Week 1 - Discussion

Planning Theory

Select two of the planning theories (synoptic, incremental, advocacy, transactive, or radical) which were discussed in Comparative Approaches to Program Planning. How might the two selected theories relate (or not relate) to your current or desired line of work in the human services realm? Describe this relation (or lack of relation) in detail and cite at least one other scholarly source in your discussion. 350- 400 words

Introduction: Week 1

This week introduces students to research and program planning concepts in human service settings.

In the assigned readings this week, students will be exposed to planning theories as well as basic research concepts with a particular emphasis on developing and writing a research proposal. Students will submit their proposed research topic and research questions for instructor review and approval. Classroom discussion focuses on the relationship between planning theory and human service settings.

Resources

Required Text

Leedy, P.D. & Ormrod, J.E. (2016). *Practical research: Planning and design*(11th ed.)*.* Retrieved from https://redshelf.com

* Chapter 1: The Nature and Tools of Research
* Chapter 2: The Problem: The Heart of the Research Process
* Chapter 3: Review of the Related Literature
* Chapter 4: Planning Your Research Project
* Chapter 5: Writing the Research Proposal

Netting, F.E., O’Conner, M.K., & Fauri, D.P. (2008). *Comparative approaches to program planning*(1st ed.). Retrieved from https://redshelf.com

* Chapter 1: Differences between Lines and Circles (Planning Theory)
* Chapter 2: Programs: Containers for Idea Implementation

Required References

Campbell, J. J. [drjasonjcampbell]. (2010, Mar 12). What is Program Evaluation? 1. [Video file]. Retrieved from[*https://youtu.be/8KO5ht0hpkk (Links to an external site.)*](https://youtu.be/8KO5ht0hpkk)**Dr. Jason J. Campbell describes 10 key concepts relating to program evaluation in this video series. The first video is helpful for all students. Dr. Campbell identifies basic concepts important for program evaluators at any level.

Earnshaw, J.. [John Earnshaw]. (2011, October 31). What is research? [Video file]. Retrieved from[*https://youtu.be/BJhpQs82uR8 (Links to an external site.)*](https://youtu.be/BJhpQs82uR8)**This video describes the concept of research for graduate students. A particular emphasis is place on distinguishing between research retrieval versus researchers pursuing new knowledge and expanding knowledge. This video helps clarify expectations for the final research project.

Ostrowj1. [Ostrowj1]. (2009, September 30). Creating a Research Question. [Video file]. Retrieved from[*https://youtu.be/AIJDfS33IWw (Links to an external site.)*](https://youtu.be/AIJDfS33IWw)**This 3-minute video describes several pitfalls related to forming a research question. Recommendations are provided to assist students form appropriate research questions.

Recommended References

Campbell, J. J. [drjasonjcampbell]. (2010, Mar 12). What is Program Evaluation? 2. [Video file]. Retrieved from[*https://youtu.be/6MtiJQRni4s (Links to an external site.)*](https://youtu.be/6MtiJQRni4s)**

Campbell, J. J. [drjasonjcampbell]. (2010, Mar 12). What is Program Evaluation? 3. [Video file]. Retrieved from[*https://youtu.be/Oc65kD0q8AE (Links to an external site.)*](https://youtu.be/Oc65kD0q8AE)**

Campbell, J. J. [drjasonjcampbell]. (2010, Mar 12). What is Program Evaluation? 4. [Video file]. Retrieved from[*https://youtu.be/GbJKRUaCe4s (Links to an external site.)*](https://youtu.be/GbJKRUaCe4s)**

Campbell, J. J. [drjasonjcampbell]. (2010, Mar 12). What is Program Evaluation? 5. [Video file]. Retrieved from[*https://youtu.be/vkE\_YGxpBAY (Links to an external site.)*](https://youtu.be/vkE_YGxpBAY)**

Campbell, J. J. [drjasonjcampbell]. (2010, Mar 12). What is Program Evaluation? 6. [Video file]. Retrieved from[*https://youtu.be/x0-6mvgLO4Q (Links to an external site.)*](https://youtu.be/x0-6mvgLO4Q)**

Campbell, J. J. [drjasonjcampbell]. (2010, Mar 12). What is Program Evaluation? 7. [Video file]. Retrieved from[*https://youtu.be/9WrQ\_RwH62A (Links to an external site.)*](https://youtu.be/9WrQ_RwH62A)**

Campbell, J. J. [drjasonjcampbell]. (2010, Mar 12). What is Program Evaluation? 8. [Video file]. Retrieved from[*https://youtu.be/5fxsPJRQpzk (Links to an external site.)*](https://youtu.be/5fxsPJRQpzk)**Dr. Jason J. Campbell continues his description of key concepts relating to program evaluation in this video series. This series is helpful for students planning to use program evaluation for their Final Project and also those students who anticipate being responsible for conducting program evaluations in the field.

