

## Social Work Issues in Mental Health and Addictions Services Research: Theories and Implementation

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## “You Can’t Be a Real Social Science Discipline, Because Disciplines Have Their Own Theories”

- Social work has two unique worldviews
  - understanding relationship between person and environment
  - unique coordination of care practice approach
- Can use both of these to develop a theory of service use or access and to facilitate field research

### This Presentation Will:

- Discuss a service use/access theory pertinent to social work
- Review social work’s theoretical and practical approaches for mounting such research

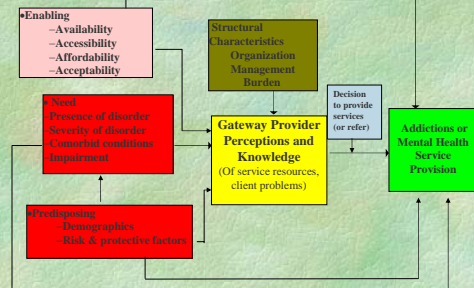
### Part One:

## Discuss a Social-Work-Viewpoint Service Use/Access Theory

### The Gateway Provider Model

- Uniquely incorporates the role of providers like social workers
  - referral as well as personally provided services
- Builds upon the service theories of
  - Andersen
  - Pescosolido’s NEM
  - Decision Theory
  - Organizational research

### Gateway Provider Model



## Examples Support the Model

- The role of the gateway provider in these analyses is akin to the typical social work role
  - providing some services
  - also helping clients access other environmental or service resources
- The theory supports the importance of our unique social work approach to practice.

## Draw on examples from 2 studies

- **Largely African American Youth in St. Louis (The YSP study)**
- **American Indian Youth from Southwest (The AIM-HI study)**

## Methods: St. Louis Study -YSP

(Sample Largely African American)

- Interviews in 1994 and 1996 of 792 adolescents aged 14-18 using the following “gateway” services in St. Louis:
  - Child welfare
  - Primary health care
  - Juvenile justice
  - Education
- Surveys of 222 providers who helped the adolescents in the year prior to their 1996 interview.

## Methods: AIM-HI

- Interviews in 2001 of 401 American Indian adolescents aged 14-18 from a southwestern urban area and a southwestern reservation
- Surveys of 92 providers who helped the adolescents in the year prior to their interview.

## Measures For Both Studies:

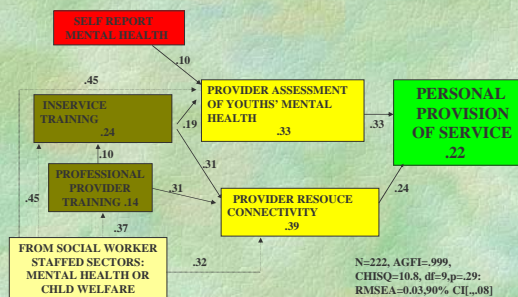
### Youth response:

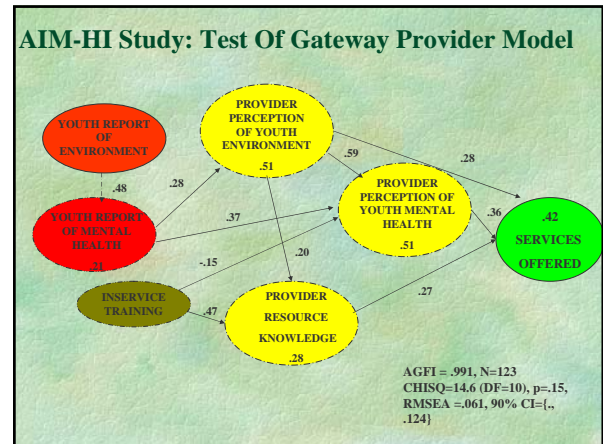
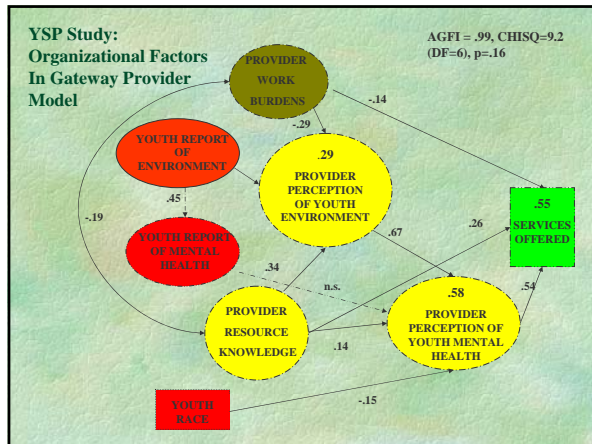
- Gender and race
- Diagnostic Interview Schedule for Children-Revised (DISC-R) and the Diagnostic Interview Schedule (DIS)
- Youth environment
- Exposure to violence
- Lack of support
- Services received (Services Assessment for Children and Adolescents (SACA), modified)

### Provider responses:

- Provider knowledge of service resources
- Provider work environment
- Provider assessment of youth’s problems
- Provider assessment of youth’s environment
- Provider report of services offered to youth

## YSP Study: Test Of Gateway Provider Model





**Results**

- Youth need and associated variables explain less than 1/4 of variance in service access
- Provider assessment, knowledge and organizational context explain about 1/2 the variance in youth service access.

