

Analysis of the
outsiders from the
perspectives of social
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The Outsiders is a book that narrates about social struggles premised on differences in social outlooks, wealth, and cultural beliefs (Hinton, 2005). The rivalry between the two gangs – the Greasers and the Socs – turns into the struggle in the context of social problems. Thus, the story represents a microcosm in which people with problematic backgrounds confront social challenges.

The main protagonist Ponyboy is a 14 years old boy who lives with his elder brothers – 16-year old Sodapop and the eldest brother Darry. The latter takes responsibilities for his brothers because their parents died in a car accident (Hinton, 2005). Ponyboy, along with his friends Johnny and Dally, confronts Bob and Randy, the members of the Socs, after returning from the cinema with Socs' girlfriends Cherry and Marcia. Later, Bob and Randy decide to revenge on the Greasers and threaten Ponyboy to kill him.

In a struggle, Johnny kills Bob because the latter attempted to drown Ponyboy. Both Johnny and Ponyboy decide to escape and hide in a church. However, when the church got on fire they rescue a group of children, but both teenagers are seriously wounded. Learning about the rescue of children from church, local newspapers proclaim Johnny and Ponyboy as heroes.

In a hospital, Johnny dies because of serious injuries whereas Dally suffers from Johnny's loss and decides to commit suicide while confronting the police. After the accident and recovery, Ponyboy returns home and leads a normal life, but his grades in school leave much to be desired. Then, he writes a term paper based on the story of his life, which later turns into a novel.

The book reveals a complex interaction between representatives of different layers of society resulting in rigorous struggles between the rich and the poor. The story is also about complicated family relations, as well as how family background influences teenager's outlook on social interaction and communication.

In this respect, the three brothers - Ponyboy, Sodapop, and Darry - are left without parents' attention and, as a result, they have to take on extra duties and responsibilities. Ponyboy is irritated by Darry's extreme care. He befriends Johnny and shares his outlooks on life.

Sodapope is a handsome and carefree high school student who gave up studying. Along with his best friend Steve, he works at the gas station and knows everything about how to steel hubcaps. All these relationships are presented in the context of specific behavioral codes dictated by external constraints. All the members of the gang, therefore, are committed to the idea of honorable actions, which implies readiness to stand for each other in front of the Greasers' enemies.

Johnny has also a problematic family history with his abusive mother and father paying insufficient attention to their son's education. Therefore, he is vulnerable enough to the external environment. The three brothers are also left without attention and, therefore, they are ignorant of generally accepted codes of behavior in a community.

Exercising violence against other social groups seems to be the only means of protection accepted by the characters. In addition, there are also cases of

substance abuse that can be seen the way drunken Socs attack Ponyboy and his friends.

From a social worker perspective, many theories and approaches are applicable to the case. Particular attention should be paid to the social theories related to the analysis of the place of gangs in society, as well as the nature and causes of social struggles (Heinonen & Spearman, 2000). In this respect, consideration of community development theory, crisis theory, family relationships and processes, as well as ego psychology is imperative for explaining the social problems and concerns the book heroes encounter.

Regarding the case under analysis, social work practice should be implemented by using strength and ecological perspectives. The idea of the strength perspective is premised on the theory of positive psychology and cognitive therapies that would enable individuals to search for their resourcefulness and worth.

Recognizing personal skills and abilities and acceptance of other views and outlooks can contribute to building a positive environment, as well as successfully interacting with other people (Ronen and Freeman, 2007 p. 7). From a social worker perspective, Ponyboy and Johnny should accept their worthiness and resourcefulness to fulfill themselves in such disciplines as literature and music. Moreover, the strength perspective allows the social workers to address resilience of individuals interacting in social and family context.

The need to focus on solutions rather than on challenges and problems is paramount as well (Ronen and Freeman, 2007). Flexibility and readiness to <https://assignbuster.com/analysis-of-the-outsiders-from-the-perspectives-of-social-work-theories-and-applications-essay/>

changes, therefore, should come to the forth when it comes to case of Dally's suicide. Indeed, the hero fails to find a solution because he cannot reveal other way-outs. At this point, the Greasers have chosen the wrong tactics while confronting the outside society and considering those enemies.

From an ecological perspective, the situation presented in the book should be considered as a sophisticated interaction of microcosm, mesosystem, and macrosystem. The microcosm is represented in the form of relationships within the gang and between Ponyboy and his brothers, which are quite complicated because each one encounters significant psychological problems (Pardeck, 1996).

These problems are also revealed while considering the interaction of the gang with other members of the community, which refers to the idea of mesosystem. Finally, macrosystem addresses the issues related to the conflicts and interaction between different cultures (Pardeck, 1996). Because the characters of the book have different family backgrounds and outlooks on life, social workers cannot solve the problem by analyzing psychological characteristics and behaviors separately.

Rather, social contexts should be considered to define what challenges and reasons an individual has while committing a particular action. In other words, the ecological perspective should address the " person-in-environment as one entity" (Greene & Rubin, 2008, p. 200). Social workers should deal with Ponyboy's problems with regard to the relationships with his brother and his best friend Johnny and define what influence the gang as a social construct has on his outlook on society.

Regarding the social and family problems experienced by the main characters in the book, the story provides a typical account on how different social layers interact, as well as how different social groups accept the reality. In fact, the title of the book, *The Outsiders*, provide sufficient explanation for social issues.

The principle of differentiating people according to social status, wealth, gender, and sex leads to spreading the concepts of superiority and inferiority where the dominant group disapproves the action performed by the outsiders. Therefore, the book provides an adequate portrayal of social struggles.

Judging from the above analysis, the outcome of social work practice should be similar to the one practiced in reality.

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