Centre for Social Work Research (CSWR). (n.d.). About Us. Retrieved from [*https://www.uel.ac.uk/schools/cass/research/centre-for-social-work-research (Links to an external site.)*](https://www.uel.ac.uk/schools/cass/research/centre-for-social-work-research)   Current research on a variety of social service topics can be found at this website. Many of the publications are available in full-text format as well. This is an excellent resource for Week 2 when completing your literature review.

Foundation Center. (n.d.). IssueLab: Collecting, Connecting, and Sharing Knowledge About Critical Social Issues. Retrieved from [*https://www.issuelab.org/ (Links to an external site.)*](https://www.issuelab.org/)   This website offers files of numerous topics related to social services, with current statistics and issue briefs included as well. The files provide excellent examples of how to justify a social problem. This website is useful during Weeks 1 and 2 of the course. The examples are useful during completion of the Final Project.

Lamatic, M. (2011). Program Evaluation: Qualitative Methods And Techniques. *Economy Transdisciplinarity Cognition (14)*1, 197-203. Retrieved from ProQuest.

Malik, H.R. (2012). Scales for measurement of variables. Retrieved from: [*http://hafeezrm.hubpages.com/hub/Scales-for-measurement-of-variables# (Links to an external site.)*](http://hafeezrm.hubpages.com/hub/Scales-for-measurement-of-variables)

Social Work Policy Institute. (n.d.). Research: Why do We Need Social Work Research? Retrieved from [*http://www.socialworkpolicy.org/research (Links to an external site.)*](http://www.socialworkpolicy.org/research)   This website provides a wealth of resources related to various topics in the human services, including: evidence-based practices, childhood trauma, homelessness, diversity, and alcoholism. This is an excellent resource for the first two weeks of the course as you refine your topic and investigate previous research for your literature review.

What is Program Evaluation? A Beginner’s Guide. (2015, February 1). Retrieved from [*http://gsociology.icaap.org/methods/BasicguidesHandouts.html (Links to an external site.)*](http://gsociology.icaap.org/methods/BasicguidesHandouts.html)   These are basic guide handouts designed as introduction to evaluation for those without technical backgrounds.

Hello and welcome to Integrative Project for Human Services Learners (HUM 5100), where we will find ways to apply the knowledge and skills obtained throughout the course in a practical way in our current or future careers. I am excited to have you in the class and look forward to working with you over the next six weeks. This week’s guidance will be a little longer than normal and broken out into several parts so that we can go over the layout of the course and then discuss the material covered this week. So push up your sleeves and let’s get going!

I tend to believe that if you have read the materials, the last thing you want is for me to regurgitate it back to you. Therefore I teach and lecture with the belief and premise that you have read the materials. My guidance notes are meant to add or enhance what you have read – not repeat it. Keep in mind you will be responsible for all materials in your assignments so the guidance will not replace anything you have read.

So let’s get started… imagine you are a manager or director at a local human services organization. Maybe you focus on health issues or youth interventions or reducing socioeconomic barriers. Maybe you are funded by the government, private donors, an endowment, or more likely a combination of the three (plus many other sources). And maybe you have wondered if your current program or set of programs is doing enough for your target audience. Maybe your funders are wondering if their investment has any viable returns? And maybe your community is questioning the legitimacy or need for your programming. These are all legitimate scenarios that happen all the time in communities across the globe. For years we have invested in human service programming with the expectation that innovative programing and sound investment will bring about a positive change or improvement in social conditions. And why not? If you were putting millions and millions of dollars into a cause, would you not expect a return on your investment?

Now let’s take the other side of the equation. Human services are first and foremost about helping people whether through direct services (i.e. a shelter) or through indirect services (advocacy to change social and public policies on an issue). The needs of those most vulnerable in our society are paramount and become the driving force behind our program development and implementation. How do you develop a program that meets the needs of your target population? How do you ensure sensitivity and cultural diversity? How do gain their trust? How do you ensure that you are “doing no harm”? And how can you PROVE that you are making a difference in their lives?

