Chapter 2
Theoretical Perspectives for Social Workers

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter begins with the case study of Sandra McLean, a young woman who suffered a head injury at birth and cannot live independently. Sandra's situation is used to help illustrate the importance of two major types of theoretical perspectives necessary for competent social work practice: those that guide daily practice and those that guide social welfare policy decisions and strongly affect practice.

With respect to social work practice theory, the chapter discusses the influence of systems theory and an ecosystems perspective on today's generalist approach to practice. Levels of intervention included in the generalist approach are discussed as well as the systematic planned change or intervention process. The importance of a strengths-based orientation and recognition of client resilience is discussed. The chapter notes that appropriate levels of social work intervention today may extend beyond former notions of community to include global, ecological, and environmental considerations.

Basic political theory is discussed to help social work students understand different views on government action that will strongly impact practice with clients, who often fall outside the mainstream. Conservative perspectives are contrasted with liberal or progressive and radical viewpoints. Neoconservative and neoliberal points of view are introduced. The Information on basic political theory is followed by a discussion of the political spectrum and how it affects social welfare policy decisions. Social work students are challenged to think about which political perspective might best assist their clients and to attempt to find ways to encourage people who fall on opposite ends of the political spectrum to work together to improve the lives of all.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading Chapter 2, the student should be able to:

- Evaluate roles used by a social worker to implement social welfare policy.
- Develop an initial understanding regarding the need for appropriate treatment plans.
- Develop initial knowledge of systems theory and how it is used in the practice of social work.
- Identify the different systems in the change agent process.
- Evaluate the ecosystems perspective in relation to the client.
- Define the generalist approach as applied to social work practice.
- Identify the levels of intervention and the intervention process.
- Develop an understanding of global, environmental, and spiritual considerations in the generalist approach.
- Define the strengths perspective and how it is used in direct practice.
- Develop familiarity of the political process and how different perspectives operate.
- Identify the political perspectives and how these affect social welfare policy.
- Develop an understanding of why and how we will have to turn to each other to meet today's challenges.

LECTURE GUIDE AND ASSET CORRELATION

Classroom Activities

- Small group discussion/exercise: Social work intervention.
- Small group discussion/exercise: Importance of relationships.
- Debate: Liberal and conservative views.

Out-of-Class Assignments

- Social work documentary: *On Any Given Day, Social Workers Help*
- Policy and Social Work Intervention
- Ecosystems Perspective and Social Work

Websites are focused on aspects of theoretical perspectives and social work as well as policy issues, including the Democratic National Committee, the Republican National Committee, and the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research.

MySearchLab resources include the videos, "Human Behavior: The Ecological Model Using the Friere Method" and "Policy Practice: Participating in Policy Changes"; the cases/documents, "Please Don't Let Our Mother Die" and "Travis (Adoption)"; and focused websites, including a website on ecological social work.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

The Several Roles of Stephanie Hermann, BSW

Brockton Manor

Sandra McLean: The Effects of Institutionalization

Ongoing Challenges of Community Placement

Social Work and Systems Theory

The Ecosystems Perspective

The Generalist Approach

Levels of Intervention

Global, Environmental, and Spiritual Considerations

The Intervention Process

Values, Ethics, and Human Diversity

Social Justice and Populations at Risk

The Strengths Perspective: Resilience and Empowerment

Political Perspectives

The Political Spectrum

Conservative Perspectives

Liberal or Progressive Perspectives

Neoliberalism and Neoconservatism

Radical Perspectives

The Political Spectrum and Social Welfare Policy

Turning to Each Other

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1. Discuss the major components of the generalist approach to social work. How would you apply these components in social work practice with Sandra McLean?
2. How is the ecosystems approach useful in the political system? Please explain.
3. How would conservatives and liberals view an individual in poverty?
4. Discuss processes that can broaden your worldview regarding the global environment.
5. Explain why progress will not come easily toward a sustainable future.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

1. Small group discussion/exercise: Social work intervention. Use a case scenario such as the following: Ian, age 18, is experiencing difficulty in locating housing. He recently left home and earns a minimum wage in his employment. Ian did earn a high school diploma, but has no plans to further his education. He needs a deposit for housing, has no savings, and does not know if he is eligible for federal housing. Ask students to develop a social work intervention plan to assist Ian using the ecosystems perspective.
2. Debate: Liberal and conservative views. Divide the class into two groups through a random process: liberal or conservative. (You may need at least two sets of groups for each view depending on the number of students in the class.) Both groups are assigned the same policy (i.e., healthcare policy, Social Security) to discuss. Each group proposes revisions or status quo in the policy from either the liberal perspective or from the conservative perspective and presents the rationale for the proposal. Time can be given to each group for questions and comments to the other group (rebuttal).
3. Small group discussion/exercise: Importance of relationships. Divide the students into small groups. Ask the groups to explain the importance of relationships globally, nationally, and locally in ensuring a sustainable future.

