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### **Review of *Human Behavior for Social Work Practice: A Developmental-Ecological Framework*. Wendy Haight and Edward H. Taylor. Reviewed by Marvin D. Feit.**

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these latter issues. Consequently, Schram's book turns out to be another work on liberal redistribution (or pro-Fabian redistribution, as the British used to call it) that supports the party line in social work. In so doing, it fails to educate us about how to build and maintain a surplus that makes the continuity of a safety net possible.

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Wendy Haight and Edward H. Taylor, *Human Behavior for Social Work Practice: A Developmental-Ecological Framework*. Chicago, IL: Lyceum Books, 2006. \$ 39.95 papercover.

This is an interesting text on an important aspect of social work education which is complex. Human behavior and the social environment currently has an extremely large number of texts. This text by Wendy Haight and Edward Taylor draws upon knowledge about human behavior and places it in the context of social work practice, a different orientation.

The authors explore the complex relationship between human behavior and social work practice. They present a developmental-ecological framework as the conceptual orientation for the rest of the text. They use this framework in the context of social work with individuals through the life span. For example, they illustrate social work with infants and young children, children and middle-childhood, adolescents, young adults, mid-life adults in a mental health context, and medical social work with older adults. The developmental-ecological framework is used as a conceptual framework for social work practice with these groups of people, and it is also applicable to other populations.

They suggest that their text be used in conjunction with readings selected by an instructor, primarily to present the relationship between human behavior and social work practice. It should be noted that they provide a very nice list of references and web-based resources and they sprinkle their

chapters with case vignettes designed to illustrate the points they are making. These authors are to be commended for struggling with the relationship between an individual's development and his or her response to social, economic and political issues over their life span.

This interaction is the dynamic of human growth and development which is what social workers address with clients and for which there are no easy answers, if answers exist at all. Social workers are always helping individuals develop at different stages in a life-span and responding to environmental pressures. For example, individuals may be doing quite well and then their life is changed completely when they get a pink slip. There is then a reaction to that life situation which must be addressed by individuals and the people in their environment, such as spouses, children, in-laws and friends. This is an example of a significant struggle that social workers have to face with clients over the life span.

One must recognize that an individual responses to situations will differ. We may not easily understand the complex personal factors which result in different outcomes, which is where the developmental-ecological framework is likely to help. Throughout the text, these authors present this sense of reality to social work students. In their words, "the processes through which culture is acquired and elaborated by new generations are complex", (p.15). Their developmental-ecological framework constantly reminds us that these processes occur throughout the life-span. There is then also a reminder that one needs to consider and look at behavior from the client's point of view. Its focus is on how clients interpret experiences and behaviors in the context of their station in life. It is the search for the client's meaning of their own life situation which differs from trying to place behavior in the context of theory.

This shift to understanding how clients see life situations is very much needed. For example, it requires workers to put themselves in the shoes of their clients and to understand the various forces acting on them. This is more than a subtle shift in social work practice, for it requires workers to understand not only the context of the situation, but also the emotional response to events. How would a young worker understand the struggle of a poor, relatively uneducated mother of three who

is in her 30's, particularly if that worker has never experienced poverty, children, and the culture in which that client lives? How would a sighted worker understand the complexity of a client who is middle-aged, and newly blind? The authors' conceptual developmental-ecological framework provides an important backdrop for workers when facing these situations. While there are no easy answers, the framework provides guidelines for intervention and effective practice with clients which remind one, again, to see the individual in the sea of complexity and faced with a myriad of problems. The worker needs to understand how clients manage and think about handling such problems. The authors' framework forces practitioners to focus on the individual rather than viewing them as members of groups.

In conclusion, this is a very helpful and useful text in preparing practitioners to work toward achieving a better understanding of the complexity between human behavior and social work practice. It offers guidelines for dealing with individuals: it doesn't provide easy answers, but it offers direction for helping clients. I would recommend this text in order to better understand how practitioners can work more effectively with individuals by putting themselves in the shoes of a client and understanding the world from their perspective. In this way we would be much closer to understanding the many cultural and social pressures which exist for these clients. We may not resolve these complexities, but we are more likely to better understand them.

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James G. Dwyer, *The Relationship Rights of Children*. Cambridge University Press, 2006, \$ 55.00 hardcover.

The United States and Somalia stand as the only two nations in the world that refuse to sign the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, a document that lays down the basic rights and moral standing of children. Nor