PSY3041: PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTING, THEORIES OF ABILITY AND ETHICS

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READING SUMMARIES

WEEK 1

ETHICS

A set of principles for guiding behaviour;

- In the case of psychological testing and assessment, for guiding professional behaviour

Attempt at self-regulation by a group of professionals

More careers may have been damaged by a lack of ethical knowledge than a lack of technical knowledge

Ethics vs legalities;

- It is important to consider that behaviour may be considered unethical even though it may not be illegal

ETHICAL TRAPS

Ethical trap 1: The “Commonsense, Objectivity” Trap;

- “Commonsense, objective solutions” to professional ethical dilemmas are always easy to come by because helping professionals are basically ethical people and they will use this trait as a satisfactory guide when they face any ethical dilemma
- A trap because;
    - Decisions that appear to be based on ethical considerations must be guided by the law;
        - Confidentiality/privacy rights
        - Treatment of minors
    - Objectivity is difficult to achieve in real-life situations;
        - Helping professionals are automatically personally involved in the client’s situation and bring their own human experiences with them
        - People bring their own sense of reality (including its flaws) to their ethical decision making;
            - Can lead to inappropriate and potentially harmful resolutions
- Personal biases;
    - We make generalizations from past experiences that we then apply to the next one
    - We can often learn the wrong thing from past experiences and therefore make the wrong generalizations

Ethical trap 2: The “Values” Trap;

- Confusion on the part of helping professionals about what professional ethical codes are and are not
- Often what is required of helping professionals by their professional ethical codes may seem to conflict with their own personal values, moral standards or religious convictions;
    - E.g. a religious person against divorce may have to encourage a married couple to separate if the relationship is toxic

Ethical trap 3: The “Circumstantiality” Trap;

- The belief that there are no “right” or “wrong” answers to any ethical questions because the circumstances under which they occurred must be taken into consideration rather than the behaviour itself
- BUT behaviour often IS right or wrong based on professional ethical standards, regardless of the circumstances in which it occurred.

Ethical trap 4: The “Who Will Benefit” Trap;

- Confusion about who will benefit from a specific ethical decision
- There is often a ‘winner’ and a ‘loser’ when making a decision;
    - Sometimes taking sides from among two or more conflicting interests is necessary
- Long vs short term interests need to be considered

THE ETHICAL HIERARCHY

The professional

Society

The client

ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Problem identification;

- Decision-making process can’t begin until a problem has been identified
- Four most common ethical violations;
    - Dual relationships
    - Breaches of client confidentiality
    - Attempts to provide treatment beyond the scope of an individual’s professional competence
    - Failure to take appropriate steps to prevent suicide attempts

Step 1: Identify the Ethical Standard Involved;

- Find out if a code covers the situation
- Consult with a colleague or supervisor
- Check legal requirements

Step 2: Determine Ethical Trap Possibilities;