

Chapter 2

The Changing Nature of the Helping Process

SUMMARY

In this chapter, we give students a social context for understanding helping behavior and the human service professions. Factors that influence helping behavior include the values of a society, the historical period, the economic situation, and the socio-political climate. As these factors shift, the human services shift to reflect changing attitudes and situations. These shifts tend to follow a cyclical and dialectical path. Earlier modes of service often reappear in a future century. For example, the current conservative proposal for putting poor children in orphanages signals a return to a 19th century mode of child welfare. Many shelters for the homeless resemble 18th and 19th century almshouses.

We emphasize the difference between theories that tend to blame people themselves for their troubles (victim-blaming), and theories that look at the social system (opportunity theory). We show how the structure of social welfare programs reflects these opposing theories. For example, means-tested programs that separates the "deserving" from the "undeserving" draw upon victim-blaming theory, while institutional universal programs draw upon opportunity theory.

We give a brief history of the development of social welfare in the U.S. including the 1935 Social Security Act, the War on Poverty, the Welfare Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s, and the conservative onslaught against social welfare beginning in the 1980s and continuing to the present. We summarize theories of leading conservative policy makers, including Charles Murray, and show how those theories distort the public's ability to have a clear understanding of such phenomena as teenage pregnancy. We discuss the racist ideology inherent in the TANF program (formerly AFDC) since its beginnings and how it continues in the present. We consider welfare reform as an attack on racial minorities as well as an attack on women.

We illustrate the cyclical nature of helping by showing historical changes in society's approach to welfare, mental illness, and juvenile justice. We then discuss how behavior becomes defined as a social problem, illustrating this by examples: the drug scare, AIDS, welfare, and family violence. Finally, we describe the historical development of the social work and human service professions.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Students will be able to characterize societal attitudes toward people with problems and how the social programs to deal with them have changed through the ages.
- Students will be able to differentiate between means-tested and universal programs and describe how poverty is defined.
- Students will be able to critique cycles of helping in the welfare, mental health, juvenile justice, and criminal justice systems.
- Students will be able to explain the history of human service work and the careers within the field.

PUTTING THEORY INTO PRACTICE: SUPPLEMENTARY ASSIGNMENTS

a. Oral History

Students are asked to interview an older relative or friend of the family to discover what kind of human service problems they faced when they were the same age as the student is now. Students will research what kinds of services were available to deal with the problems that young people faced then. They should phrase questions that try to determine how young people were treated by the community, how his or her problems were viewed by others, what changes have come about since he or she was a young adult and what his or her opinions are about the quality of those changes.

b. Research the history of a social agency in the community.

This can be internet or library research or an interview with someone who is familiar with the history of the agency—how it was started, where its initial funding came from, what its initial mission was and how all of these have changed since its inception.

c. Go to your local TANF (welfare) office and sit in the waiting room for an hour.

You don't need to announce yourself unless the receptionist asks you who you are, in which case you can explain that you are here to observe for a class assignment.

Observe carefully then, write up your observations and your analysis of what kind of service appears to be being delivered. How might it feel to a person who had to come to that office for help? Notice how the receptionist and workers treat the clients, how the clients look, and how clients respond to each other and to the staff. Notice the physical conditions of the office and think about what kind of message this sends to the clients. How does the appearance of the waiting room compare to offices that serve the middle class and rich? If you wish, you can talk to clients and ask their impressions of welfare.

Notice how accessible the office is to a variety of clients. Is it within easy reach of public transportation? Is there enough parking space? Are there toys and play space for children when parents need to bring them to the office? Notice whether information about the agency or other programs is available. Report your observations to the class. Discuss how your observations illustrate public policy regarding welfare.

d. Film Analysis.

Have students watch the film "Sins of Our Mothers" (PBS-An American Experience, 1989). This film tells the story of a young woman sent to the textile mills in Massachusetts in the 1820s. It touches on child labor, unwed pregnancy, and poverty. Have students write a paper (or discuss in class) how the attitudes of the family and townspeople reflect the cyclical nature of human service policies. Students can compare how these issues were dealt with in the early 1800s, and how they are similar to/different from current attitudes and policies. The film also can serve as a springboard for a discussion on Social Darwinism.

