

Analysis of Social Work Theory Progression Published in 2004

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Abstract: *The authors reviewed 67 articles that discussed and/or tested human behavior theories from social work journals published in 2004 in order to assess the level and quality of theory progression. The articles were further sorted into Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) Foundation Curriculum content areas of HBSE, practice, policy, field education, values & ethics, diversity, populations-at-risk/social and economic justice, and research for purposes of categorization. Results indicated that HBSE and practice were by far the largest group of articles reviewed. Also found was that social work has a limited amount of theory discussion in the content areas of field, values and ethics, diversity, and populations-at-risk/social and economic justice. Thirty-three articles were found to demonstrate theory progression, eight articles presented new/emerging theories, and 26 articles discussed or critiqued theories without presenting evidence of theory progression.*

Keywords: *Human behavior in social environment (HBSE) evaluation, social work theory, theory progression, social work education, social work practice, social work policy*

INTRODUCTION

For centuries, scholars have attempted to articulate the implication of theory, to establish a meaningful framework for evaluation of a theory's merit, and to document progression of a theory through the evolutionary stages of concep-

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tualization, development, and empirical testing. Recently, some social work scholars have taken the stance of rejecting the need to teach theory, instead, advocating a focus on teaching practice skills without communicating the significance of the profession's theoretical foundation (Simon & Thyer, 1994). And, yet, researchers must have a starting point from which to begin their inquiries and a roadmap to enable them to recognize where each theory has been. This is essential to direct our scientific progress as a profession. Sherraden (2000) states, "theory has a great deal to do with asking questions well," (p. 1) and from that stance concludes that "certain structures of inquiry may lead to theories that are more productive than others" (p. 2). It is from this perspective that we have attempted to develop a framework to evaluate the discussion and progression of theories of human behavior in the social environment (HBSE) in primary social work journals published in the calendar year 2004.

In order to begin our discussion of theory quality, an operational definition of theory is necessary. Payne (2005) defines theory succinctly as "an organized statement of ideas about the world" (p. 5). Turner (1996) offers a similar definition: "a model of reality appropriate to a particular discipline" (p. 2), and Sherraden (2000) conceptualizes it as "theory is what explains why an intervention causes an outcome" (p. 3). Since we have limited our discussion to HBSE theory in social work, all of these theories seem valid and complementary.

Previous authors have attempted to establish criteria in order to evaluate the merits of human behavior theories (e.g., Fischer, 1973; Payne, 2005; Robbins, Chatterjee, & Canda, 1999; Turner, 1996; Witkin & Gottschalk, 1988), yet these did not seem to adequately encapsulate the full dimensions of theory discussion in the literature. The concept of theory progression was absent in all of these frameworks. By theory progression, we mean whether the practical application of the theory was solidified, more thoroughly understood, or extended into a broader explanation of behavior. In this article, we have attempted to develop a system of assessment for theory progression.

METHODS

The nine members of our research team sorted 67 articles (the pool of articles were drawn from a larger pool sorted by doctoral students and a faculty member (Gentle-Genitty et.al., 2007) based on theory review procedures cited in Daley et.al., 2005) with the sorting emerging from a discussion of theory from primary social work journals published in 2004. The articles were classified into the Council on Social Work Education's (CSWE) Foundation Curriculum Content areas as defined in the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) (Council on Social Work Education, 2001). The articles were initially sorted by individual members of the research team, then reviewed collectively by the entire team, who consensually determined the final categorization of each article. The abstracts, authors' statements regarding the primary focus of the article, and general content guided the classification process. The articles reviewed included research-based studies, policy analysis, and editorials.

After sorting, the articles were distributed to seven individual team members (readers) to assess the quality of the theory discussion in each article. Each reader received approximately 10 articles. To the extent possible, each reader was assigned an entire Curriculum Content area. Areas with more than 10 articles were divided between two readers. The following instructions for summarizing the content of the articles were agreed upon by the team:

Describe each article briefly in terms of the author's discussion of theory including:

- Is it an established theory or emerging?
- In terms of the author's discussion, has the theory been empirically specified and has the historical context been addressed?
- Can a reader easily use the article to improve practice, teaching, or policy development?

