

Critique of theories essay examples

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



(Course Name and Number)

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Developmental Perspective

Coherence and Conceptual Clarity

The developmental perspective to social work has two facets – community development and strengths-based development. Community development seeks to fulfill “ needs, gaps, problems and deficits,” while strengths-based development involves “ democratic, participatory [and] people-centered approaches” built on a strong human rights foundation (Gray, 2002). Such allows social justice to thrive, which is seen to benefit clients in social work to have equal opportunities, equal resource access and self-determination. Thus, strengths-based development under the developmental perspective empowers clients in social work as it urges social workers to reevaluate their developmental approaches based on community development, which merely pertains to just fulfilling what is lacking at hand. The coherence and conceptual clarity of the developmental perspective to social work must therefore stay within the frame of strengths-based development, as it molds social workers to both fulfill the needs of, and empower clients (Gray, 2002).

Testability and Evidence of Empirical Support

Government policies on social work in South Africa has provide the impetus within which social work done through strengths-based development under the developmental perspective has thrived. Such has urged social workers in South Africa to review their way of doing social work, which initially focused on community development, and turn it towards the tenets of strengths-

based development. Imparting unto people the importance of their agency in confronting challenges in life has been the most important focus of strengths-based development under the developmental perspective. In South Africa, social work done with emphasis on democratic participation and people-centeredness has helped clients towards the road to empowerment (Gray, 2002).

Comprehensiveness

The developmental approach, specifically under strengths-based development, places high regard on the agency of clients towards positive change in their lives, with social workers serving as agents of empowerment through democratic participation and people-centeredness. Strengths-based development departs from community development, which is rather basic given its emphasis on fulfilling the needs lacking among clients (Gray, 2002).

Consistency with Social Work's Emphasis on Diversity and Power Arrangements

The developmental perspective, focused on strengths-based development, focuses much on the emphasis of social work on diversity and power arrangements, in that it seeks to empower clients towards changing for the better through democratic participation and people-centeredness. Such does not focus on existing pathologies dividing majority and minority groups, since strengths-based development does not impart any limits to clients of social with regard to achieving positive change (Gray. 2002).

Usefulness for Social Work Practice

Empowering clients of social work through democratic participation and people-centeredness requires remarkable changes not just within themselves but to the environment as well. Thus, the developmental perspective, focused on strengths-based development, is of significant use for social work practice, as it is both distributive and reformative. Fulfilling the needs lacked by clients in social work, as seen in community development, is not just the only focus of the developmental perspective that is strengths-based in nature. Rather, changing the lives of clients in social work through democratic empowerment is the objective of strengths-based development, which is in line with the NASW Code of Ethics (Gray, 2002).

Conflict Perspective

Coherence and Conceptual Clarity

The assumption that “ society is in a state of perpetual conflict and competition for limited resources” is an overarching principle of conflict theory (Hammond, 2008). In short, the wealthy always seek to remain wealthy and even strive to become wealthier, while the poor do all that they could to extract resources even to the best of their meager capabilities. Yet, it is understood that social work must rest on a system of benevolence, not on balancing resources despite the reality of scarcity. Given the lack of emphasis on empowerment under the conflict perspective due to its distributive approach, its application on social work remains basic at best (Hammond, 2008).

Testability and Evidence of Empirical Support

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Several historical instances allude to the fact that the world has scarce resources that cause conflict between people of different social classes. However, social work tends to provide more out of its benevolent approach, given that different approaches to empowerment must also lie alongside resource distribution. At best, community development stated by Gray (2002) fits within the context of conflict perspective, but its dismissal as just a distributive approach refers to its lack of substantial benefit to the professional efforts of social workers (Hammond, 2008).

Comprehensiveness

There is no doubt that the conflict perspective rests on a lingering reality of the work on scarcity of resources and the struggle it causes between social classes. However, one must understand that social work must not rely on resource distribution alone even as it runs on resources, given that reforming clients towards greater productivity in attaining and producing resources must be the central goal of social work (Hammond, 2008).

Consistency with Social Work's Emphasis on Diversity and Power Arrangements

The conflict perspective focuses on disagreements between social classes with regard to the distribution of resources, thus making it fairly lacking when used to resolve matters pertaining to social work. As emphasized earlier, social work aims not just to distribute resources properly but also to empower clients to eventually become producers of resources. Thus, the conflict perspective is a rather premature approach to social work, particularly with its emphasis on diversity and power arrangements (Hammond, 2008).

