

Orbits-Gravity Model – Basic Theory

Paradoxical Interventions - A Non-linear Approach

Behavioral, Cognitive, and Psych-dynamic therapies are all founded on the premise that the 'process of change' occurs in a **linear 'cause and effect'** manner. These traditional orientations are relatively easy to understand, since they offer face validity and come across as logical and straightforward. Within these models, growth is seen to occur in a **gradual 'step-by-step'** fashion.

However, on a broader theoretical level, the presentation of these methods is problematic. While it is obvious that an overlap exists between these orientations, historically they have each presented as '**closed systems**' that give the impression that there is little 'common ground'. Since each approach is defined and supported by their own subjective observations, they offer no room to bridge the gap that addresses their obvious overlap. While various attempts have been made to integrate these orientations, none have been successful.

Paradoxical interventions are known for the rapid nature in which change occurs. As compared to traditional therapies, paradoxical interventions can be viewed as promoting '**exponential leaps**' of change. Often, unhealthy rigid behaviors that have been going on for months or years rapidly 'vanish' or 'evaporate overnight'. The rate of growth when using this method does not match the gradual expectation of linear models. Since the predominant view within psychology assumes that change occurs through a gradual 'cause and effect' process, many clinicians are skeptical that such 'exponential leaps' will sustain over the long term. Without a theory to support this kind of movement, clinicians dismiss such 'leaps' as implausible since they seem to defy conventional logic.

In addition, unlike traditional orientations which focus on their 'brand' as the primary attribute in the change process, the advantage of paradoxical interventions

is that it is known to have **simultaneous impact** on changing behavioral, cognitive, and emotional (psycho-dynamic) aspects. As will be discussed, it is through understanding paradoxical interventions that we are able to offer a **single unified theory** regarding the process of change.

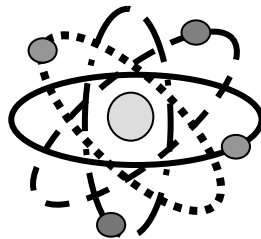
Orbits-Gravity Phenomena

In order to explain the nature of paradoxical interventions, it is important to have a working understanding of '**orbits-gravity phenomena**'. By matching the paradoxical method with an orbits-gravity model, it becomes possible to extrapolate ideas that explain '**exponential leaps**', as well an approach that **theoretically unifies** traditional treatment methods.

Orbits-Gravity Phenomena – 3 Components

While it is conceptually a new idea to present psychological ideas within an orbits-gravity framework, a review of the major sciences indicates that this **paradigm serves as the central model** for all modern scientific thought. This paradigm has been accurate in hypothesizing phenomena in areas ranging from astronomy to chemistry to quantum physics (Capra, 1975; Hawking, 1998). The following illustration (Figure-1) offers a basic model of an 'orbits-gravity system':

Figure 1: Basic Orbits-Gravity System



Through this model, the workings of paradoxical interventions can be understood. The model **provides insight** in defining ideas that have often been considered complicated and abstract. An important aspect of this model is that it provides clinical direction in working with **treatment resistant clients**. Treatment resistant clients include those who are defiant, oppositional, or have no conscious desire to change their behavior. As will be discussed, this model is inclusive of treating eating disorders, aggressive or problem sexual behaviors (PSB), fire-setters, and other volatile type behaviors.

The model provides perspective on **abstract psychological concepts**. Abstract concepts include: 'free will', 'exponential leaps' of change, and the

significance of 'imposing attachment' as the key ingredient that promotes treatment. The visual aspect of the model provides clarity for ideas that have often been intuitively recognized, but words alone do not adequately explain.

Defining General Terms

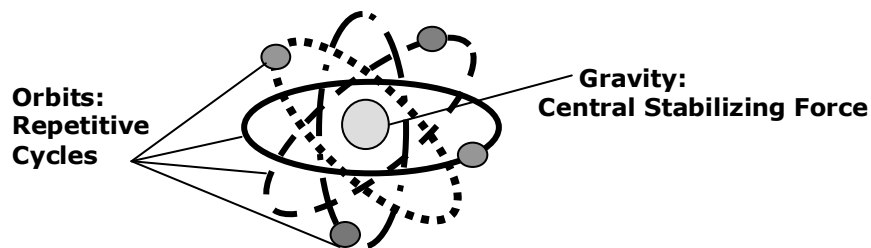
The orbits-gravity model provides structure to the **non-linear nature** of the paradoxical approach. In presenting this paradigm, it is first important to define general terms and concepts, and then show how they match or parallel psychological phenomena.

The orbits-gravity model illustrates a non-linear system in **balance and equilibrium**. The model is made up of three components: 'orbits', 'gravity', and the orbits-gravity 'system as a whole'.

- 1) **Orbits** represent 'ebb and flow' cycles of repetitive energy and movement.
- 2) **Gravity** is the force that attaches, bonds, and stabilizes the entire system.
- 3) The **system** is the integrated unit of orbits-gravity where the 'whole is greater than the sum of its parts'.

