

1982). It is also known as an obligatory role function in that the individual acts according to social standards. In years past, it was accepted that the husband was suppose to work and support his family, while his wife stayed home to raise the children and take care of the home. Today, this has dramatically changed in that there are almost as many women as men in the workforce. In the transition from mother and housewife to working woman (or the combination of both), shifts in roles are common and must be adapted to in order to satisfy the requirements of each obligatory function.

Roles are also defined as explicit (those that are clearly defined and distinguishable) and implicit (those that are implied but not directly expressed). With explicit roles, individuals are generally aware of the expectations and demands that accompany these roles; role partners, likewise. It is the implicit roles that sometimes create confusion and anxiety. When things are not clearly defined, lacking structure, there may be a great deal of ambiguity that an individual must sort out. People generally fare better when they are aware of the rules. With role functions that are vague and indefinable, mistrust and uncertainty can result. Individuals know how to respond to and acknowledge that which is known, but not what is implied.

Norms and values, like expectations, are woven into the fiber of interpersonal roles and their corresponding behavioral patterns. Klein (1972), describes norms as those

standards and ideas which prescribe "the attitudes and behaviors of members of a group. They are not only those behaviors which are expected, but also those which are tolerated". He emphasizes that significant norms are internalized and lead to behavioral constraints and conformity. They are first learned in the family, but are highly susceptible to alteration, depending on what social group the individual later espouses.

Values also are incorporated at a very early age, stemming from familial influences, while being readily modifiable by other group involvement. They are "principles, standards, or qualities considered worthwhile or desirable" (The American Heritage Dictionary), those which are deemed useful and important to the possessor. Group members share values related to important assumptions and beliefs (Kleir, 1972). Therefore, it can readily be seen how individual behavior is influenced by that which is valued in the social context. As an example, in some groups, education is highly valued that would consequently determine the attitude towards the student role and its corresponding behaviors.

Role theory blends well with the social work perspective of viewing the Person-in-Environment, which would demonstrate that an individual's behavioral responses are related to the social context, and therefore not merely a manifestation of normal or abnormal intrapsychic phenomena. In addition to this orientation, there are extensions of the theory which

attempt to further explain the significance. This becomes an effective tool to guide the practitioner in working with the multi-faceted problems of clients.

Importance of theory to the development of practice.

Fischer (1978), said that theory and research should be viewed as the basic components of knowledge for practice. Fischer sees seven specific ways that theory is important to practice, which include: 1) it allow classification of the phenomena of concern, and hence, imposes order on heterogenous events; 2) facilitate generalization from one situation to another; 3) facilitate prediction of outcomes; 4) allow the development of orderly, consistent procedures for observing the relationships between events; 5) help social workers explain their orientation and activities to others; 6) allow the development of means for modifying behaviors; and 7) provide assurance for the worker. From the authors viewpoint, the intervention theory is what we have that allows a practitioner to direct practice.

Grinnell (1985), has four of his own reasons on how theory is useful to practice. These include the following: 1) social workers can limit the scope of events to be considered or described such as roles; 2) social workers can clarify phenomenon and explain sequences of events within the phenomena; 3) social workers can develop further explanations of phenomenon; 4) social workers can produce new knowledge for the development of practice.

The author sees that both sets of reasoning given are useful to practice, but would like to present his own thoughts. These thoughts are to answer the question of the role of theory in practice, which include: 1) identification of the practitioners theory base allows the worker to understand their personal world view to the client/practitioner process; 2) guides the direction of the client/practitioners process; 3) aids the practitioner in areas that they feel need to be empirically proven through the client/practitioner process; 4) allows the practitioner a guide to choose their work, setting, population, and approach to service delivery; 5) gives the practitioner the capabilities to communicate and legitimize their approach to client and others.

In reading over the author's reasoning for theory it can be said that he overlap with Grinnell (1985), and Fischer (1978). The biggest difference is that the author try to directly relate the reasoning to the practice setting.

According to Davis (1986), Role theory can be used to focus on the distress that clients experience when they are ill-matched with their environments. At the same time the concept of role is in congruent with social worker's historical focus on transactions between person and their environment. Role theory seeks to explain the ways in which the behavior of the client is directly and indirectly influenced by their social environment.

Principles for practice.

There have been many useful developments stemming from Role theory which can be theoretically applicable to the practice situation. The terminology used denotes the motives and effects of actions and reactions of the demonstrated role behaviors.