Usefulness for Social Work Practice

As a fundamental approach, the conflict perspective may serve the interests social work with regard to organizing the needed resources. Yet, given that benevolence must prevail in social work, social workers must utilize other approaches that would complement the conflict perspective (Hammond, 2008).

Rational Choice Perspective

Coherence and Conceptual Clarity

The rational choice perspective to social work provides the need to analyze the actions of actors – social workers and clients alike, as they act rationally to achieve specific ends. In a theoretical sense, the rational choice perspective thoroughly explains that people act rationally in accordance to their interests, henceforth leading to the designation of concepts such as “ free-riders, transaction costs and collective goods” (Hedstrom & Stern, 2008). Thus, social work, acting in benevolence, must reasonably act in accordance to assisting and empowering clients under the rational choice perspective.

Testability and Evidence of Empirical Support

At best, the rational choice perspective is vastly theoretical in application to social work. Other approaches, such as the developmental, social constructivist and psychodynamic perspectives, attest more on the empirical effectiveness of social work and thus complements the rational choice perspective. Therefore, the rational choice perspective is not exactly used to make social work effective, as it rather serves as a theoretical explanation on the processed social workers undertake to help their clients (Hedstrom &

Stern, 2008).

Comprehensiveness

The rational actions of social workers and clients alike provide for a descriptive detail of the rational choice perspective to social work. Simply put, rational actions are based on the values and interests that people in social work have – imparting resources and empowerment via benevolence on the part of social workers, and receiving notable life improvements in the form of resources and empowerment on the part of clients (Hedstrom & Stern, 2008).

Consistency with Social Work's Emphasis on Diversity and Power

Arrangements

The rational choice perspective applies to all aspects of society, regardless of several divisions in terms of class, race and gender, among many others, in that it explains how people are driven by their values and interests in acting rationally. Especially in planning for social work, the rational choice perspective is consistent with the importance of diversity and power arrangements needed from social workers as they serve their clients (Hedstrom & Stern, 2008).

Usefulness for Social Work Practice

The use of the rational choice perspective to social work is theoretical at best, since other approaches such as the developmental, social constructivist and psychodynamic perspectives are more instrumental in terms of serving clients through resource provision and empowerment. Understanding the theoretical premises brought forth by the rational choice perspective may lead to the use of said approaches, alongside other applicable ones, as

choices for reaching the needed objectives of social work (Hedstrom & Stern, 2008).

Social Constructivist Perspective

Coherence and Conceptual Clarity

The social constructivist perspective, being experience-based, thus provides implications that support its nature in social work as one that is highly subjective and non-neutral. Framing social work as an enterprise that is “not necessarily objective or neutral” requires having to provide due attention to the following: the creation of an equitable social worker-client relationship, “active solicitation of stories of clients” and the provision of valuable information on changing professional practices (Sahin, 2006). In terms of consistency, the social constructivist perspective to social work stays true to its experience-based roots, to which it alludes its identity based on systems characterizing clients. Assigning appropriate meanings to concepts in social work stands in coherency to the concepts promoted by the social constructivist perspective, even as it leads to risks arising from problem-solving from the perspective of clients, which may conflict with one another given the difference of self-interests (Sahin, 2006).

Testability and Evidence of Empirical Support

Undertaking social work on the basis of the experiences of clients is perhaps the most complicated aspect of the social constructivist approach in terms of establishing evidence of empirical support. Nevertheless, the assertion of the social constructivist perspective that feelings and experiences are socially constructed allows the assumption of subjectivity to prevail. Testability is the key to the effectiveness of social work under the social constructivist

perspective, given that each social worker-client relationship provide new findings (Sahin, 2006).

Comprehensiveness

The reliance of the social constructivist perspective on socially-constructed feelings and experiences provides essence on the kind of social work it promotes – one that is based on equitability than equality, stories of clients and the consonant need to adjust professional practices. Therefore, in terms of comprehensiveness, the social constructivist perspective to social work remains true to its hold on subjectivity (Sahin, 2006).

Consistency with Social Work's Emphasis on Diversity and Power

Arrangements

The social constructivist perspective does not stand to benefit only one set of people, given its high regard for the subjectivity of feelings and experiences. Framing social work on subjectivity provides insights that allow social workers to see feelings and experiences as those that have distinct origins that are socially-conditioned. Thus, social constructions play a key role in enabling social workers to understand their professional services based on the social constructivist perspective (Sahin, 2006).