The following is the most common view of an 'orbits-gravity' model (Figure 2):

Figure 2: Orbits-Gravity Model



The model shows **multi orbits or cycles** of repetitive energy/movement, which are stabilized by a **central force of gravity**. The whole unit is a **self-regulating system** in equilibrium. The visual image illustrates an integrated entity of interacting and simultaneous cycles in relation to a steady gravitational force. Gravity is the dominant force that keeps the orbits within a given cyclical rate, range and flexibility. The orbits-gravity paradigm is representative of a unified system in which 'the whole is greater than the sum of its parts'. As a self-contained system that maintains the quality of movement and equilibrium the orbits-gravity paradigm can be seen as a **metaphor for an 'alive system'**.

Orbits-Gravity Phenomena – Human System

The 'alive' aspect of the orbits-gravity model can be seen to parallel the 'human condition'. As human beings we are each a 'system' that is made up of a myriad of 'ebb and flow' cycles and rhythms. These 'ebb and flow' rhythms are most notable on the physical level related to breathing, eating, sleeping, etc. as dictated by the body's needs for survival. However, it is possible to show how this model is also **parallels psychological and personality phenomena**. The 3 components of 'orbits', 'gravity', and 'the system' can be matched with the following psychological phenomena:

A) '**Orbits**' as represented by *repetitive cycles of energy* related to behavior, emotions, thoughts, and social interaction.

B) '**Gravity**' as represented by developmental *attachment and trust*; and

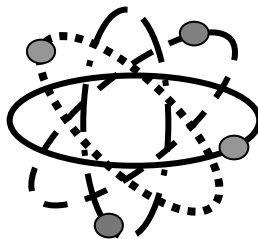
C) The '**system**' as represented by the *personality as a whole* in which repetitive energy and attachment is viewed as an integrated system. The model suggests that although energy patterns and attachment can be discussed separately, in reality these aspects are intrinsically related in a manner that '**the whole is greater than the sum of his parts**'.

A) Orbits / Cycles of Repetitive Patterns -

'Orbits' relates to cycles of repetitive biological and psychological patterns. Repetitive *biological* patterns include vital life functions related to breathing, sleeping, digestion, heart rate, etc. These functions occur automatically and are generally viewed as being outside one's conscious control.

Psychological orbits or patterns relate to repetitive energy and movement that include behaviors, emotions, thoughts, and social interaction. Over time, people develop repetitive, habitual, and often predictable patterns regarding their behavior, emotions, thought patterns, and social relations. The rates, ranges, and flexibility of these patterns ultimately define the person's psychological well-being. The combined type and degree of these repetitive cycles will influence whether the person's lifestyle is considered to be '**functional**' or '**dysfunctional**'.

Basic Psychological Orbits: – Behavior, Emotions, Thoughts



Flexibility and Rigidity -

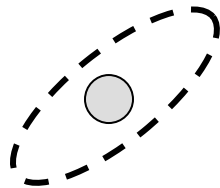
In general, **flexibility** in behaviors, emotions, etc. suggests a healthier lifestyle, as the person is able to express a wider range of behavioral, emotional, etc. choices. A person's ability to make flexible choices is related to healthy coping, frustration tolerance, and impulse control. The greater the range of one's flexibility the more he is able to manage unexpected life events. In orbits-gravity terms, flexible energy cycles can be likened to a rubber-band that has the ability to '**stretch**'. The idea of 'stretching' refers to the ability to incorporate a wide range of choices that allow the person to address new situations in a calm, open, and relaxed manner.

A person who exhibits **rigid patterns** indicates a more constricted lifestyle. Rigid patterns are associated with 'less choices' and a reduced ability to cope. Dysfunctional patterns relate to rigid habits that limit the person's range of choices. Constricted patterns include addictions, mental health disorders, repetitive criminal behavior, and ongoing couple / family conflict. In orbits-gravity terms, rigid energy relates to cycles that are 'fixed'. 'Fixed' cycles tend to restrict the person's range of choices. As such, new situations are often met with fear and anxiety as the person lacks the ability to 'stretch' in order to meet these new challenges. Rigid patterns are often noted by one's insistence to avoid situations, and remain isolated and self-involved.

B) Gravity - Attachment

Unlike orbits that demonstrate movement and energy, 'gravity' represents an invisible, silent, and steady force. Gravity in the natural sciences represents a central force that **attaches, bonds, and stabilizes the system as a whole.**

Basic Psychological Gravity: - Attachment, Bond, Connection



In psychological terms 'gravity' parallels the concept of '**attachment**' in **parent-child relationships**. The concept of 'attachment' relates to trusting relationships that *attach, bond, and stabilize* the child's life experience. The child's experience of 'attachment' is significant in personality development and is a guide for future social interaction and relationships. Psychologically, a strong 'force of gravity'

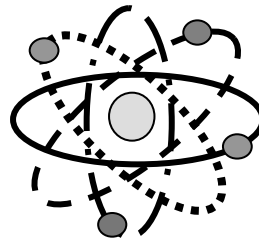
allows the person to develop an internal 'sense of self' that is confident, secure, and stable. This secure 'sense of self' allows the person to develop flexible relationships based on trust and sharing.