If a reader discovered that an article had been incorrectly classified, he/she alerted the team via a listserv and justified the article's reclassification. This occurred in two cases. The readers returned their article summaries to be synthesized by two team members. The articles, theories, and status of theory progression are individually listed in the tables following each section of this paper dedicated to individual Curriculum Content areas. Also, a brief summary and specific information related to the featured articles will be found under the headings of each content area below.

The following categories were established based on summaries of the articles provided by individual team members: progressed, discussed without progression, and new/emerging. An article was classified as "progressed" if it provided the historical context of an existing theory as well as tested the theory empirically or applied the theory in a new context. Those articles that were "empirically tested" included both quantitative and qualitative studies. Articles that discussed or critiqued an existing theory without attempting to test it empirically were classified as "discussed without progression." Finally, articles that discussed new or emerging theories comprised the final category.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the articles by EPAS area. Subsequent tables give more detail by the EPAS categories.

Human Behavior in the Social Environment (HBSE)

Within the scope of social work research and practice, a plethora of theories explore the nature of human behavior and the social environment. These theories originate from a multitude of disciplines, including social work, sociology, psychology, and economics. Thirty-one theories of HBSE were published in 24 different articles in social work journals in the calendar year 2004 (Table 2). Twenty-one theories from 16 articles in this content area were judged as progressing, which is by far the largest group in this study. Four theories were presented as new/emerging and three existing theories were discussed or critiqued with little or no theory progression.

Table 1: *Theory Progression by Content Area*

| EPAS Area | Progressed (%) | Discussed Without Progression | New/ Emerging |
|---------------------|----------------|-------------------------------|---------------|
| HBSE | 16 (66.7%) | 4 (16.7%) | 4 (16.7%) |
| Practice | 7 (43.8%) | 7 (43.8%) | 2 (12.5%) |
| Policy | 3 (42.9%) | 4 (57.2%) | |
| Populations at Risk | 3 (42.9%) | 4 (57.1%) | - |
| Diversity | 2 (33.3%) | 3 (50%) | 1 (16.7%) |
| Research | 2 (50%) | 2 (50%) | - |
| Values & Ethics | - | 2 (100%) | - |
| Field | - | 1 (100%) | - |
| Grand Total | 33 (49.3%) | 26 (38.8%) | 8 (11.9%) |

The theories progressed dealt with four categories: 1) family units, 2) couples, 3) adolescent academic performance, and 4) other. Seven articles progressed theories that dealt with the family unit. A theory of adult development and personal authority in the family system was used to explore intergenerational family relationships (Lawson & Brossart). Family development theory was used to explore the life cycle of a family (Richman & Cook). Family systems theory was used to demonstrate a link between divorce and adolescent emotional adjustment (Vandervalk Spruijt, DeGoede, Meeus, & Maas). Feminist theory (Mack-Canty & Wright) and role theory (Landry-Meyer & Newman) were used to discuss parenting. Lifecycle theory was used to explore the effect of consumer debt on the family (Baek & Hong). Finally, social construction theory was used to examine meaning making, empowerment, and narrative for families who have experienced torture (Montgomery).

Four articles progressed theories for working with couples at various life stages. Attachment theory was used to explore infidelity (Allen & Baucom). A theory of the division of household labor examined power relationships between husbands and wives (Zipp, Prohaska, & Bemiller). Gender construction was used to explore traditional gender roles and couples relationships (Zuo). Finally, life course theory was used to explore satisfaction of retired couples (Smith & Moen).

Three articles dealt with adolescents and their academic performance. Life course (Crosnoe & Elder), psychoanalytic (Jones), and role theories (Baum) were used to explore adolescent academic performance. The remaining two articles discussed trauma theory with respect to child welfare workers (Regehr, Hemsworth, Leslie, Howe, & Chau) and social capital theory to discuss children's street work in Mexico (Ferguson).

