

UNIT I: Professional and Theoretical Perspectives

SWK 3800
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Good professional practice is based on:

Values
Knowledge
Skills

Common ground with practice and Christianity

- Worth and dignity of all people
- Self-determination
- Basic need for kindness and understanding
- Ethics

What ethical considerations impact professional practice?

- Professional Code of Ethics
- Diversity issues
- Individual versus general
- Broad perspective

Why should you take note if a chart says “DTO/DTS or HI/SI”?

Exceptions to confidentiality include:

- Danger to self/others
- Client waiving right to privilege
- SW suspects abuse or neglect of vulnerable person
- Court orders records to be available
- If an emergency exists

A few potential roles played by a professional:

- Enabler
- Mediator
- Educator
- Analyst
- Broker
- Facilitator
- Initiator
- Advocate

Assessment: a vital component of competency within any professional role. For a good assessment a professional must think about each aspect of a situation. Therefore, we will discuss multi-determined behavior and the multidimensional approach to assessment.

Multi-determined behavior:

belief that human behavior is the result of many causes
(judgement error can result due to our own
egocentrism)

Multidimensional approach

human behavior changes over time
(it is not static)

Personal dimension

interaction of an individual's functioning systems
changes as maturation occurs

Environmental dimension

systems outside the individual impact behavior

Environmental System levels

- Micro - individual
- Meso - small intimate group
- Exo - larger group
- Macro - largest interaction systems

Time dimension:
maturity and
experience influence
behavior, as well as
cultural changes

A person's perception
is their reality

How dimensions
influence an individual
(and vice versa)?

- Influenced differently (we have our own view of "normal")
- Physical experience shapes influence
- Perception

Theory guides the knowledge-base of professional practice. A theory is a "set of concepts and propositions, organized into a deductive system, that explains relationships between aspects of our world" (Hutchinson, p. 32).

Research methods and
the connection to
theory:

systematic problem solving
proposed relationships and outcomes

Quantitative methods

focus on patterns, predictions and ability to generalize outcomes

Qualitative methods

focus on in-depth understanding specific to a given situation
(narrative is valued foremost)

The meta-theory for social work, and this course, is the Systems Perspective/ Ecological Perspective. See class notes outline for terms to be familiar with.

In addition to the systems perspective, it is important to understand other theoretical perspectives on human behavior.

The Conflict Perspective

power structures that can influence behavior (social, economic, and political structures)

Empowerment

identifying areas of inequity and helping people take actions on their own behalf to address them

Rational Choice Perspective

belief that behavior is rational and goal directed

Social exchange theory

behavior is based on desire to maximize benefit and minimize cost

Social network theory

evaluation of social networks to understand behavior
(example use of an ecomap)

Social Constructionist Perspective

understanding how people use symbols and social constructs and the impact on behavior

“Looking Glass Self” (self-fulfilling prophecy)

behavior is shaped by reactions of those we interact with (interpretation of others behavior)

Psychodynamic Perspective

- belief that the personality has three main components (id, ego and superego)
- understanding of dilemmas to be resolved at certain points in life and the impact on behavior

Developmental Perspective

sequential human development (expected changes in biological, psychological and social interactions)

Erikson's theory

developmental "crisis" to be resolved throughout the life-span, each having impact on behavior

Social Behavioral Perspective

behavior is learned through interactions and experiences (umbrella perspective)

Classical conditioning

behavior is learned through association (pairing of unconditioned stimulus with conditioned response)

Operant conditioning

behavior is the result of reinforcement or punishment

Cognitive social learning

behavior is learned through imitation, observation, beliefs and expectations

Humanistic Perspective

understanding behavior in connection with search for meaning and freedom of choice

Carl Rogers

individuals need empathy, warmth and genuineness to be “fully functioning” and to improve self

Maslow's theory

hierarchy of needs (lower levels must be met in order to progress to higher level needs)



Why know multiple perspectives for practice?

- no one theory explains all aspects of behavior
- a broad perspective leads to a better assessment