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Human Behavior in the Social Environment 1 (NO)

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Symbolic Interaction

Discuss the main concepts in labeling theory and discuss their implications for diagnosis and assessment in clinical social work practice.

According to Robbins, "Labeling theorists point to the fact that deviance is not an inherent property of any specific behaviors or persons. Rather, it is a matter of social definition" (p.329).

Since deviance is not an inherent but rather a social definition, we must choose whom we want to socialize with. If we start to socialize with bad gangs, it will be a matter of time before we internalize the negative label. After a time, adapting to a gang's nature seems to be the right thing to do, and eventually, the person will conform to society's expectations. Our world is quick to judge and label others. Once labeled because of the stigma associated with the labeling oftentimes, the label does not recover. The class video features "Looking Glass Self," Charles Cooley believed 1. "We try to figure out whom we think we are." 2. "We try to understand what other people think of us." and 3. "We change based on what society thinks of us." Most gang members enter a gang with the mind that this is all life has to offer. Some believe that society already labeled them as gang bangers, addicts, criminals, etc. Their behaviors will change to reflect how society sees them. Furthermore, when society changes the perception it has on an individual and sees them as criminals, individuals may re-evaluate their 'self' depending on the authority of other people's judgment. I work in a mental facility. The clients are labeled with all

different kinds of behavior problems. When I first started out in the field, all I saw was mental clients or 'crazy people' because of the stigma. As I grew within the field, I began to see humans, not behaviors. Irrespective of their behaviors, I try not to label because it is bad enough that people see themselves through the eyes of society.

Diagnosing is essential because it can help save lives. If someone is diagnosed with cancer and it is detected early, it is possible that the doctors can stop the cancer or slow it down with the necessary treatment. Because diagnosis plays a significant role in shaping individual identities and the quality of life, we must know the facts before we proceed. As a clinical social worker who is trained to diagnose, we must keep in mind the negative impacts on the client and the social worker. For instance, if the diagnosis is mental, we must be gentle because sometimes diagnosing can do more harm than good, which can have substantial consequences.

Reference

Robbins, S. P., Chatterjee, P., Canda, E.R., & Leibowitz, G. S. (2019). Contemporary human behavior theory: A critical perspective for social work practice (4th ed.). New York: Pearson. ISBN: 978-0-13-477926-3

Looking Glass Self • (2018, Sep 24). Retrieved November 02, 2019.

<https://youtu.be/ukSScFhVrBM?t=200>