| Author | Progression | Titles of Theories | Key Points | Tested Empirically |
|----------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| Allen & Baucom | Progressed | Attachment | Article demonstrates the progression of attachment theory into the area of adult infidelity. Citing previous research briefly, they establish an empirical base and proceed to show how attachment style can be used to predict infidelity. Implications for practice are explored, including using an understanding of attachment style to create empowering narratives for couples dealing with infidelity. | Yes |
| Applegate | Discussed without progression | Psycho-analytic | Reviews the application of psychoanalytic theory to social work's theory base, education and practice. Discusses theory's decline over the past several decades. Findings from neuroscience on infant attachment have led to a paradigm shift within the theory. Incorporations of new understanding of gender and sexuality, and concern for the "person in situation" have reinvigorated the theory base, making it increasingly viable to social work practitioners, working with oppressed populations. | No |
| Baek & Hong | Progressed | Lifecycle | Utilizes life cycle theory to examine the effects of life stages on consumer debt. Does an effective job at establishing a link between consumer debt and the family's life-cycle stage with families in the empty nest, solitary household, and single parent stages showing a lesser likelihood of having installment debt. | Yes |

Table 2: *Articles Summaries for HBSE Content (cont.)*

| Author | Progression | Titles of Theories | Key Points | Tested Empirically |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| Baum | Progressed | Role/Role Model | Applied role theory to look at the effect of maternal employment on a child's academic achievement. Found that maternal employment could have a negative impact on a child's academic performance that is in contrast to what the theory would predict. | Yes |
| Castro, Jones & Mirsalimi | New/ Emerging | Parentification & Imposter Phenomenon | The study reflects that childhood parentification over an extended period of time in part can be explained by the imposter phenomenon. There is a moderate correlation between the two constructs. No significant differences for ethnicity and race and the parentification scores were found. Caucasians however scored higher on the imposter phenomenon score than African-Americans. | Yes |
| Cordon & Somerton | Critique with no progression | Trans-theoretical | Examined the application of the transtheoretical model of change to work with parents finding its assessment of parenting is viable when used critically and in particular situations. | No |
| Crosnoe & Elder | Progressed | Life Course | Advance life course theory by exploring the many factors that contribute to adolescent educational resilience during this one particular life stage. | No |
| Ferguson | Progressed | Social Capital | Progressed social capital theory by applying it to a different culture and demonstrating its relevance to children's street work in Mexico. | No |

| Table 2: Articles Summaries for HBSE Content (cont.) | | | | |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| Author | Progression | Titles of Theories | Key Points | Tested Empirically |
| Houston | Critique with no progression | Heuristic | Examined Gidden's heuristic theory and sought to expand on the theory and establish a position on the constructs of structure and agency. | No |
| Jones | Progressed | Psycho-analytic | Examined the effect of having a non-resident father on psychological separation and academic performance utilizing psychoanalytic theory as an explanatory model. The findings are consistent with numerous previous studies showing a tie between father involvement and academic performance, but failed to establish a clear link between the results and psychoanalytic theory. | Yes |
| Kroska | Critique with no progression | Division of Household Labor | Describes four theories and applies them to explaining the division of household chores in families. Specifically, the author uses gender ideology, relative resources, time availability, and doing gender. The author found these theories to be helpful in explaining the division of tasks but found that gender remains an important determining factor. | No |
| Landry-Meyer & Newman | Progressed | Role/Role Model | Applied role theory to explore the grandparent as a caregiver role respectively. Performed a qualitative study interviewing grandparents who were raising grandchildren. Concerns reported were consistent with those that would be predicted by role theory. | Yes |

| Author | Progression | Titles of Theories | Key Points | Tested Empirically |
|---------------------|--------------------|---|---|---------------------------|
| Lawson & Brossart | Progressed | Adult Development Personal Authority in Family System | This study explores differences among participants inter-generational family relationships. Results indicate that younger groups expressed more intimacy and intimidation with each parent and more triangulation with fathers than the older groups. Gender differences revealed that females have slightly stronger and healthier intergenerational relationships with parents. | Yes |
| Mack-Canty & Wright | Progressed | Feminist | Use a qualitative research design to demonstrate how a feminist parenting style can assist children to challenge hierarchy and oppression, thereby, assist in advancing feminist theory. | Yes |
| McPhail | New/ Emerging | Queer Feminist | Article questions ideas of gender binaries of (male/female or homosexuality/heterosexuality). Discusses post-modernist and queer theorists who have offered new insights on sexuality and social justice. Develops a queer theory critique on compulsory heterosexuality and calls for deinstitutionalization of the gender binaries, which create problems of oppression and social exclusion. | No |
| Montgomery | Progressed | Social Construction | Author applies the emerging theories to work with families who have experienced torture. Coordinated Management of Meaning model is supported by the findings of this qualitative study. The model suggests how to help families construct empowering and truthful narratives about torture histories. | Yes |

