to effective counseling. The value of theory rests in its use as a screen or filter—an orienting framework through which client information can be processed and better understood.

Counseling theories help counselors distinguish the relevant from the tangential. They give counselors the framework for making predictions about clients' behavior. Counseling theories provide the counselor direction as to the goals and purposes of the counseling as well as the processes and techniques needed to achieve those ends.

Counseling Theory: Guiding Reflective Practice provides an understanding of the process of change and use of both classical and cutting-edge theoretical models of change as lenses through which to process client information and develop case conceptualizations and intervention plans. This text is unique among the vast array of “theories” textbooks in that it features the following:

- *Expert practitioners as authors:* Each of the theories presented within this book is written by an expert in that theory—someone who not only understands the theory presented but also employs it as a framework for client case conceptualization and treatment planning.
- *Insight into professional identity:* The authors—who are scholars, academics, and practitioners—share the special value and import of the theories they employ, not just as a guide to their practice decisions but as an essential component of their professional identities.
- *Emphasis on application:* This book goes beyond promoting understanding of theories to facilitating their application to guide practice. It demonstrates the truth behind Lewin's statement that there is “nothing so practical as a good theory.”¹ The text employs a single illustrative case and the concept of “reflective practice” as the anchor for each author's presentation of a particular theory. While articulating the history, significant contributors, and essential concepts of the theory, the primary

¹Lewin, K. (1951). *Field theory in social science: Selected theoretical papers*. New York: Harper, p. 169.

focus of each chapter is on the contributor's application of that theory to the illustrative case. Each author will demonstrate, use of the theory as a tool guiding the practitioner in processing client data and formulating treatment plans. This modeling, along with the chapter's guided practices, helps the reader "see" the theory in action and employ it to guide his or her own case conceptualization and practice decisions.

- *Reflection of the reality of increasing globalization:* This book presents theories that reflect the increasing globalization and diversity of clients engaged in counseling and the issues they bring. It not only highlights the various lenses through which one must view multicultural issues but also demonstrates how each of the theories discussed, while developed in Western culture, can apply to people from different cultural backgrounds.
- *Presentation of classical and cutting-edge theories:* While the classical theories of counseling are fully presented within this text, it also provides the reader with a "peek" into the future of counseling as a profession and practice, as it takes form in emerging, cutting-edge theories that will move counseling well into the 21st century.
- *Address of CACREP competencies:* As with all the books in this series, *Counseling Theory: Guiding Reflective Practices* is most noteworthy in that it has been developed to foster the reader's formative development and professional identity. This book gains value by being a significant part of the integrated series, targeting the professional formation of counselors. As part of an integrated body of work, this book presents theory as an essential component to the counselor's identity formation and eventual professional practice, and to this end is designed to address specific competencies identified by CACREP as essential to developing an understanding of the processes of counseling and development of a counselor's professional identity. Specifically, the goals of this text are as follows:

1. Demonstrate the value of theory to a counselor's reflective practice
2. Identify the historical roots of contemporary theories
3. Present models of counseling consistent with current professional research and practice
4. Compare and contrast the major tenets of affective, behavioral, and cognitive theories
5. Apply counseling theory to material guiding case conceptualization and selection of appropriate interventions
6. Describe the "what," "when," and "why" of selecting family and other systems theories and related interventions
7. Highlight the impact of increasing globalization and diversification of the practice of professional counseling and of the clients served

We are proud to have had the opportunity to assemble such a diverse group of scholar-practitioners to share their chosen theories and unique professional identities. We know you will find their presentation valuable to your own professional practice and developing professional identity.