TEST ITEMS

Open-ended Questions

1. Discuss the philosophy of Social Darwinism.
 - *The adaptation of the ideas of Charles Darwin on evolution to the realm of sociology.*
 - *Herbert Spencer used Darwin's work to coin the phrase "survival of the fittest" The fittest were presumed to be those people who were able to make money. Poor people were declared unfit*
2. Discuss how the discriminatory classification of people as “deserving” versus “undeserving” has impacted what kinds of social service programs are likely to be implemented?
 - *The opposing classifications of individuals as deserving versus undeserving have resulted in very different approaches to giving help. Victim blamers feel superior to the victims and separate people into “them” and “us”. The blaming the victim ideology always sees character defects in individuals. Entire groups of people are blamed for their behavior. This results in programs that address character or personality defects, rehabilitation programs, punishing programs designed to correct behavior, programs to detect fraud.*
3. What kinds of social service programs are people who believe in opportunity theory likely to implement?
 - *Programs that make changes in the social system which will create more opportunities for people, such as job programs, community development, or organizing for social change.*
4. Why do liberals tend to prefer universal over means-tested programs?
 - *Universal programs do not separate the social classes from each other. They have more political clout because the middle class and rich get benefits from them. They avoid the stigma of programs that are only for the poor.*
5. Discuss the difference in how people view Social Security programs for children and the TANF program.
 - *While the children on Social Security do not differ in any important way from children on TANF, the children “on welfare” are stigmatized while the children on Social Security are hardly noticed by the general public.*
6. Name some of the achievements of the welfare rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s
 - *People were provided with lawyers to help them fight for their rights. Those lawyers struck down some repressive laws such “man in the house” rules. The movement helped poor families get more money, and created a fundamental change in the consciousness of welfare recipients about their right to dignity and respect for the important work of mothering.*

7. Describe how Opportunity Theory explains the emergence of social problems.
 - *It defines human problems as a result of interacting personal and social forces, often beyond the control of the individual. It looks at individuals as embedded in families and communities and in economic and political systems that exert a powerful pull on personality development, social status, and life chances. It does not blame people's problems on their individual defects, but upon the lack of opportunity for advancement or access to resources in the social system.*

8. Summarize the Catholic Bishops' statement on poverty.
 - *Poverty violates the sense of a caring community, deprives people of citizenship, and leaves them powerless. It assaults not only one's pocketbook but also one's fundamental human dignity*

9. What were Charles Murray's beliefs about teenage pregnancy?
 - *Illegitimacy is the single most important social problem of our time — more important than crime, drugs, poverty, illiteracy, welfare or homelessness because it drives everything else.*

10. What statements in the Personal Responsibility Act reflected Charles Murray's philosophy?
 - *Title I of the Personal Responsibility Act, entitled "Reducing Illegitimacy," declared that "marriage is the foundation of a successful society," and listed so-called "facts" about illegitimacy that featured teenage mothers and linked criminality with absent black fathers.*

11. What are some of the things that help to reduce teen pregnancy?
 - *Sex education and easy availability of contraception lower the likelihood of getting pregnant. Research shows that the most powerful factor in the decision to delay pregnancy until later in life is an adolescent's commitment to education and a future career apart from motherhood.*

12. Why does the National Organization for Women (NOW) maintain that the Personal Responsibility Act is an attack on women?
 - *It attempts to pressure all women into a repressive sexuality, limited reproductive choices, and conventional family arrangements.*

13. Describe how welfare provides a good example of the cycles of reform using the theory of Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward.
 - *Welfare expands and contracts in response to changes in the economy and the political climate. Welfare expands in times of civil turmoil, and when the turmoil dies down, welfare contracts and is used to enforce work norms. An example of the cycle of expansion is the beginning of large-scale federal relief programs during the Great Depression. An example of contraction is the cutbacks during the 1940's and 1950's after the turmoil of the 1930's subsided. Welfare was often withheld from people in order to force them into low-paid agricultural and factory work.*

14. What is the "principle of less eligibility"?
 - *Welfare grants should be kept lower than the lowest wage, in order to encourage people to take any low wage job rather than go on welfare.*