Role performance or enactment refers to those behaviors which are observed, ordinarily deriving from the expectations of a particular role. There is a wide latitude of performance, and every individual has a unique style of expression. Nevertheless, performance ordinarily will demonstrate the particular role occupied by the individual, as stated in Role Theory. For example, if discipline is one of the responsibilities of the parental role it is expected that the mother or father will carry out this function.

The extent and severity of the action can be positively or negatively evaluated and sanctioned. Whether this will have an effect on performance corresponds to the values placed on the significance of the group evaluating performance. More importantly, however, are the internal sanctions which govern behavior. These relate to significant norms which have been internalized, leading to behavioral constraints or conformity (Shaw and Costanzo, 1982).

According to Balgopal and Vassil (1983), individuals often attempt to convey, overtly or covertly, to others that part of themselves that they wish to be known; i.e., they may

"selectively" express limited characteristics of themselves. This can often be interpreted as a "front" to impress people to attain a desired goal. The current language in the treatment of the Alcoholic and family refers to "people pleasing". Although this may be considered to have a benevolent and caring characteristic, it also has a negative and manipulative connotation in that there is a "means to an end". A reward is expected, either tangible or intangible.

Of greater significance for practice is the fact that "public acts of performance are valuable for assessment because they are observable. Furthermore, they are subject to alteration, practice and renewal (Balgopal and Vassil, 1983). By observing the behavior and thoughts expressed by the client and significant others, the practitioner can make invaluable assessments towards the goal of improvement of functioning and positive change. What must be emphasized in using Role theory as a guide to assessment, methods of interventional strategies, and goals is the basic premise that individuals are behaving in response to the ascribed and prescribed roles they have and the situation where these roles are enacted.

Principles of interaction, which are relevant to this theory are effectively demonstrated in Role distance. The latter refers to the comfort level one experiences in his role, in relation to another. It can also denote the acceptance, or lack therefore, of the person and his role. The person will perform a role, but not identify with it.

Interactionally, role distance can be maintained by confrontation, superficiality, boredom, and nonchalange.

Munson and Balgopal (1978), cite Homan's hypothesis that "interacting individuals tend to become more alike over time". In discussing the relationship of worker and client, they mention that "the conscious use of the professional self to promote change in the client requires a differential model for identification". The additional bonus will be a reduction in role distance and a greater acceptance of self.

Role conflict, of course, is the most commonly used term derived from the theory. It is experienced when expectations placed upon the individual are incompatible. This results in a lack of clarity of the expectations, which creates stress that hinders role performance. Conflict can also arise when "the demands from two or more roles are such that adequate performance of one role jeopardizes adequate performance of the other" (Secork and Backman, 1964).

Certainly role conflict can mirror the effects of trying to juggle a family and career.

Of significance in both expressions of role conflict is the enormity of the impact on the individual who is the victim, as well as the significant others who are involved secondarily. Recognizing these role conflicts and their effects, rather than focusing on the symptomatology expressed can provide effective means for change in the practice situations.

Role overload is defined as "having so many demands related to one's role (s) that satisfactory performance is improbable" (Barnett and Baruch, 1985). Essentially, the demands are too high and can't be met. Attempting to be a wife, mother, and employee at the same time is likely to make excessive demands on a woman's time, energy, and emotional resources. There is a similarity in the concepts of role conflicts and overload. Wilsnack and Cheloha, (1987), categorizes role overload as a result of role conflict, intensified in the duality presented from home and employment.

In contrast to Role conflicts, Role deprivation suggests that individuals are more adversely affected by having too few roles than by having too many (Wilsnack and Cheloha, 1987). Persons who are unmarried, divorced, or widowed, or who have no children to care for or no employment may be vulnerable to adverse effects. They may suffer from loneliness and lack of social supports.

An interesting theory generated from sex role conflict is Fear of Success. This was derived from Shaw and Costanzo, (1982), observation that "highly competent females, when confronted with standard achievement tasks or when on the threshold of culturally desirable attainments, appear to evidence both excessive anxiety and a decrement in performance". The authors reasoned that "talented women would be lost resources to the culture due to the simultaneous negative operation of system constraints and self-produced

anxieties".

These terms, which depict role-related behaviors, should have a prominent theme in guiding the practitioner through the initial meeting with the client, the assessment, evaluation, planning, intervention, and termination. At each step-of -the way, the notion of person-in-environment, reacting to the expectations placed upon the relationships and corresponding roles, should be kept in mind.

