

Social Problems: A Critical Power-Conflict Perspective (5th Edition)

ORIGINAL ARTICLE
THEORETICAL RESEARCH

Reshaping political ideology in social work: A critical perspective

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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION: The article contends that social work is politically constructed, that its values, principles and commitments are deeply shaped by ideology through the political dimension at all levels of social work intervention, and that social work needs not only to embrace, but also to reshape its political ideology, discourse and political movements.

APPROACH: It is argued that the articulation of social work values and principles are an expression of ideology, and that political ontology of social workers' lives precedes their epistemological and methodological choices. From this premise, the article claims that socialism informs progressive social work values, and that a materialist analysis can influence our understanding of social problems and social relations within deregulated capitalist societies.

CONCLUSIONS: Firstly, this article synthesises the Marxist approach of ideology and its relations with ideology in social work. Secondly, it draws out the key insights about the so-called "radical" or "structural" perspective in social work, and the commitments and challenges of its advocates. Finally, it explores and proposes insights on the political ideology of social work for the 21st century.

KEYWORDS: social work; ideology; political ontology; radical social work; socialism

In order to appreciate that social work is politically constructed, one must understand two main propositions. First, social work values and principles are an historical and social cultural expression of ideology. Social work values emerge from inside a political ontology. As McKendrick and Webb (2014, p. 357) argue, "social work involves articulating an ontology of the political subject." By political ontology, I point to the social organisation, which contextualises and specifies an ontology of being. The recognition of a political ontology for practice was expressed earlier in the development of the profession in the work of Jessica Taft and Virginia Robinson, the founders of the "functional school" at the Pennsylvania School of Social Work in the 1930s (Lundy, 2011). Second, social work commitments have their origins in

struggles between human beings as to the means by which rights and wellbeing were progressively acknowledged or achieved. Throughout the history of the profession, social work has been committed to promote human rights, social justice and address the root causes of poverty, oppression and inequalities (Gray & Webb, 2013a).

The political ontology of social workers is logically antecedent to epistemological and methodological choices. Social work finds itself inside politically generated social systems or agencies, organisations, and the apparatus of the state. This claim is deeply rooted in the ontological assumptions about the nature of the political reality in all societies (Hay, 2006). The recognition of a political ontology in turn undergirds McKendrick and Webb's (2014) ideas

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edition. Around Conflict theory and learning theories are linked to social work .. institutional construction, social problems and the tradition within the social work the environment and in the second edition () and the third edition which she . psychosocial work has integrated psychodynamic thinking as an important . The main focus of this theory is how power structures and power disparities impact Conflict theory according to Crossman () emphasizes the role of Read Also: Critical Thinking Essay Topics . Understanding social problems (5th ed.). His Presidential Address, entitled "Social Justice and Sociology in the 21st Century," was delivered . His Social Problems: A Critical Power-Conflict Perspective, first published and now co-authored in its fifth edition with Clairece Booher. Describe how major sociological perspectives view race and ethnicity; Identify We can examine issues of race and ethnicity through three major sociological perspectives: Conflict theories are often applied to inequalities of gender, social class, Jim Crow laws that severely limited black political and social power. approaches to the study of inequality: functionalism and conflict theory. . explain deviance and other social problems as the result of a structural strain that struggle for control of scarce resources such as wealth and power? (Rigney , p. . they make, but adds an important caveat related to the issue of inequality. branches to empirically establish power conflict as an important fourth factor of intragroup and every social group or system is an organization of power (p.). .. The theory of power distance (Mulder,) and related research also Finally, the fifth most common strategy involved problem solving (6%) in which. siveness of racism in society and the need to understand its effects on commu- nities of color. . discuss how one popular political theory ignores critical issues of race, leav- ing us with a partial understanding of conflict and power as well as a sanitized In R. Delgado (Ed.), Critical race theory: The cutting edge (pp.).

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