Now think very carefully about these two opposing paradigms. Sure, there are lots of similarities and common desires – they both focus on improving social, economic and political conditions – but consider how they may oppose one another. Let me give you a real life example. Community Mental Health Centers struggle with these two distinct and ever-present variables in their life. On one hand, they have investors who want to see their funds help those most in needs and as many in need as possible. Yet, due to the nature of mental health, the operational costs are very high therefore you tend to see some people receive lots of help while the rest are left on waitlists. This is an example of a program that runs deep (meaning the services are intensive and expensive) versus broad (meaning you can help many with little direct touch, therefore less expensive). So if a program only offers substance abuse counseling once a week in a group setting they can help more people, which means their numbers served are greater making them look more impressive and thus they can attract more funding. But if organization recognizes that for many substance abuse is a deeper issue and therefore offers one-on-one counseling coupled with other interventions, then the costs are much higher meaning they can only help so many people. Thus their services look more costly and potentially less competitive with other mental health services in the community. Do you see the inherent issue here? The real question should be, which program has a better approach and is more impactful against the greater issue of mental health.

I am bringing this up because as we go through this course, you will learn a lot about program planning and evaluation as well as some research methodologies that can be used in a practical way in the field. This is critical because as the availability of resources shrink (meaning there’s less money to go around for good causes), the demand for efficient and effective programs continues to increase. In other words, there’s simply not enough money to go around to fund all the problems and issues in the world. Therefore, good planning and evaluation is not just quality control but also a means of program survival. Furthermore, in your career in this field, you will struggle with the dilemma I address above as well as many others regarding the value and impact of your program(s). So keep in mind that your ability to thoroughly plan your program will help set the stage for meaningful evaluation and thus meaningful communication of your program successes and impact. As the old adage goes, if you plan to succeed, you will. Planning, like any form of due diligence, make you more prepared and helps you ensure that your program is offering the best possible services to those most in need.

There are several frameworks out there on the program process. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (2011) likes to describe the process in five steps:

The first step is to identify and research an issue. This not only means research the topic and looking for best practices in the field, but also researching your community and how specific dynamics influence and enable specific issues. Next, you build a process for how you believe a program would work in your community. This may sound like it should be consistent but it’s not. A program for homelessness in Miami will look very different from a homelessness program in Minneapolis (can you think of all of the reasons why?). The next step is to finally select your intervention. You may do this with a committee or a board of directors. You might do it as a collaborative project or as a coordinated effort between a variety of agencies and organizations. This step also includes assigning responsibilities, tasks and some sort of reporting and accountability structure. Once you have all this in place, you can then move to the fourth step, implementation. This is boots on the ground and making it work. The fifth step – but not the last step – is evaluation and adaptation, where you look back on what you have done, measure what data you have been capturing all along, and gauge whether you are making a difference. If areas for improvement are found, you adapt your program to address those gaps and inefficiencies.

I want to emphasize that evaluation and adaptation are not the final step because once you have done this part, you just right back into the cycle again. For example, let’s say that you created a program and went through the first iteration of the cycle. During evaluation, you found that due to the time of day that you offered your program, people most in need could not attend. You consider this and do some research, finding that programs with the best results tend to offer their interventions in the evening. You then propose a process change, vet it through your committee, implement it, and evaluate again. You see, the cycle never stops and it never ends. A good program is not static but flexible and malleable able to meet the changing needs of both its target audience and the community dynamics.

If it sounds like you wear a lot of hats, you do. In short, program management means you have to be a planner, a designer, a collaborator, a researcher, a process-person, a data collector, and an evaluator. In addition, you have to be able to communicate, synthesize a variety of reports, present ideas in a collective way, and be flexible and malleable when change is needed. WHEW! Tired yet? However, despite how overwhelming this may sound, there are few jobs as rewarding and significant as working in the human services. No matter how caught up in process you may be, someone’s life is improved by your actions – and there are very few jobs in the world that can give you that return on your efforts.

I managed to sneak it in earlier but let’s spend a little time on research. The assigned readings give you a pretty good overview so I won’t go in depth too much about the technical aspects. Instead, I want to focus on making research more practical. Chances are, as you sit in your office or at a collaborative session deciding on how to develop a new program (or a re-design of an old one), you are not going to reach for your research textbooks first. But let me jump in say that at some point very early in the process you should… and here’s why.

Science is about being critical – picking apart ideas in a very specific method in order to gain knowledge or to test previously stated knowledge. In the case of human services, the knowledge we seek to understand is whether an intervention works, creates change or has impact. This scientific method must be based on evidence and subject to reason and logic. The scientific method essentially works like this:

1. Hypothesis formation
2. Research design
3. Conduct study
4. Test the hypothesis
5. Communicate results

And it doesn’t stop there – in fact, once you communicate your results they are subject to scrutiny and will often be re-tested or manipulated slightly to see if the results are the same. This testing is necessary for the scientific method to work. In other words, once you get to step 5, someone (if not you) will begin step 1. So for example, if you conclude by observation that grape jello makes toddlers learn their alphabet faster, someone will now ask why or how does that happen – and we go through the scientific process again. Does this sound familiar? Sort of like the program process we saw earlier?