OUT-OF-CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

1. Social work documentary. Ask students to watch *On Any Given Day, Social Workers Help* found at http://www.socialworkers.org/pressroom/events/anyGivenDay1007/default.aspan and write a one-two page paper on the roles of the three featured social workers regarding how they each work with policy issues.
2. Policy and Social Work Intervention. Students are asked to research a social policy topic of their choice. They are then to report back to the class about their findings regarding how the policy can be applied successfully to a client situation with the assistance of social work intervention.
3. Ecosystems Perspective and Social Work: Students are asked to write a one-two page paper on how they would apply the ecosystems perspective in working with a community issue of their choice.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Books

Canda, E., & Furman, L. (2009). *Spiritual diversity in social work practice: The heart of practice.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Chapin, R. (2007). *Social policy for effective practice: A strengths approach.* Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.

Crisp, B. (2010). *Spirituality and social work.* Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Limited.

Plionis, E. (2007). *Competency in generalist practice: A guide to theory and evidence-based practice.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Saleebey, D. (2006). (4th ed.). *The strengths perspective in social work practice.* Boston, MA: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.

Turner, F. (2011). (ed.) (5th ed.). *Social work treatment: Interlocking theoretical approaches.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Journals

Edwards, B. (2011). Social work education and global issues: Implications for social work practice. *Education, 131*(3), 580-586.

Hall, R., Livingston, J., Brown, C., & Mohabir, J. (2011). *Islam and Asia Pacific Muslims: the implications of spirituality for social work practice. Journal of Social Work Practice, 25*(2), 205-215.

Lane, S. (2011). Political content in social work education as reported by elected social workers. *Journal of Social Work Education, 47*(1), 53-72.

Lane, S., & Humphreys, N. (2011). Social workers in politics: A national survey of social work candidates and elected officials. *Journal of Policy Practice, 10*(3), 225-244.

Larsen, K. (2011). How spiritual are social workers? An exploration of social work practitioners' personal spiritual beliefs, attitudes, and practices. *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work, 30*(1), 17-33.

McNutt, J. (2011). Is social work advocacy worth the cost? Issues and barriers to an economic analysis of social work political practice. *Research on Social Work Practice, 21*(4), 397-403.

Noble, C., & Henrickson, M. (2011). Editorial: After neo-liberalism, new managerialism and postmodernism, what next for social work? *Journal of Social Work, 11*(2), 128-131.

West, D., & Heath, D. (2011). Theoretical pathways to the future: Globalization, ICT and social work theory and practice. *Journal of Social Work, 11*(2), 209-221.

Websites

The Democratic National Committee [http://www.democrats.org]

- Provides information regarding the Democratic Party.

The Republican National Committee [http://www.rnc.org]

- Provides information regarding the Republican Party.

The Green Parties of North America [http://www.greens.org]

- Provides information regarding the Green Parties.

The Libertarian Party [http://www.lp.org]

- Provides information regarding the Libertarian Party.

Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives [http://www.policyalternatives.ca/]

- Website of this non-partisan research institute addressing issues of social and economic justice.

CQ-Roll Call Group [http://congress.org]

- Provides information regarding current policy issues, votes, and debates.

Hudson Institute [http://www.hudson.org/wpc/]

- Provides information on nonpartisan policy research.

Association for Community Organization and Social Administration [http://www.acosa.org]

- Provides information on community and administrative practice.

Social Issues in Islamic Countries [http://www.casasp.ox.ac.uk/welcome.html]

- Website for the University of Oxford Centre for the Analysis of South African Social Policy. Reports and research are available.

The European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research [http://www.euro.centre.org]

- Website for this UN-affiliated intergovernmental organization that focuses on social welfare policy and research.

Social Welfare Services, European Union and Cyprus [http://www.misi.gov.cy/misi/sws/sws.nsf/dmlunion_en/dmlunion_en?OpenDocument]

- Provides information on the social welfare programs and services of Cyprus.

MySearchLab Assignments and Activities

Reinforce what you learned in this chapter by studying videos, cases, documents and more available at www.MySearchLab.com.

Watch and Review

Watch these Videos

Human Behavior: The Ecological Model Using the Friere Method
Policy Practice: Participating in Policy Changes

Read and Review

Read these Cases/Documents

Case #48: Please Don't Let Our Mother Die
Case #60: Travis (Adoption)

Explore and Assess

Explore these Assets

http://capwiz.com/nami/issues/
http://www.unb.ca/crisp/index.php
http://www.ecosocialwork.org/

Assess Your Knowledge

Assess your knowledge with a variety of topical and chapter assessment. Conclude your assessment by completing the chapter exam.

Test Bank

The following assessment has been created for in-class use. This assessment is available through Pearson's MyTest website—allowing for easy access for creating your own tests. *Please contact your local Pearson sales representative to learn about the options available. Visit http://www.pearsonhighered.com/replocator.*

Multiple Choice Questions

Difficulty: 1 = Easy; 2 = Medium; 3 = Challenging

Choose the best possible answer for each of the following.

