

# [Introduction assist a person or family with a](https://assignbuster.com/introduction-assist-a-person-or-family-with-a/)

IntroductionThe basic understanding of the helping profession revolvesaround the idea of giving assistance. Under the overarching umbrella of” helping professions”, it is easy enough to mistake one with the other. However, while they all work towards the same goal, they are fundamentallydifferent professions. In this paper we will evaluate the similarities and differences between these 3professions in the following aspects: (i) theprimary mission and purpose of the professional, (ii) valuesand ethics, (iii) knowledge base about human behaviour, and (iv) practice skills andplanned change process. Whilebearing in mind that psychologists and counsellors have roots in the samediscipline (Brady-Amoon & Keefe-Cooperman, 2017). i) The primary mission and purpose of theprofessionalThe general perception of these 3 helping professions is to helpindividuals identify problem areas in their lives and develop skills toovercome those problems.

The differences lie in how they are carried out. CounsellingAccording to the Singapore Association for Counselling, counselling cover processes of interviewing, assessment, testing, guiding, andhelping individuals to cope, manage or solve problems and plan for the future(Kuna, 2015). A counsellor’s position would serve to assist a person or familywith a specific problem, develop positive coping strategies within themselvesand build capabilities to enable them to adapt to their environments. PsychologyPsychology, on the other hand, brings to mind a more” scientific” structure to the helping domain. According to the AmericanPsychological Association, (American Psychological Association, n. d.) psychologistsassess behavioural, mental function and well-being, while studying how humanbeings relate to each other work to improve these relationships.

Mental healthand behaviour are assessed through psychological testing to describe, explain, predict, and reshape behaviour. Social WorkThe most “ involved” would seem to be social work as it goesbeyond the individual and delves into the community the individual is immersedin. The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance humanwell-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particularattention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty (National Association of Social Workers, n.

d.). Probably the most extraordinary aspect that differentiates social work from therest would be the aspect of advocacy, in the sense of developing and improvingsocial policy. The advocacy role, from a social context, includes theredistribution of power and recourse to an individual or group, guarding theirrights and preserving their values, conserving their best interests andovercoming the sense of powerlessness (Pardeck, 1996). Where counselling and psychology serve to empower individuals to problem solveon their own in order to adapt to their environments.

Social work serves toconnect these individuals or families with resources, services andopportunities while also influencing the environment to form an infrastructure tosupport the individual. ii) Values and EthicsValues refer to our conviction and attitude that provideguidance in our day to day life while ethics refer to conducting ourselves in amorally upright manner (Corey, 2003). The two are usually used interchangeably butthey are not identical.  SimilaritiesAs social workers, counsellors or psychologists, ourprofessional relationships with our clients exist for their benefit.  According to National Association of SocialWorkers (NASW) (2017), the following are the broad ethical principles based onsocial work core values of services: dignity and worth of person, integrity, importance of human relationship, competence, and justice. These values being humanistic in nature are common to not just counsellors, psychologists and social workers but are values that can be threaded throughall helping professions.

Dignity and worth of person is concerned with treatingindividuals with respect and compassion, regardless of the individual’sdifferences, cultural norms and ethnic diversity (NASW, 2017). Integritycompels one to be honest and righteous, it is a core ethical principle for allhelping professions who are entrusted with much responsibility in therehabilitation of their clients (Corey, 2003). All three professions requirethe cooperation of their clients, and human relationship is a vehicle that canbe leveraged on to facilitate positive change. The three professions also must be knowledgeable within their areas ofcompetence including the different legislations affecting their differentgroups of clients – for example children, women, disabled, vulnerable adults, etc. (NASW, 2017). Extrinsic resource-based vs intrinsic value-basedSocial work is about “ person in environment” which means itlinks an individual with sets of system that provide the individual withresources, services and opportunities (Higham, 2006). Thus, in social work, thevalues and ethics are basically characterized as derivatives in the interactionbetween the collaborative parties involved in the life of the individual. Forexample, in helping an individual to develop and adjust to changes, the focuswill be on the extrinsic relationship between the individual with the environment.

Whereas, in the profession of counselling and psychology. Focus is on thegoverning of interpersonal values and rights of the individual which is anintrinsic value-based.  iii) Knowledge base about human behaviourPsychologists, counsellors and social workers share aninterest in the study of human behaviours. Theories of human behaviour have postulatedover two millennia. Collectively, they emphasized the importance of biological, learning, cognitive, psychological and environmental factors.   Biological PerspectiveThe biological viewpoint posits that human behaviour isinfluenced by organic factors.

Genetic defects, constitutional liabilities, brain dysfunction, etc., play significant roles in shaping human behaviour(Coleman, Butcher, & Carson, 1984). Damage to the frontal areas of thebrain through trauma, is associated with either passivity and apathy orimpulsivity and a lack of ethical restraint (Crockett, Clark, & Klonoff, 1981).  Social Behaviourist PerspectiveBehaviourists and social learning theorists focused on howpeople learn by acting on their environment. Ivan Pavlov’s seminal research onclassical conditioning showed that behaviour can be shaped and conditioned(Pavlov, 1927). In addition to conditioning, Bandura and Walters (1963)emphasized the importance of observational learning or imitation.