| Author | Progression | Titles of Theories | Key Points | Tested Empirically |
|---|--------------------|---------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| Regehr, Hemsworth, Leslie, Howe, & Chau | Progressed | Trauma | Authors explore individual, incident and organizational factors that create post-traumatic stress distress among child welfare workers. Reports that individuals who develop healthy relationships with others and who exercise greater control on their lives report low levels of stress. Individuals who had fewer contacts with the issue also reported less stress. The organizational environment was the most effective predictor of stress. | Yes |
| Richman & Cook | Progressed | Family Development | Authors describe the Stairstep Framework—an alternative model of family development that encompasses different types of families. It has five life processes: 1) establishing a family, 2) addition of family members, 3) family members pursue inter/independence, 4) separation of family members, 5) adults develop dependence. | No |
| Smith & Moen | Progressed | Life Course | Analyzes retirement satisfaction among retirees and their spouses-individually and jointly. Results find differences among retirees and spouses in satisfaction level with retirement. Joint satisfaction among couples is lower than the individual levels. The most satisfied couples were retired wives and their husbands who reported that husbands did not exercise any influence in wives decisions. | Yes |

| Table 2: Articles Summaries for HBSE Content (cont.) | | | | |
|---|--------------------|-----------------------------------|--|---------------------------|
| Author | Progression | Titles of Theories | Key Points | Tested Empirically |
| Sullivan, Pasch, Cornelius & Cirigliano | New/ Emerging | Health Belief | Article enhances the legitimacy of the HBM model to predict couple's counseling decisions. Results indicate that the most effective predictors were couple's perceptive barriers and whether or not counseling was recommended to them through some source | Yes |
| Utz, Reidy, Carr, Nesse, & Wortman | New/ Emerging | Widowhood | Authors examine how widowhood affects daily household activities. Results indicate that children mediate the affect by helping with errands and housework and that the individual characteristics and intergenerational attributes have impact on the daily household activities in late-life widowhood. | Yes |
| Vandervalk Spruijt, DeGoede, Meeus, & Maas | Progressed | Family Systems | Advance family systems theory by demonstrating a link between divorce and adolescent emotional adjustment. | Yes |
| Zipp, Prohaska, & Bemiller | Progressed | Division of Household Labor | Asymmetric power relationships between husbands and wives are explored by examining decision-making, division of household labor, and childcare. Results find gender asymmetries in the household are reinforced through routine interactions. Study also reveals marital power, which is difficult to locate and is usually exercised covertly. | Yes |

Table 2: *Articles Summaries for HBSE Content (cont.)*

| Author | Progression | Titles of Theories | Key Points | Tested Empirically |
|--------|-------------|---------------------|--|--------------------|
| Zuo | Progressed | Gender construction | Seeks to advance gender construction theory by examining the link between men's breadwinner status and the presence or absence of an egalitarian ideology. | No |

Practice

Twenty theories of practice were published in 16 different articles published in social work journals in the 2004 calendar year (Table 3). Seven theories from the articles in this content area were judged as progressing, which is the second largest group in this study. Two theories were presented as new/emerging, and seven existing theories were discussed or critiqued with little or no theory progression.

The theories progressed dealt with four categories: 1) the therapeutic relationship, 2) families, and 3) other. Three articles discussed the therapeutic relationship. Attachment theory was used by two authors to discuss working with clients individually (Bennett; Ringle). Control-mastery theory was used to discuss therapists who work with clients in a psychotherapy setting (Nol). Two articles progressed theories dealing with the family unit. The family resilience model was used to explain how families adjust to economic pressures (Vandsburger & Biggerstaff). A theory of procedural justice was used to explore Family Group Conferencing in child welfare work (Neff). Finally, a theory of social justice was discussed for working on a macro level with activism and policy (Mulroy), and trauma theory was used to discuss social work education (McKenzie-Mohr).

Policy

Five theories dealing with policy were published in seven different articles in social work journals in the 2004 calendar year (Table 4). Three theories from the articles in this content area were judged as progressing. No theories were presented as new/emerging, and three existing theories were discussed or critiqued, with little or no theory progression. Responsive regulation appeared in three articles and was judged to be progressed by one (Burford & Adams) and discussed in two articles (Kelly; Pennell).