1. Active treatment for the developmentally disabled means:
      A. Individualized plans for training, therapy, and services
      B. Physical therapy
      C. Exercise classes
      D. Working with the family

Answer: A
Difficulty: 2
Bloom's Taxonomy: Comprehension

2. The simplest way to define the term "system" is:
      A. Human beings
      B. Theoretical framework
      C. A whole consisting of interacting parts
      D. The family

Answer: C
Difficulty: 1
Bloom's Taxonomy: Comprehension

3. The ecosystems perspective encourages social workers to focus on:
      A. The role the federal government plays in social welfare
      B. The person and environment
      C. Community networking
      D. Systems theory

Answer: B
Difficulty: 1
Bloom's Taxonomy: Knowledge

4. The generalist approach to social work practice is strongly rooted in:
      A. Systems theory and the ecosystems perspective
      B. Psychoanalytic theory
      C. MSW education
      D. NASW Code of Ethics

Answer: A
Difficulty: 1
Bloom's Taxonomy: Knowledge

5. The generalist approach to social work practice involves attention to
    A. Working with individuals only
    B. Working with large corporations
    C. Working with groups
    D. Multiple levels of intervention

    Answer: D
    Difficulty: 1
    Bloom's Taxonomy: Comprehension

6. The type of issues of which social workers need to be aware because they affect absolutely everyone, not only ourselves and our clients, are
    A. community and organizational issues
    B. global and environmental issues
    C. liberal and conservative issues
    D. subsystem and suprasystem issues

    Answer: B
    Difficulty: 2
    Bloom's Taxonomy: Application

7. A strengths perspective leads naturally to the idea of
    A. Empowering clients.
    B. Increasing assistance to clients.
    C. Identifying specific problem issues with clients.
    D. Social work intervention in the family and home.

    Answer: A
    Difficulty: 2
    Bloom's Taxonomy: Synthesis

8. The person who notes that health issues continue to increase worldwide due to factors such as ozone depletion and toxic chemicals, but believes a movement can arise strong enough to stop the race toward destruction of our good Earth, is
    A. O'Murchu
    B. Von Bertalanffy
    C. Lerner
    D. Saleebey

    Answer: C
    Difficulty: 2
    Bloom's Taxonomy: Knowledge

9. The Republican Party can be described as
    A. Liberal
    B. Conservative
    C. Neoliberal
    D. Far left

    Answer: B
    Difficulty: 1
    Bloom's Taxonomy: Knowledge

10. The Democratic Party can be described as
    A. Far right
    B. Conservative
    C. Liberal
    D. Ultra-conservative

    Answer: C
    Difficulty: 1
    Bloom's Taxonomy: Knowledge

11. People with conservative perspectives want to
    A. Keep things as they are
    B. Give the poor a better standard of living
    C. Change the structure of the government
    D. Make all people in the country economically equal

    Answer: A
    Difficulty: 1
    Bloom's Taxonomy: Comprehension

12. An individual who takes a radical perspective holds a view
    A. Right of conservatives
    B. That having the wealthy and elite is good for the economy
    C. Very similar to conservatives
    D. "Left" of the liberal view

    Answer: D
    Difficulty: 2
    Bloom's Taxonomy: Comprehension

13. The generalist social worker usually begins with a situation in which change is
    A. unwanted.
    B. opposed by the client system.
    C. desired.
    D. primarily the goal of the generalist social worker.

    Answer: C
    Difficulty: 3
    Bloom's Taxonomy: Knowledge

14. In particular, conservatives believe that the government should not interfere with the
    A. social worker's practice.
    B. physician's practice.
    C. generalist social worker's intervention process.
    D. free market forces of supply and demand.

    Answer: D
    Difficulty: 2
    Bloom's Taxonomy: Comprehension

15. The processes people use to try to improve the fit between themselves and their environments are
    A. interventions
    B. adaptations
    C. implementations
    D. terminations

Answer: B
Difficulty: 3
Bloom's Taxonomy: Knowledge

Essay Questions

1. Identify and briefly explain two of the roles that Stephanie Hermann used while implementing state and federal mandates on the developmentally disabled population.

    Difficulty: 3
    Bloom's Taxonomy: Analysis

2. Identify and define the levels of intervention.

    Difficulty: 1
    Bloom's Taxonomy: Analysis

3. Discuss the ecosystems perspective and systems theory and give examples of how they are helpful in the practice of social work.

    Difficulty: 3
    Bloom's Taxonomy: Comprehension

4. Briefly describe what interventions may have been implemented to avoid the institutionalization of Sandra McLean.

    Difficulty: 2
    Bloom's Taxonomy: Application

5. Describe the perspectives of the two major political parties in the United States.

    Difficulty: 2
    Bloom's Taxonomy: Knowledge