Ellis (1970)believed that core irrational beliefs were the cause of most maladaptive humanbehaviour. Psychodynamic PerspectiveFreud (1946) introduced the idea of three subsystems withinan individual’s personality – the id, ego and superego. The ego mediatesbetween individuals and their environment, protecting them from becomingoverwhelmed by impulses. Freud theorized that internalized experience shapedpersonality development and functioning. Erikson (1950) provided a psychosocialdevelopment perspective, charting human behaviour and development throughstages, with each stage marked by specific tasks and challenges. Psychology, Counselling and Social Work – Convergence andDivergencePsychologists employ scientific methods to study humanbehaviour, emotions and mental processes to derive theories, while counsellorsapply these theories in therapies. Both share an overlapping focus on humanbehaviour, albeit one that tends to focus largely on the individual, often in aclinical setting.

Like psychology and counselling, social work shares a kindredinterest in human behaviour, and subscribes to the theoretical perspectivesoutlined in preceding paragraphs. However, unlike psychologists andcounsellors, social workers are by contrast directly involved with individuals, families and communities to effect change. This difference is significant, and accounts for a divergent approach tounderstanding human behaviour. Social work emphasizes knowledge of humanbehaviour from a “ person-in-environment” (PIE) perspective that focuses on boththe individual and their environments (Mattaini & Meyer, 2002). This is nota new approach; the General Systems Theory (Bertalanffy, 1969) considers howinterrelated components within a system interact, and are both affected by, andexert influence on the environment.

From a human behaviour perspective, thesocial worker is concerned about the individual’s bio-psychosocial-spiritualmake-up, their role and place within society, and how they strive forequilibrium. This approach makes for a more holistic understanding of humanbehaviour and clearer insights to how change can be facilitated.  iv) Practice skills and planned change processAs defined by Sheafor and Horejsi (2008), planned change concerns itself withthe deliberate design of a plan for which to modify “ some specified condition, pattern of behaviour, or set of circumstances in an effort to improve aclient’s social functioning or well-being”. Process suggests that this includesa logical sequence of phases. Practice skills are techniques employed by the practitionersin these processes. For the purpose of this discussion, this planned change process will take theform of the Problem-Solving model (Compton, Galaway andCournoyer, 2005) which consists of4 phases: engagement, assessment, intervention and evaluation. Engagement PhaseIn the engagement phase, all 3 professions faced similardifficulty in getting clients to adopt a collaborative partnership.

This is attributedtowards the power imbalance which is brought on due to the association betweenhelping professionals and the larger powerful networks which they are often apart of; these networks usually have connotations of judgement, punitivemeasures and control (Compton et al., 2005). It bears to note that currentsocial work discourse displays increasing sensitivity towards this powerimbalance and acknowledges the need to minimise this disparity (Sheedy, 2012).

Assessment PhaseIn the assessment phase, counsellors and psychologists traditionallyutilise a cognitive behavioural approach to assess the individuals’ mentalstate, thought process and attitude. These are done in clinical sessionsbetween the counsellors/psychologists and client. Guided by the PIE principlewhich perceives the individual in relations to his environments and itselements (Kondrat, 2013), social workers’ assessment goes beyond the individualto assess his environment.

An assessment of the environment would look at thecapacity of the environment to support the client and his systems. An examplecould be an assessment of the housing authorities’ policies to determineeligibility or barrier of service for the client’s access to public housing. Another difference is the pathological approach that often follows practiceskills such as cognitive behavioural therapy which is often employed bycounsellors/psychologists. This placed an emphasis on the problems and whatunderstandably follows is the fixation to “ fix what is wrong” (Magyar-Moe, Owens, & Conoley, 2015). Governed by the strength based approach which place emphasis on a person’sstrength and inherent capabilities as opposed to the problems, this is done inpractice through strength based conversations where your questions can bereframed in a bid to uncover strengths of the client. An example shared by Compton et al.

(2005) is by asking the client todesccribe exceptions to their current issues and subsequently analyzing theseexceptions to uncover strengths. Intervention and Evaluation PhaseSimilarly, in the intervention and evaluation phase, the PIEprinciple guides the social work practitioner to work with and evaluate theperson and his interconnected systems in a broader perspective as opposed to interventionsand evaluation targeted at the individual in his entirety. Through its advocacyfunction, contemporary social work has progressed beyond an individual to widersocial issues such as “ power, culture, social and economic injustices” (McLaughlin, 2009). By linkingindividuals’ symptoms with the social root causes, social workers alsofacilitate the rise of social capital. This achieves a more sustainable outcomeas it prevents members of the community from being disenfranchised due tosimilar social root causes. Social capital primes the ground for collectiveactions to rectify problems faced by the collective (Coleman, 1988). ConclusionBy evaluating the differences between the 3 professions, wecan identify uniquely defining principles and approach such as PIE andstrengths approach that inform social workers and their practice.

Through thispaper, we can see that these principles permeate and influence every aspects ofsocial work such that the profession is able to distinguish itself from otherhelping professions such as counsellors and psychologists. By developing its own theories and drawing on the theories that originated fromother disciplines. Social workers are able to develop a holistic approach inlooking at an issue and resolving them with a more sustainable outcome. (1, 919words)