Research by Spitz (1946) determined that the attachment bond had far-reaching consequences. In orphanages, he determined that infants who failed to demonstrate attachment had much higher rates of mortality and morbidity. He concluded that 'attachment' impacted the child's ability to thrive, and was literally a matter of ***life and death***.

C) The Personality System - 'The whole is greater than the sum of its parts'

The 'system' represents the inseparable integration of orbits and gravity. As an integrated system the 'whole is greater than the sum of its parts'. From a psychological perspective the 'whole system' is represented by the personality. The personality represents the manner and style by which a person functions to promote a normal sense of equilibrium in his daily life. The personality acts in both conscious and unconscious ways to perpetuate physiological and psychological balance. Spitz's research determined that the early attachment experience of the infant had significant impact on the development of one's 'personality system' and ability to thrive.

Basic Orbits-Gravity System: Personality System



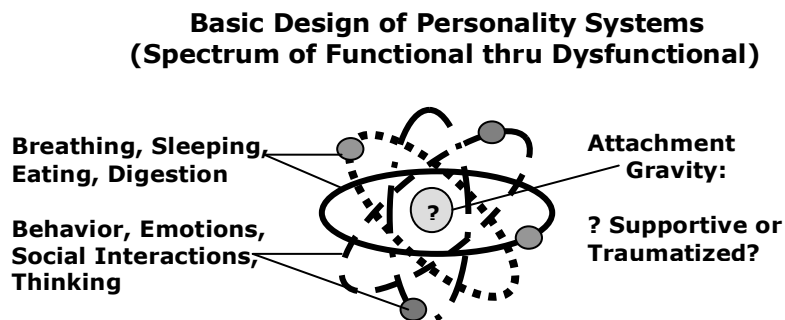
The Personality System -

The personality functions as a system in which 'the whole is greater than the sum of its parts'. In the context of orbits-gravity, both healthy and dysfunctional personality systems function within a state of equilibrium. 'Healthy - functional' systems are defined by equilibrium that is more flexible and relaxed, while 'unhealthy - dysfunctional' personalities are more constricted and rigid.

The model indicates that the **type of 'attachment-gravity'** that stabilizes the personality will determine whether the system is more functional or dysfunctional. Functional personality systems demonstrate *movement and flexibility*.

Movement and flexibility are related to a wide range of choices that promote the relaxed 'ebb and flow' of life energy. When 'attachment' is strong and supportive, the personality has flexibility to cope with new situations in a relaxed way. Dysfunctional systems have reduced flexibility. Although these systems are in equilibrium, they restrict the person's range of choices. When 'attachment' is weak and traumatized, the personality system will react in a rigid, limited, and self-involved manner when new situations arise. The lack of flexibility in these personalities often results in responses that are often viewed as **socially inappropriate or dysfunctional**.

In a broad sense the personality is an **integration of the individual's mind, body, and social functioning**. The personality system encompasses the individual physiologically, psychologically, and socially. The personality is an integration of physiological aspects related to breathing, digestion, sleeping, etc., in conjunction with repetitive aspects of behavior, emotions, thoughts, and social interaction. The orbits-gravity model represents a metaphor of each individual's personality structure in their effort to perpetuate a 'normal' sense of balance and equilibrium as a unique 'human system'. The following illustration indicates the physiological, psychological, and social overlap that occurs in both functional (healthy) and dysfunctional (unhealthy) personality systems. The question mark (?) seeks to determine whether the attachment-gravity is 'supportive' or 'traumatized' as this will indicate the relative 'health' of the system:



As noted, attachment-gravity dominates the system. In addressing the wide spectrum between healthy and dysfunctional behavior, the question (?) always depends on the degree and depth of the attachment bond. This bond most often relates to the client's developmental experience as a child of feeling supported or feeling (isolated) traumatized.

Using the above model, the clinician can hypothesize the type of underlying attachment experience the client comes in with. By observing the client's behavioral, emotional, thinking, and social patterns, the clinician can reliably gage the client's

early attachment experience. In fact, in most cases, observing these factors can be more accurate than the client's own self report regarding his history since his own recall may be influenced by denial and / or a need to protect those who raised him.

'Personality systems' that develop in relation to supportive attachment will be flexible and open. Overall patterns related to breathing, digestion, sleep, etc. will be relaxed and tranquil, along with patterns of behavior, emotions, thinking, and social skills. In the opposite fashion, the more a system is based on traumatized attachment, the more a person will exhibit dysfunctional rigid patterns, and react in a constricted and closed manner.

As will be discussed, this model is useful to help identify and plan treatment strategy. In brief, what the model alludes to is the fact that ultimately the core factor of any treatment is to shift the client's underlying traumatized attachment status quo toward an attachment experience that is accepting, supportive, and validating.

As we continue our discussion, we will move from a 3 dimensional (3-D) atomic model to a one-dimensional 'solar' orbits-gravity model. The reader should understand that the **solar model** represents the exact same dynamics as the atomic model, however, for the sake of clarity the visual aspect of the solar model allows us to gain a better handle as to the nuances surrounding the concepts to be presented.