The three articles that progressed theories dealt with divergent topics. Ecosystem theory was used to study the impact of systems of care model on families and their therapeutic outcomes (Coffey). Responsive regulation was used to understand the dual roles (social control and empowerment) of most practitioners (Burford & Adams). Finally, transtheoretical theory is used to examine welfare-to-work (McGuire).

| Author | Progression | Titles of Theories | Key Points | Tested Empirically |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|--|--|---------------------------|
| Alperin | Discussed without progression | Dream Analysis (Classical Object-Relations, Modern Psycho-analytic, Self-Psychology) | Identifies and compares four theories of dream analysis. Concludes that overall purpose of dreams is to develop, maintain, and restore self-object relationships | No |
| Bennett | Progressed | Attachment | Discusses attachment theory and infant research to understand the therapeutic relationship. Examines how clients who represent the four styles of attachment (secure, insecure ambivalent, insecure avoidant, and disorganized) respond to therapeutic telephone contact, or “disembodied communication.” Patients with insecure avoidant or disorganized attachment did not respond to changes in treatment mode. | No |
| Brandell & Ringel | Discussed without progression | Psycho-dynamic Attachment | Traces the importance of the therapeutic relationship in clinical social work and case-work management. Identifies psychoanalytic concepts relevant to social work, including therapeutic alliance, the “holding environment,” transitional objects, and phenomena. Argues that psychodynamic perspective on relationship should be taught in social work curricula. | No |

| Author | Progression | Titles of Theories | Key Points | Tested Empirically |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| Brownlee & Oikonen | Discussed without progression | Bereavement Cycle | Explores perinatal loss and related issues of mourning/grief. Provides concise clinical and historical background of theory and family/parental stress during the loss of an unborn. Detailed discussion of empirical research studies with parents, extended family members, and primary care providers to support (attachment/loss/grief). Also reports limitations for women in follow-up clinical services. | No |
| Burlae | New/Emerging | Mindful Space | Uses theory to understand and suggest tools to prevent violence against women. Two forms of violence— invasion and captivity are experienced in subtle ways. Ones emotional energy alerts the receiver on a visceral level when a violation occurs. These cues can prevent destructive violence if the receiver acknowledges them and sets limits. If not, the repeated subtle acts of violence fragment the sense of self. | No |
| Corcoran & Nichols-Casebolt | Discussed without progression | Resiliency | Presents a “risk and resilience ecological framework” for client assessment and goal formulation on micro, mezzo, and macro levels. This framework, though comprehensive, is massive and may be overwhelming for some. | No |
| Gubman | Discussed without progression | Attachment | Discusses practical link between the theory and social work clinical settings using empirical and evidence-based studies about working with “difficult patients.” | No |

| Author | Progression | Titles of Theories | Key Points | Tested Empirically |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|---|---------------------------|
| Kahng & Mowbray | Discussed without progression | Modified Labeling | Applies MLT to discuss the process of mental illness (MI) stigmatization. Identifies factors contributing to MI stigma(s): self-worth, rejection, and self-esteem. Empirical studies related to chronic/severe MI, social work settings, and family support systems are used in this paper to provide a better understanding and framework for MLT. | Yes |
| Manning, Cornelius & Okundaye | Discussed without progression | Afrocentric Egopsychology Spirituality | Identifies three primary theories recommended for practice with African American clients that incorporate accounts of racism, oppression, stress, mental, and general health issues. | No |
| McKenzie-Mohr | Progressed | Trauma | Discusses theory as an underutilized tool of knowledge in undergraduate and graduate schools of Social Work (SW). Provides in-depth discussion about integrating it into college level curriculum. Offers specific empirical studies that support the need to incorporate skills in SW practice and teaching settings. Also, discusses the possibility of traumatizing SW students who are not emotionally capable of processing first-hand trauma. | No |
| Mulroy | Progressed | Systems Social Justice | Provides in-depth look at macro social work practice by discussing several prominent theories (systems, social justice, social environment, and community). Examines three levels of social justice and applies them to social work community activism and administrative policy. | No |