**Part Two:**

**Review Social Work's  
Theoretical and Practical  
Approaches to Mounting  
Research**

**Theories To Help Social Workers  
Navigate the Practicalities of  
Conducting Research**

- Social Exchange Theory
- Cultural Divide Theory

**Culture and Cultural Divides: A  
Unique Concern and Specialty of Social  
Work**

- Social Work research typically done in social service agencies, or in culturally diverse populations
  - Bridge the bench versus trench cultural divide, by demonstrating sensitivity to the unique pressures and realities affecting providers.
  - Cross racial, ethnic, socio-economic and cultural divides

## Strategies For Bridging Divides- From Social Exchange Theory:

- **Minimize participants' costs**
- **Maximize their rewards**

## Minimizing Costs

- **Research compatible with normal agency operations and priorities**
- **Research examine questions based on those priorities**
  - Delineate potential incompatibilities and minimize in planning stage
- **Minimize intrusions and disruptions**

## Maximizing Rewards

- **Direct financial benefits**
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> party contracts for overhead
  - Salaries or travel expenses
  - Assuming costs of existing service programs
  - Buying supplies and equipment
- **Indirect financial benefits**
  - Access to libraries, computers, consultation
  - Staff supplementation
  - Staff training programs

## Example: Bench/Trench And Cultural Divides In The AIM-HI Study

- **American Indian reservations constitute independent nations with their own laws**
- **Nevertheless they and all on their lands are subject to the same laws as govern the rest of the United States**
- **History of being taken advantage of by outsiders, including researchers**

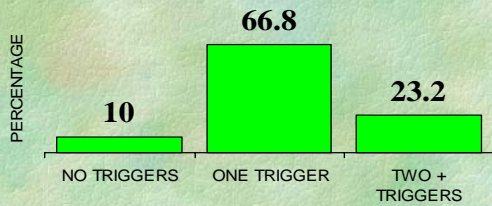
## They Wanted Direct Benefits From Research

- **Financial:**
  - Gifts to providers, hiring American Indians as interviewers
- **Ongoing consultative and veto role on all research**
- **Ongoing information for policy and service planning:**
  - training, reports to Tribal Council, frequency books and charts
- **Increased service access when we interview youth with problem:**
  - Red flag system

## Consequences Of Intervening In Need For Care

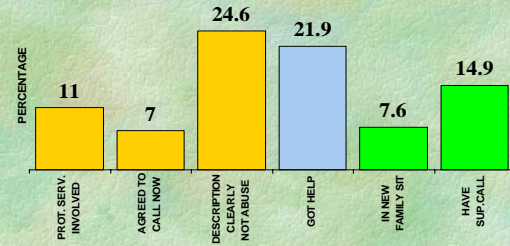
- **If you do: change the mental health and behavior of subject so goals of an epidemiological naturalistic study are compromised**
- **If you don't: person may feel ignored, unheard, or may be in danger**

### Number Of Triggers Raised (n=401)



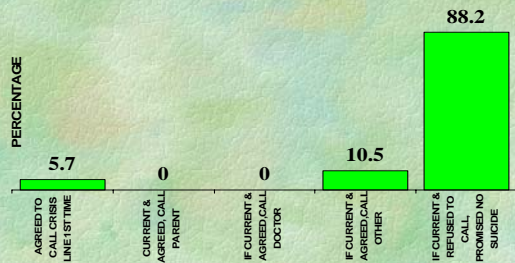
### Reactions And Explanations If Abused

(n=146, 26.9% of youth)



### Reactions To Service Press If Currently Suicidal

(130 youths ever suicidal, 19 currently):



### Conclusions

- No easy answers to bridging differing needs and perspectives
- Must all live with the competing pressures and find the cultural, ethical and research actions to maximizing benefits

### We Discussed 2 Separate Issues

- Service theory
- Theories for bridging divides

### Why Discuss Them in One Paper?

### Because:

### Yes, Virginia, --Social Work Research Is a Real Social Science

- We have unique and important theories
- We have a unique understanding of environment and contrasting perspectives that helps us bridge divides
- We need to celebrate and capitalize on that uniqueness

---And That Is What We Are Doing  
Today!