



Social Work Practice: An Ecological Approach

John Pardeck

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Pardeck demonstrates that the ecological approach to social work practice stresses effective intervention, and that effective intervention occurs through not only working with individuals, but also with the familial, social, and cultural factors that impact their social functioning. The power of the ecological approach, through focusing on multiple factors for assessment and intervention, is that it integrates empirically based theories from various fields including social work, psychology, sociology, and anthropology.

Pardeck provides an orientation to the role of social work practitioners within the human services. He differentiates the unique contributions of social work and explains them in terms of the needs and goals of an ecological approach to practice. An ecological approach to practice stresses that effective social work intervention occurs through not only working with individuals, but also with the familial, social, and cultural factors that impact their social functioning. The power of the ecological approach, through focusing on multiple factors for assessment and intervention, is that it integrates empirically based theories from various fields including social work, psychology, and anthropology.

The book represents an effort to define the goals, commitments, and approaches that have emerged out of the history of social work and to relate them to similar concepts and values that are central to an ecological approach to practice. Three pervasive and unifying themes run through the book. One is the constant commitment to goals of facilitating human development. Pardeck suggests this is a central ethic that defines and distinguishes an ecological approach to social work practice. The second theme is an affirmation of the basic utility of a systems approach in conceptualizing and intervening in human needs, concerns, and problems. The ecological perspective views human beings as social organisms engaged in patterns of relationships that nurture or inhibit this basic humanity. The third theme is an interactionist view of the importance of person-environment fit as a central dynamic in human functioning. The traditional intrapsychic aspects of human behavior have tended to obscure the immense importance of both nurturing and potentially damaging forces at work in the social environment. This volume will be of considerable interest to social work educators and practitioners as well as their research libraries.

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