



Developing the Precision Paradigm

Theories of Behavior Survey
Early Results – Feedback to Intervention Researchers

May 2022

Thank You!

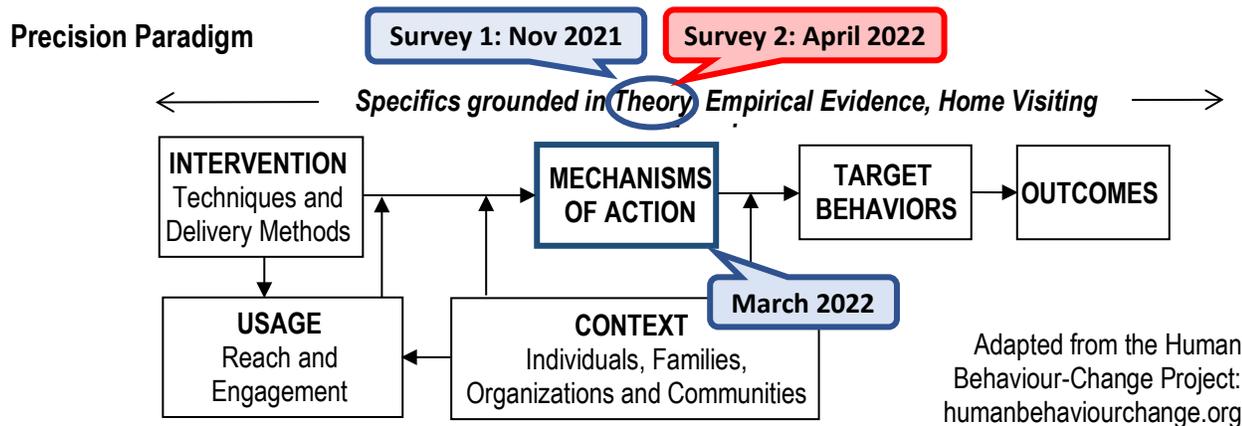
Thank you for being one of **over 100 intervention researchers across the country** helping to specify the **Precision Paradigm**.

Precision Paradigm

The Precision Paradigm is the foundation for innovative research to learn, *What interventions within home visiting (HV) work best, for which families, in which contexts, why and how?*

With help from researchers and many others with an interest in HV, we are specifying each part of the Precision Paradigm to build a common framework and language for such research. Click [here](#) for brief video.

We are sharing what we learn each step of the way. This email shares results from our **April 2022 survey** of intervention researchers regarding **grand or explanatory theories of behavior**.



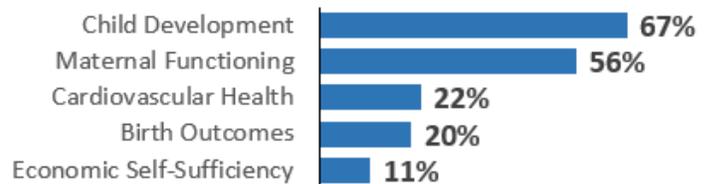
Why We Did the Survey

Theory is part of the foundation for intervention design. There are many theories of behavior and behavior change. We want our research resources to feature well-recognized theories rated to be high quality and relevant for HV research. The current survey expanded on the theories of behavior change survey conducted in [November 2021](#) to include general and explanatory theories of behavior. Like the previous survey, we surveyed researchers to learn their familiarity with theories and how they rated the quality and relevance of theories familiar to them.

How We Did the Survey

- We invited **112** intervention researchers to complete the web-based survey.
- The survey included **34 theories of behavior** cited in the literature.
- It asked respondents to rate the quality – the generalizability, clarity, coherence, and evidence-base – of theories familiar to them, and the theories’ relevance for HV and precision research.
- We received responses from **55** intervention researchers with expertise in five outcome areas.

Primary or Secondary Area of Expertise



Highlights of What We Learned

What theories were familiar to researchers?

- Every theory was familiar to at least a few researchers.
- 18 of 34 theories were familiar to most researchers in at least one outcome area (**Table 1**).
- Only 5 theories were familiar to most researchers in all five outcome areas.

How did researchers rate the quality and HV relevance of the theories familiar to them?

- 17 were rated high quality by at least 50% of researchers;
- 13 were rated relevant for HV research by at least 50% of researchers; and
- 13 were rated both high quality and relevant for HV research by at least 50% of researchers.

An Unexpected Finding – What Constrained Researchers' Ratings of Quality?

- Researchers familiar with a theory were often unsure how to rate its quality. For example, over half of researchers familiar with social ecology theory responded 'not sure' to one or more of the four quality items.

Table 1. Intervention Researcher Familiarity and Ratings of Theory Quality and Relevance (n=55)

Theory	Familiarity by Area of Researcher Expertise ¹						Relevant for HV ^{3,5}	High Quality ^{3,4}	Unsure How to Rate Quality ⁶
	BO	CD	MF	CVH	ESS	n ²			
Classical Conditioning						53	30%	68%	11%
Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs						51	69%	63%	22%
Attachment Theory						49	76%	65%	14%
Ecological Systems Theory						46	91%	87%	6%
Cognitive Dissonance Theory						44	32%	52%	36%
Family Systems Theory						39	69%	59%	26%
Transactional Model of Child Development						36	81%	81%	17%
Locus of Control Theory						36	42%	53%	36%
Lifecourse Approach						29	76%	79%	14%
Theory of Mind						27	48%	56%	30%
Social Network Theory						25	64%	60%	20%
Social Ecology Model for Health Promotion						24	67%	71%	25%
Social Ecology Theory						24	38%	33%	54%
Adult Learning Theory						22	77%	68%	32%
Stress Theory						22	77%	86%	4%
Behavioral Economics						22	59%	68%	18%
Social Ecological Theory of Resilience						18	61%	56%	33%
Parent Investment Model						14	64%	71%	29%

Key: BO=Birth outcomes; CD=Child development; MF=Maternal functioning; CVH=Cardiovascular health; ESS=Economic self-sufficiency; ¹Blue shading indicates $\geq 50\%$ of intervention researchers were somewhat or very familiar with the theory; ²Total number of respondents across all areas of expertise that were at least somewhat familiar with the theory; ³Of those at least somewhat familiar with the theory; ⁴Agreed to all four quality items. If participant responded 'not sure' to one or more items, the theory was not rated high quality; ⁵Agreed to both relevance items. If participant responded 'not sure' to one or both items, the theory was rated not relevant; ⁶Percent of researchers who were familiar with the theory but unsure how to rate 1 or more of the 4 quality items.

Implications

- Explanatory theories of behavior have a place in the Precision Paradigm alongside theories of behavior change.
- Researchers' perspectives are useful in identifying theories to feature in our research resources.
- Many researchers themselves could benefit from resources that make it easy to learn key features of well-recognized theories.

Ongoing Work & Next Steps

- Developing TA resources for **Theories of Behavior Change** for inclusion on the HARC website;
- Revising the **Mechanisms of Action** taxonomy based on the [March 2022](#) survey of intervention researchers;
- Developing methods to elicit input on theories and mechanisms of action from a broader range of HV partners, including national HV models and local programs; and
- Planning activities to define features of **Context** (led by James Bell Associates)

Stay up to date on our progress by visiting www.hvresearch.org