

Theoretical Approach to Counseling

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Before a counselor can provide service to a student, they must be fully aware of their thoughts on how to approach the counseling relationship professionally. They need to know how they will treat their student, their philosophy and principles, and whether they have any limitations. Although a counselor may be inclined to pick and choose interventions from other theoretical approaches, there is always one theory that sticks to a counselor based on their background and personal values. The theoretical approach chosen by the counselor will be the source that determines the counselor's effectiveness and the student's success.

Human Nature and Change

The Theory I connect to my values about Human Nature is the Person-Centered Theory. According to Corey(2023), Carl Rogers, the father of the person-centered theory movement, believed that people were capable of self-understanding and self-direction. He believed therapists should exude congruence, unconditional positive regard, and accurate empathic understanding to help clients grow their actualizing tendencies. (Corey,2023). In this theory, less authority is given to the therapist, and more emphasis is placed on the client's abilities. (Corey,2023). A person who engages with their environment can grow their understanding. As people experience their environment, they develop perceptions and values that can be influenced by the people surrounding them. (Dollerhide & Lemberger Truelove, 2019).

Personal Background:

I chose this theory because of its connection to my background. I was told by a psychiatrist when I was six that I would never read, my overall skills were too poor, and I would probably not even get to high school or graduate. If it weren't for my mom, I probably would have never gotten to where I am now. Growing up, she taught us that all of us can do things as long as we set our

minds to it. She showed me that with hard work and dedication to my learning and growth, I could overcome my obstacles and be successful. She showed me how to study in a way that was effective for me. (I have a learning disorder known as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder). She also taught me how to manage my time to effectively ensure that what I was learning was staying with me. (My disability causes short-term memory loss and slow executive functioning). After teaching me effective methods to study and helping me see my capabilities, my mom got me to self-study by high school.

There were values that I learned from living with my family that also correlate with my reasoning for choosing this theory. I grew up in a large family. My mom had two kids of her own; then, she adopted me and nine other kids. All of us who were adopted came from pretty rough lives before coming to our mom. Although our mom tried her best, she couldn't always meet all our emotional needs, but the children she was able to reach, my mom used person-centered techniques as well as family-centered techniques to help my siblings and me process the trauma that we witnessed. My mom did these techniques without even realizing it, though. We all grew to work as a family unit to help heal each other while also growing individually and processing our trauma. It was also because Mom included faith. She taught us that when we struggle to find our strength, we should lean on God and use his word to motivate us to get through the pain.

Relationship Building and Assessment

For a person-centered therapist, the relationship between the client and the therapist is key to success. The therapist must desire a real relationship with the client. Essentially, the

therapist only sees the client as a human and gets to know them without forcing a diagnosis. The ultimate goal should be to come alongside the client in their journey of personal discovery; showing empathy is key. (Corey, 2023). Therapists are tasked with grasping the reality of the client's world, putting themselves in their client's shoes, and not allowing personal bias and values to interfere with how they perceive their client's personal experiences.

In Person-Centered Theory, clients are held accountable for themselves and use the counseling relationship to understand reality and themselves. They are allowed to explore the range of their beliefs and feelings. There is less distortion and more acceptance of uncomfortable feelings. (Corey,2023). The client is responsible for providing self-assessment with encouragement and minimal prompts from the therapist. The therapist and client will work together to discover what a client wishes to work on in the session and what goals they wish to meet. If the goals are not meeting the expectations or showing positive results, the client and therapist assess where the goal needs to be changed and discuss why it did not seem to work for them.

Even though there are a lot of benefits to using a person-centered approach, there are some limitations. Culturally, a lack of structure makes it hard for those trying to deal with a crisis or who prefer to set goals and see counselors as the authority. Also, person-centered theory focuses on internal evaluation rather than community mindset (Corey, 2023), which can limit this approach for community-centered cultures. Although this theory is willing to hypothesize, change, and grow, a method of research needs to be done to make such changes. Finally, there are no specific techniques or guidelines for changing a person's behavior, just loosely defined principles (Corey,2023).

Ethical & Biblical Principles

One of the problems with the person-centered theory is that due to the loose principles, there is no sure way to gather data on the results of using this method. According to ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors, the result of this problem violates A.14.a. In being able to use valid or reliable research-based tests to evaluate. (ASCA, 2022) On the other hand, The person-centered theory aligns with many of the ACA Codes of ethics in its philosophy. ACA Codes of Ethics such as A.1.a, Respect your client. A.1.d. Recognize the support the client has in the community and home. A.2.b, Informing the client of what is offered in the counseling session. A.4.b. Being aware of personal values and ensuring there is no imposition of one's values. And A.7.a Counselors are advocates for their clients. These are examples of ethical codes that align with the philosophy of person-centered theory. Not only does the theory align with the ethical guidelines given to school counselors, but it also aligns with the biblical principles and values that I carry.

The Biblical Principle of living like Jesus applies to this theory. Jesus was all about reaching people where they were and guiding them to see that they are capable of having a relationship with God if they are open for refinement. When they have a relationship with Him, they will strive to be like Jesus. John 14:12. “Truly, truly I tell you, whoever in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father” (*Holy Bible: NIV: New International Version.*, 1973). Not only does it apply to the client’s role, but as a therapist, the bible talks about the importance of listening (Mark 4:24) and loving openly without judgment (Matthew 7:1-5, James 4:11-12, Romans 2:1-3, James 1:26) which are also principles mentioned in theory.

Some of the verses mentioned above exemplify implementing my values in my room. For example, in James 4: 11-12, James talks about the importance of not judging others and leaving the judgment to God. (*Holy Bible: NIV: New International Version.*, 1973). My mindset must remember that I am not there to judge a person's circumstances or choices. That is God's job. Also, in Ephesians 4:29, Paul talks about the importance of watching what you say to ensure that anything from your mouth is encouraged. (*Holy Bible: NIV: New International Version.*, 1973). I do not want to admonish my clients for not following a goal. Instead, I like to focus on what they could do to change their predicament successfully. James 1:26 Follows along this same line, reminding Christians that if you claim to be of faith and then slander other people, then you are fooling yourself into believing that your faith is sincere. (*Holy Bible: NIV: New International Version.*, 1973). Finally, Galatians 6: 1-5 Reminds us that we should be gentle and humble when helping our fellow person find the right path. (*Holy Bible: NIV: New International Version.*, 1973). Here, I will be humble and gentle in ensuring my clients follow their pathways and pursue their healing.

Conclusion

As a future counselor, I want to ensure that my clients can connect to themselves through person-centered theory. My clients will not only feel like they are advocates for their mental health, but they can recognize me as a partner for the ride rather than a leader in their lives. Everything I do and say will represent my family, background, and faith in a light that encourages my client to process their problems while feeling like they can trust me and that we are a true team. I will make assessments for my culturally diverse clients and be open to using different methods based on my clients' desires. My theoretical approach will ensure success for my clients and show my effectiveness as a counselor.

References

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