| Author | Progression | Titles of Theories | Key Points | Tested Empirically |
|---------------|--------------------|---------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| Neff | Progressed | Procedural Justice | Integrates social exchange theory with equity theory to explain Family Group Conferencing (FGC). The primary concepts discussed regarding child protection are: restorative, retributive, and group value. | No |
| Nol | Progressed | Control-Mastery | Discusses theory as tool used primarily in psychotherapy settings. Author identifies two basic concepts essential in linking theory with practice, 1) clients are motivated to reveal unresolved emotional issues, and 2) therapists provide and develop a trusting relationship in order to allow clients to reveal unconscious materials. | No |
| Ringel | Progressed | Attachment | Author details a change in attachment style using a clinical case study with an adult. Asserts that the treatment relationship and process facilitate the change. Use of AT shifts focus of treatment away from medical model of diagnosis. | No |
| Rojano | New/ Emerging | Community Family | Community family therapy (CFT) in this conceptual article is a progressive theory of the ecosystemic model of therapy for economically oppressed populations. A primary goal is moving clients out of poverty and is achieved through three levels of intervention facilitated by a "citizen therapist." The "citizen therapist" is a new role for the therapist and includes coaching, advocacy, networking ability, community activism, and civic leadership. | No |

| Author | Progression | Titles of Theories | Key Points | Tested Empirically |
|---------------------------|-------------|-------------------------|---|--------------------|
| Vandsburger & Biggerstaff | Progressed | Family Resilience Model | Evaluates family resiliency model/theory to explain how families adjust when challenged with economic pressures. Authors provide discussion of poverty, family functioning, and resiliency. Uses the Stress Adjustment Adaptation Model (ABCX). | Yes |

Populations at Risk

Eleven theories dealing with at-risk populations were published in seven different articles in social work journals in the 2004 calendar year (Table 5). Theories from articles in this content area were judged as progressing. No theories were presented as new/emerging and four existing theories were discussed or critiqued, with little or no theory progression.

As with policy, the three articles that progressed theories dealt with divergent topics. Critical constructionist and ecological theories were used to study parents who have been physically abused by their adolescent child (Cottrell & Monk). Marxist theory is used to discuss how alienation of labor, human nature, and humanity has an impact on clients and social workers (Ferguson & Lavalette). Finally, queer theory is used to discuss body image disturbances and psychosocial difficulties experienced by some gay men (Wood).

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Several interesting trends related to theory discussion and progression in social work appeared as we reviewed these articles. Our primary purpose was to evaluate theory progression within the social work literature. Overwhelmingly, this occurred within the 24 articles in the HBSE category. Of the 24 articles reviewed, 16 demonstrated some level of theory progression. In the practice content area, seven articles demonstrated progression, while seven others showed minimal evolution. The populations-at-risk/social and economic justice and policy content areas both had three articles that suggested theory progression, while the research content area had two articles that showed progression, as did the diversity content area. There were no theories discussed that demonstrated progression in the content areas of field or values and ethics. It is reasonable to conclude that social workers are continuing to focus their work on the advancement of theories of human behavior and social work practice, while spending less time on the content areas of policy, populations-at-risk/social and economic justice, diversity, and research methods.

Across the Curriculum Content areas, eight new and emerging theories were presented in the literature. Among these, four were sorted into the HBSE content

| Author | Progression | Titles of Theories | Key Points | Tested Empirically |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| Baylis | Discussed without progression | Lacanian Analytic | Attempts to analyze the development, or lack there of, of social work's identity as a profession. Provides reader with extensive description of complex theory from a historical context. Without showing any evolution of the theory, the author makes an argument for applying it to current debates regarding the nature of the social work profession. No empirical evidence is provided either in support of the theory or its application to social work's identity crisis. | No |
| Burford & Adams | Progressed | Responsive Regulation | In-depth description of theory that gives both historical context and development of the theory. Provides a way to understand the dual roles (social control and empowerment) of most practitioners. Suggests a framework to negotiate these roles in practice. | No |
| Coffey | Progressed | Ecosystem | Studies the impact of systems of care model on families and their therapeutic outcomes. Has comprehensive historical discussion of ecosystemic theory. Links resiliency theory to the model. Provides evidence that the belief that systems of care may have a negative impact on therapy outcomes. | No |