15. Why is welfare like “society’s lightning rod”?
- *Welfare attracts people’s ideas and beliefs about dependence and self-reliance-about work, about race, about single mothers, and about the nature of a just society. Welfare is more of a politically hot issue in the United States than in any other industrialized country.*
16. Why does Wacquant say that the government’s policy for poor people is now “prison fare and workfare”?
- *In the 1960’s the goal for prisoners was rehabilitation, but now the goal is being tough on crime. Wacquant believes that welfare reform and massive incarceration were two parts of the same policy of enforcing conformity to an unstable job market of temporary, part-time, and low paid people. In addition to enforcing low-wage work, politicians use “tough on crime” rhetoric to win elections and cash-strapped rural communities build prisons to provide employment-sometimes the only employment available in the community. The U.S.is the world’s leader in incarceration with 3 million people in the nation’s prisons or jails in 2010, which is a 50% increase over the past 30 years. Tough on crime policies run parallel to tough on welfare policies and child welfare policies terminating parental rights. African-Americans are disproportionately represented in all of these populations.*
17. Discuss some of the beliefs of the mental patients’ liberation movement.
- *They believe that mental patients should not be coerced into hospitals or into taking medication. They believe that professionals have treated them in paternalistic and controlling ways, and they believe that patients and ex-patients are capable of running their own services.*
18. What have been the unintended consequences of deinstitutionalization of mental patients?
- *Many of the patients have been "re-institutionalized" into shelters for the homeless, nursing homes, and prisons. Not enough community residences were provided for after care services for the discharged patients.*
19. Why are so many mentally ill patients placed in nursing homes?
- *Since Medicaid paid for nursing homes and was paid for partly by the federal government, this encouraged states to shift much of the financial burden to the federal government by discharging patients to private nursing and boarding homes. In addition, patients were federally subsidized by Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI).*
20. How does the juvenile justice system differ from the adult criminal justice system?
- *Juveniles do not have the right to a jury trial unless they are bound over to an adult court. Their cases are heard in a closed court.*
21. When does a particular kind of personal or social behavior become defined as a “social problem”?
- *Behaviors become social problems when some people and organizations force those issues to the top of the public agenda. Wife-abuse and rape were not defined as social problems until the feminist movement challenged traditional assumptions about a women’s place in society. The process of defining and treating those problems is often more political than scientific. The drug scare led an overwhelming majority of both houses of Congress to vote for new antidrug*

laws, sometimes the objective reality of the scope of a problem has very little relationship to the public perception, of its gravity as shaped by the media. The drug problem was exaggerated, and the AIDS problem was underplayed for many years, due largely to lobbying efforts of various interest groups.

22. What are the differences between the Charity Organization Societies (COS) and the settlement house movement?

- *The COS claimed to deliver "scientific charity" through case-by-case work of "friendly visitors". These "friendly visitors" sought to separate the "deserving" from the "undeserving" poor through an investigation of their life situations. The COS thought that poverty was perpetuated by indiscriminate relief giving, which made people lazy, or by character defects. The settlement house movement was exemplified by the work of Jane Addams at Hull House in Chicago. The settlement house workers wanted to bring together the privileged and the underprivileged. This movement established agencies in city slums where professionals gave group services and engaged in social action on behalf of the slum dwellers. Jane Addams drew a sharp distinction between her kind of work and the work of the COS. She did not think that the COS workers were "friendly" at all in the moralistic way they drew distinctions between the deserving and undeserving poor.*

23. What might account for the initial slow government response to the problems associated with AIDS?

- *The perception of AIDS as a result of "deviant" sexual behavior of gay men stigmatized its victims and caused people to deny its seriousness.*

24. Discuss the findings of the study by Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) about how the media contributed to stereotyping of welfare recipients?

- *Most people interviewed were politicians and government officials, and most said that spending on the poor ought to be restricted. Governors who had implemented punitive programs were interviewed often. Welfare recipients were seldom interviewed and those chosen to be interviewed often reinforced stereotypes.*

25. How did the civil rights movement affect the human services?

- *People of color, feminists, gays, and young people created their own alternative self-help groups such as the Black Panther breakfast program, feminist health collectives, parent co-op day care centers, shelters for battered women, rape crisis centers, and gay and lesbian counseling centers.*

26. How did the OEO War on Poverty affect the human services?

- *It challenged the traditional practices of social workers. Agencies hired indigenous workers from the communities they served in order to forge links between the agency and the users of service. Poverty lawyers often clients against what they viewed as repressive agency rules or practices.*

27. Describe the New Careers movement.

- *It was begun as part of the War on Poverty to create human service careers for poor people. Because of the "career ladder concept", a worker who was not formally trained or credentialed could advance through on-the-job experience. One of the movement's leaders started the College of Human Services in New York City with the intention to "change the whole pattern of credentialing".*

Closed-ended Questions

1. The federal government supports college programs in prisons.
 - a. True
 - b. False

2. The poor have always been treated with suspicion and mistrust throughout history.
 - a. True
 - b. False

3. Governments have generally been eager to give help to the needy.
 - a. True
 - b. False

4. What philosophy of social welfare believes that all citizens should have help as a social right?
 - a. Capitalism
 - b. Institutional
 - c. Means-tested
 - d. Special needs
 - e. Residual

5. The first large-scale federal involvement in income supports was
 - a. General Assistance.
 - b. Food stamps.
 - c. Social Security Act.
 - d. Women, Infants, and Children Program.
 - e. War on Poverty.