Principles applied to practice situations.

In a study by Ruderman (1986), describing countertransference themes experienced by women therapists treating women clients it found that the Fear of Success and Role Conflict themes emerged. Although this research was drawn from psychoanalytic theory, principles of Role theory effectively explained the interactional process women were experiencing.

Many themes of Fear of Success manifested itself in the conflicts which female clients experienced when choosing a career versus building a family. One female law student commented, "If a woman to succeed, she has to prepared to give up a lot. We wind up career-bound, but alone". Because of therapists' own struggles with these issues, many initially experienced discomforts during the sessions, which had to be addressed.

Acknowledging this aspect of the clients' difficulties led the therapists to be more attuned to the need for support

in discovering the clients' abilities. "Patients explored, discovered, and expanded new internal and external dimensions of themselves". Conflicts in balancing career aspirations with family and social relationships provoked stresses and guilt. Identifying these conflicts as it related to women's roles provided incentive to explore options and make wise choices. Awareness that traditional role stereotypes hinder the progress towards fulfillment of capabilities and advancement produced a noticeable reduction in negative reactions and emotions.

The second study by Barnett and Baruch (1985), describe women's involvement in multiple roles. Was examined in relation to three stress measures: role overload, role conflict, and anxiety. It was found that the quality of experience in the work and parental roles was a significant predictor of role overload; quality of parental role experience was a significant predictor of role conflict and anxiety. Also of significance was the finding that women who are not employed experience a lack of legitimacy in their commitments that would provide structure and meaning in their lives.

Role theory was effectively used in this study to examine whether multiple roles were beneficial or injurious to women's mental health. It used the major concepts of the theory to explore the effects of the number of roles, the category (worker, wife, mother), and the quality of experiences in each

role.

Of particular interest to practitioners would be the emphasis on "quality of experience" garnished from the work--- whether at home or in the workforce. Women's roles will be personally valued if there is effort to recognize, reward and reinforce self-worth, accomplishments, capabilities, and tasks performed.

In this study, the parental experience produced much more stress than the work experience. Practitioners would benefit from exploring with their clients which of these factors are lacking in substance and what actions need to be taken to correct them (or find substitute means of gratification in their roles).

In assessing roles and implications for practice Munson and Balgopal (1978), makes the following statements and recommendation:

- 1) Current role behavior patterns are useful only to the extent that they are related to the problem under consideration. Individuals should not be generally categorized in all situations.
- 2) The worker may interpret, reinforce, create, or neutralize role patterns in groups. It is in the therapeutic setting that roles are sharpened, maintained or altered.
- 3) Role perceptions and actions are valuable choice points for assessment and treatment. Public acts of performance are valuable for assessment because they are observable, and

therefore, subject to alteration, practice, and renewal.

These are just a few examples of the significance of this theory to the possible empowerment of clients. It has been shown that the worst use of the treatment relationship is one in which the practitioner attempts to focus on the "whys" of the problem instead of the consequences of the problem (s). Promoting insight and developing into the past merely tends to increase feelings of guilt and depression. This theory emphasizes the person-in-his/her-situation, the social context, and relationships. Roles and their related principles, can supply a dynamic orientations and theoretical foundation for the inspired practitioner.

Conclusion.

Fischer (1978), describes intervention theory as "... an interrelated systems of more or less general propositions used as principles of explanation of some specified interventive, therapeutic, or clinical practice". He also states that its utility is "... a way of observing, understanding, planning, predicting results and implementing intervention".

Turner (1986), Ford and Urban (1963), agree that there are many potential advantages to the use of theory in practice. From the authors viewpoint, the intervention theory is what we have that allows a practitioner to direct practice. It is a social workers basic guide or rooting.

Social worker's knowledge base is broad as they espouse Psychoanalysis, Role theory, Behavior therapy, Problem-solving, Task-Centered, Family therapy, Ecological Systems, General Systems, and all the other theories and models for practice. In each social workers find something of value to offer their clients. But they must constantly keep attuned to the discovery of new theories, approaches, and new techniques that will add a different dimension to their work.

The social worker in practice must prove effectiveness of interventions and outcomes.

Although the contribution of the Role theory to the social work profession can't be denied, it doesn't fulfill the need of the profession for a more comprehensive theory. I am not suggesting that we have to create a new theory for our

profession. Rather, I call for an eclectic theory. A theory that pull together the best concepts and principles form various theories used in the filed, and present them in a practical way.

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