Table 4: *Articles Summaries for Policy Content (cont.)*

| Author | Progression | Titles of Theories | Key Points | Tested Empirically |
|------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| McGuire | Progressed | Trans-theoretical | Provides a thorough and clear historical description of the development, empirical study and evolution of the Transtheoretical model and welfare to work. Examines the change process that was initiated when welfare to work became the major method of moving people off of welfare toward self-sufficiency. | Yes |
| Mulroy & Tamburo | Discussed without progression | Political Economy | Looks at the changing climate of nonprofit organizations and welfare-to-work. Provides little discussion on historical evolution of political economy theory. Cites several studies that examine welfare reform programs and policies the political economy framework is used to analyze the impact of welfare-to-work on nonprofit organizations and their delivery of services. | No |
| Pennell | Discussed without progression | Responsive Regulation | Provides detailed description of the components and processes of Family Group Conferencing (FGC). | Yes |

area, two were in the practice content area, and one each was classified in the policy and diversity content areas. This could suggest that social work scholars continue to develop new ways to understand human behavior but are not developing new theoretical frameworks to address issues of social justice, research methods, values and ethics, or field education.

Of the theories discussed in these articles, Psychoanalytic Theory and Feminist Theory appeared across the widest spectrum. Psychoanalytic Theory was found in articles sorted into the Curriculum Content areas of diversity, practice, HBSE and values, and ethics, while articles related to Feminist Theory were found in the categories of populations-at-risk/social and economic justice, research, values and ethics, and HBSE. Other theories that were examined multiple times include Attachment Theory in practice (three separate articles), and HBSE and research;

Table 5: *Articles Summaries for Populations-at-Risk/Social and Economic Justice Content*

| Author | Progression | Titles of Theories | Key Points | Tested Empirically |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|--|---------------------------|
| Abbott, Sharma, & Verma | Discussed without progression | Family Stress | Authors use family stress theory to interpret the emotional climate within Indian families living in poverty. The authors operationalize the main constructs of family stress theory for the purposes of this study, but results fail to offer firm support of the theory. One possibly beneficial conclusion is the suggestion that poverty alone does not predict satisfaction with family or life in general. | Yes |
| Anguiano | Discussed without progression | Social Capital Ecological | Studies minority students at-risk of dropping out of school using theories. Offer no explanations of previous studies that may have verified either theory. Primary components of each theory is explained. Little attention given to the historical context. They suggest that the types of parental involvement important for students' high school completion may vary by ethnicity. | Yes |

Ecosystems or Ecosystemic Family Theory in policy, and populations-at-risk/social and economic justice; and Transtheoretical Change Theory in HBSE and policy.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PROFESSION

As noted earlier in this paper, we categorized social work articles that discussed theory as either progressing the theory, proposing a new or emerging theory, or simply discussing or critiquing a theory without progression. For the purposes of this article, theory progression was defined as an empirical test (quantitative or qualitative) of the tenets of a theory or as a discussion of a theory that proposes innovative applications or examples. Most of this work continues to occur in studies focused on the CSWE Foundation Curricular Content areas of HBSE and practice. Given the current political climate and pending federal and state budget cuts for programming, social work would be well served to focus immediate

and future research efforts on issues of diversity or populations-at-risk/social, and economic justice. It will be necessary to develop new and empowering approaches to working with individuals and families who have been marginalized by restrictive social policies. Furthermore, social workers must continue to research the effects of social problems and to evolve theoretical explanations for human behavior in order to develop positive interventions and to assist people of all ethnic backgrounds and people representing diverse sexual orientations and evolving concepts of gender. Social work researchers must also do a better job of reviewing pertinent theories of research and developing theories of research methodology than they did in 2004.

Also sorely lacking is theory discussion or progression in the EPAS content areas of field education or policy. Field clearly is a bedrock content area in social work education, and yet, there is minimal evidence to suggest that any scholars researched its theoretical components in 2004. Similarly, policy remains an important content area, yet only seven articles were written in 2004 that included a significant volume of theory discussion and only three of those articles demonstrated theory progression. Social workers must do better at researching, refining, and developing a unique theoretical foundation for practice with diverse populations or we will face significant challenges in justifying our existence to political and scientific communities.

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