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Complexity Theory, Nonlinear Dynamics, and Change: Augmenting Systems Theory

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Abstract

Social work change processes are addressed in terms of complexity theory and nonlinear dynamics, adding the edge-of-chaos, as well as chaos to the entropy and homeostasis of ecosystems theory. Complexity theory sees the edge-of-chaos as valuable to living systems. A logistic difference equation is utilized to model the nonlinear dynamics of the hypothetical contentment of an individual. The modeling suggests that substantial input would be required to move an individual from homeostasis to the beneficial stage at the edge-of-chaos, but that too much input might result in chaos. With good measurement and data observed over time, social work might benefit from complexity theory and nonlinear dynamics, which are already advancing in related disciplines.

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