And while we first approach a social issue in a philosophical sense (what do we mean by homelessness and how does it happen) it becomes a scientific, academic and applicable discipline that helps shape how we understand the world today. In this sense, once we know the issues and once we can describe them, explain them and to some degree of certainty predict them, we can better learn how to control or contain them. Some might even say we can manipulate them but that’s a discussion for a different kind of class. In this course, let’s just understand that the same principles that define the scientific method relate directly to our program process.

Let’s keep in mind that every science has “big” questions to which the answer is not known. But if we can start to answer smaller questions to which we can find answers, than we can start to collect these small answers which may lead to conclusions about “big” questions. In fact, when a scientist formulates their research questions, they usually are doing it with the intent of contributing to a “big” answer.

Many questions start with the word "Why." "Why" questions tend to be the "big" questions. And in this form they are usually un-testable and therefore, from a scientific standpoint, unanswerable. We can turn the question into one that is testable by turning it into a descriptive or causal question.

**TOO BIG**: Why are people depressed?

**ALTERNATIVES**:

* What are some of the primary indicators of depression?
* How does depression manifest in certain personality types?
* What are the predictors of depression?
* Can environmental factors enhance or decrease depressive symptoms?

Ah, now the smaller questions start to paint the picture for the bigger issue.

In science, there are four major key concepts one must always think about when considering research:

1. Objectivity – to every extent possible, research should be done without bias
2. Control – this means that in research, every possible measure has been to avoid extraneous variables. In other words, there should be some method of eliminating all unwanted factors that may affect what we are attempting to study
3. Operational definitions – we should always be able to define the concepts clearly
4. Replications – any findings should be able to be replicated over and over again

Ok, so let’s talk about control for a second… what does control mean in research? The better you control for outside influences in your research, the better you can infer causation. Now, if there is one thing I want every single one of you to be able to say in your sleep, it is the following:

Correlation does NOT imply Causation

Say it with me now, correlation does not imply causation. One more time, correlation does not imply causation. Why am I stressing this? This is one of the biggest mistakes a researcher – yes, even a human services program manager – can make and frankly, it is a common mistake in our everyday society. Let me explain it this way, if you look at data from the past ten years, you will find that:

In Florida during the summer of 2005, ice cream sales were higher and the number of shark attacks on swimmers had increased from the year before. Now, does this mean that ice cream sales somehow made sharks more likely to attack? Or, are people buying more ice cream because there are more sharks attacking people on the coasts? While the two variables (shark attacks ad ice creams sales) are both seeing an increase over the summer, we cannot say that one caused the other.

Over a three year period, stock prices were steadily going up about 10% on average. During the same period, skirt lengths were getting shorted by ½ inch per year. Is it possible that skirts were getting shorter because stock prices were rising? Sure it’s possible but highly unlikely. Just because they are both happening at the same time does not mean one causes the other.

I am stressing this for two reasons. First, as someone in the human services field, you will hear many programs, interventions and organizations claim things that they simply cannot prove therefore you need to develop a critical eye on how other programs are developed, measured and evaluated. And secondly, as a consumer – because when you listen to or read the news, when someone at your job tells you something, whenever you are given information that others take at face value, you need to ask yourself “does one really cause the other or is this just coincidence?”

Now it is important to stress that while we may want the most rigorous and impactful program, we are also dealing (most often) with people – often those who are marginalized and disadvantages. We can’t necessarily do random assignment or offer services to some and not others. In fact in some cases it’s not only unethical, it may be illegal. In this vein, social issues present a bevy of complexities for program planners and evaluators, not least of which is the ultimate concern of ensuring that we are indeed helping and not individuals and communities. In other words, it’s a delicate balancing act.

I will sum up this lecture with a final point about theory and practice. In the real world, we need to strive to be somewhere between the passionate activist and the theory-driven researcher. It’s not a game of one or the other, it’s a spectrum and somewhere along that spectrum is where you need to strive to be. There are a lot of puzzle pieces in this process – your organizational and mission; your community; your constituents or clients; and your funders, donors and leadership. In addition, you may have other external and internal factors that will affect your development, implementation and ability to measure program outcomes. Keep in mind that while you will be forced to be practical, strive to implement as much rigor and credibility into your work. It will pay off in the long run.

References:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2011). [*The Community Guide – Program Planning Resource*. Created by the Community Preventative Services Task Force (Links to an external site.)](http://www.thecommunityguide.org/uses/program_planning.html). Retrieved at http://www.thecommunityguide.org/uses/program\_planning.html