6. The last major federal expansion in the welfare state was the:
 - a. Social Security Act.
 - b. Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act.
 - c. Mothers' Pension.
 - d. War on Poverty.
 - e. TANF Program.

7. The welfare rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s helped welfare recipients feel that their job as mothers deserved society's respect and recompense.
 - a. True
 - b. False

8. The view that poverty and other social problems are caused by the people who are enmeshed in those problems is called
 - a. victim-blaming.
 - b. family-centered theory.

- c. opportunity theory.
 - d. socialism.
 - e. social democracy
9. The Catholic Bishops have called for more help for the poor and oppressed.
- a. True
 - b. False
10. A victim-blamer would be likely to attribute the cause of homelessness to personality defects.
- a. True
 - b. False
11. People who believe that problems are caused by an unjust social system are likely to prefer means-tested over universal programs.
- a. True
 - b. False
12. The Personal Responsibility Act gave generous benefits to teen parents.
- a. True
 - b. False
13. Welfare has been called one of the battlegrounds of a war on women.
- a. True
 - b. False
14. In the 1990s, a victim-blaming theory was more prevalent in the United States than an opportunity theory.
- a. True
 - b. False
15. More women are behind bars today than at any other point in U.S. history due to mandatory sentencing for drug offenses.
- a. True
 - b. False
16. Charles Murray believes that the most serious social problem today is
- a. AIDS.
 - b. drug use.
 - c. teenage pregnancy.
 - d. pollution.
17. Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward believe that welfare expands in times of civil turmoil.

- a. True
- b. False

18. The “principle of less eligibility” states that welfare payments are kept lower than wages in order to encourage people to take any low-wage job rather than go on welfare.

- a. True
- b. False

19. Middle-class women who choose to stay home to care for children receive tax deductions.
 - a. True
 - b. False

20. The rate of recovery of mental patients is higher in
 - a. the United States
 - b. England
 - c. Third-World countries

21. Abstinence education is effective in lowering birth rates.
 - a. True
 - b. False

22. The Progressives wanted to abolish mental hospitals.
 - a. True
 - b. False

23. The child-saving movement led to the development of children's institutions, foster care, and the juvenile court.
 - a. True
 - b. False

24. Deinstitutionalization was a large-scale reform movement that.
 - a. returned people from the community into state hospitals
 - b. took people out of institutions and returned them to their community
 - c. was very successful and lived up to its promise

25. Since the Gault case, juveniles have the right to confront and cross examine their accusers and witnesses when accused of a crime.
 - a. True
 - b. False

26. Boot camps are an effective method of treating delinquency.
 - a. True
 - b. False

27. The largest proportion of anti-drug money has been spent on law enforcement and jails rather than on drug treatment programs and supportive services for addicts.
 - a. True
 - b. False

28. After basketball star Magic Johnson and tennis champion Arthur Ashe admitted that they were HIV positive or had contracted AIDS, the media was less sympathetic in its discussion of the disease.
 - a. True

- b. False
29. African-Americans use cocaine more than white people.
- a. True
 - b. False
30. The media consulted research, advocacy groups, and welfare recipients frequently when they presented information on welfare.
- a. True
 - b. False
31. A good diet and exercise would have the same benefits for poor people as they do for the rich.
- a. True
 - b. False
32. The Charity Organization Societies were the first to use:
- a. Group work.
 - b. Case work.
 - c. Community organizing.
 - d. Advocacy.
 - e. Community development.
33. The settlement house movement relied mainly on case work.
- a. True
 - b. False
34. The settlement house tradition has influenced the profession of social work more than the Charity Organization Society tradition.
- a. True
 - b. False
35. The designers of the War on Poverty criticized social work for being out of touch with poor people.
- a. True
 - b. False
36. The New Careers movement created many entry level human service jobs for poor people.
- a. True
 - b. False
37. The United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world.
- a. True
 - b. False

38. As welfare and other safety net programs were cut back, the criminal justice system has expanded.
- a. True
 - b. False

Chapter 2

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