Usefulness for Social Work Practice

The social constructivist perspective allows social workers to frame their clients based on their socially-constructed environments, hence making their stories an integral component in shaping the kind of professional social work they need. Thus, there is no avowed standard for professional social work that fits all of the varying feelings and experiences of clients, given their status as products of their own social constructs. Social work practice,

therefore, is aimed at satisfying the clients based on their socially constructed feelings and experiences, albeit minimizing conflicts in the best manner possible (Sahin, 2006).

Psychodynamic Perspective

Coherence and Conceptual Clarity

The consistency of the psychodynamic perspective is supported by its three phases: engaging, working through and ending (Wilson & Ruch, 2008).

Emphasizing the importance of the quality of interaction in social work is perhaps the main objective of the psychodynamic perspective, as it imparts unto social workers the value of having a “ general psychodynamic awareness” with regard to their profession, which they see as a form of treatment for their clients. Amidst the distress harbored by clients, social workers are responsible for building trust relationships with them if they wish to make their professional endeavors work. At the same time, social workers are not just responsible for changing the circumstances of their clients, for they also have to empower them to make their lives better. Terminating the professional relationship between social workers and clients also have to proceed professionally. The emotional difficulties of the clients should not interfere with the quality of the social work they receive and must thus not allow them to brand any of those as part of their bad experiences.

Navigating through emotional difficulties in social work coherently proceeds through the three phases of the psychodynamic perspective, hence making its concept clear enough (Wilson & Ruch, 2008).

Testability and Evidence of Empirical Support

Applying the psychodynamic perspective in practice remains the best way

for social workers to see the full extent of its effects. Interacting with clients using the psychodynamic perspective enables social workers to see through their feelings and experiences, to which they would act instinctively without breaching from their professionalism (Wilson & Ruch, 2008). Thus, the effectiveness of the psychodynamic approach lies much on the way the clients improve under social workers, despite lack of conclusiveness over their situation given the interplay of their feelings and experiences. The psychodynamic approach has since emerged as an effective alternative to clients seeking mental health services, given that they become empowered from the services of social workers (Wilson & Ruch, 2008).

Comprehensiveness

The feelings and experiences of clients all provide bearing to the professional services social workers are tasked to render under the psychodynamic approach. Social workers must act in accordance to what their clients feel and think based on their experiences and must therefore not lose their ground in the event their emotional difficulties attempt to interfere with the intended developments through projection, splitting, transference/countertransference and idealization (Wilson & Ruch, 2008).

Consistency with Social Work's Emphasis on Diversity and Power

Arrangements

Social workers are thorough exposed to the emotional experiences of their clients in the psychodynamic perspective, hence its fixation on the importance of diversity. The psychodynamic perspective does not provide undue favor to a particular segment of society, given that it focuses more on the provision of professionalism from social workers, who navigate through

the feelings and experiences of their clients. As an enterprise focused on emotional experiences in providing professional social work, psychodynamic theory frames oppression as a common yet variable factor among clients (Wilson & Ruch, 2008).

Usefulness for Social Work Practice

The practicality of the psychodynamic perspective arises from the fact that it entails the need to practice empathy towards the emotional experiences of clients, on the part of social workers. Fulfilling social work under the psychodynamic perspective requires having to navigate through delicate sets of feelings and experiences that may or may not pass through positive and negative emotional phases. Too much optimism or pessimism over specific outcomes of social work may make or break the professionalism of social workers, hence the instrumentality of the psychodynamic approach in regulating such (Wilson & Ruch, 2008).

A Multi-Perspective Approach

Undertaking social work may not necessarily rely within one framework provided by just one of any of the theoretical perspectives discussed earlier. As emphasized, theoretical perspectives may cross over and applied multilaterally in social work, provided that those enable social workers and clients alike to reach their respective objectives. A benefit of using multiple theoretical perspectives is that it enables social work to continue in a procedural approach. For instance, the rational choice perspective may allow for a thorough discussion of the larger picture within which social work needs to operate in order for other theoretical perspectives to apply accordingly. At the same time, the application of multiple theoretical perspectives,

especially those that holds almost the same values with one another – in this case, developmental, social constructivist and psychodynamic perspectives, may allow for social work to proceed within a common ground subject to its exposure to multifaceted factors grounded in theory for effective troubleshooting. Overall, using multiple theoretical perspectives reveals that they are not mutually exclusive from one another and, in fact, actually have a complementing relationship with one another.

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