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Cutting Edge Issues and Critical Reflections

Edited by Bala Raju Nikku

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Meet the editor

Bala Raju Nikku, PhD, hails from an agricultural family in India. Bala joined Thompson Rivers University School of Social Work and Human Service as an Assistant Professor in 2018. He served as a Teaching Fellow of the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) and Co-chair of the Human Rights Committee of the TRU faculty association. Dr. Nikku has served in the academia and grassroot social work practice in India, Nepal, and Malaysia and has held adjunct positions in the UK and Thailand. He served as founding director of the Nepal School of Social Work (2005-2011). Dr.Nikku received his PhD from the Wageningen University in 2006 and was awarded with a COFUND Senior Research Fellowship at the Durham University, UK in 2015. He has served on the executive boards of the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and of the Asian and Pacific Association of Social Work Education (APASWE). His research interests include green social work, wildfire disasters, pandemics, international social work, comparative social policy, and university community engagement. Dr Nikku is currently serving as a member of the editorial advisory boards of International Social Work Journal (Sage); Practice: Social Work in Action (Routledge), and is associate editor of Social Work Education: The International Journal (Routledge). Email: bnikku@tru.ca

Contents

Preface

Before beginning to consider to edit this book, I must confess a very genuine doubt as to my competency to undertake an edited book project and discourse on global social work. For the last twenty-five years I have been involved in social work teaching, curriculum development, research, and practice in Asia and more recently in Canada. From when the question was asked by Abraham Flexner in 1915 whether social work was a profession, we have come a long way to answer Flexner. Social work has grown in the last 100 years and we need waste no time in answering the same question. But perhaps we need to ask new questions. Social work education, theory, and practice have evolved over the century to be transformative as the profession is informed by contemporary debates, critical reflections, and research. I have had the opportunity to live, work, and teach in different countries, cultures, and professional settings. My involvement with the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) as member at large (2012-2016) and with the Asian Pacific Association of Social Work Education (APASWE) provided me with unique insights in to social work as an international and global profession. In the last fifty years, there has been a lot of research on global social work being published, focusing on the international dimension of social work that recognizes the complexity of working across borders and cultures. This book aims to contribute to further the existing knowledge base on global social work. There are currently increasing numbers of social work programs both in the global south and north offering a wide range of international content and I do hope that this book will be a useful addition to the ongoing efforts.

When the invitation to edit this book was offered to me by the IntechOpen, I took it is an opportunity and risk and accepted the offer even while open book publishing in social work is not common. We received a huge response and educators from Canada, USA, South Africa, Ireland, Alaska, and other counties shared their research insights and scholarship that reflects the current globalization and its impacts on social work education and practice. The chapters included in this book challenge current thinking and thus generate new brave ideas for further development of global social work as a distinct social work practice. Aa a reader you will find an eclectic mix of ideas and unique identities that inform global social work practices. The book is divided in to two parts/sections. The first section is on Decolonizing Social Work. The second part focused on Empowering Social Work Research and Field Practice. In exploring these themes, *Global Social Work - Cutting Edge Issues and Critical Reflections* addresses issues regarding community dynamics, colonization, race, immigrants, human rights, social action, and politics of populism. The authors have challenged traditional views about professional imperialism and were able to introduce global social work discourse in new and engaging directions. I am very grateful to the IntechOpen team and for the opportunity given to me to edit this book. I owe sincere thanks to the chapter contributors, who despite many constraints contributed to this collective effort that is now an example of a global collaborative project based on collegiality, cooperation, and passion.

I do hope that you will agree that the depth and breadth of scholarship these author colleagues have given us will continue to influence the current and future developments of global social work courses, curriculum, and programs across the globe as these ideas and critical reflections presented in this book travel across borders, cultures, and communities.

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Section 1

Decolonizing Social Work

Chapter 1

Using Indigenous Approaches as a Bridge between Policies, Interventions, and the Grassroots

Aissetu Barry Ibrahima

Abstract

Indigenous approaches are crucial for indigenous people across the world including Africans, in assessing the impact of imperialism and its manifestations in colonialism, liberalism, globalization, and Western research. Such approaches acknowledge the fundamental importance of local culture, recognizing that geographical, empirically based knowledge provides culturally appropriate solutions to problems. Indigenous approaches serve as a bridge between policies, interventions, and the grassroots. Social work, as a practice-based profession and an academic discipline, should acknowledge and include indigenous knowledge and methodologies in its curriculum. It is important to empower and provide space and a voice for the grassroots to articulate problems and participate in solving them by sharing their own wisdom and experiences. It is shortsighted and unworkable to rely upon prescribed Western policies and curriculums with the assumption that they will seamlessly transfer to other, fundamentally different, people and cultures. Failing to discard such an "apples to apples approach" will only result in a prolonged failure to adequately address the socioeconomic problems in Sub-Saharan Africa and will only perpetuate the problems associated with imperialism and [neo]colonialism. This chapter provides conceptual definitions to constructs such as decolonization and indigenous knowledge and demonstrates the importance of decolonization and indigenous approaches in social work scholarship and practice as it relates to Africa.

Keywords: decolonization, development, grassroots, indigenous approaches, policies

1. Introduction

The current state of African society and the practice of social work in Africa must be viewed through a historical lens. As Said [1] said "Past and present inform each other, each implies the other and each co-exists with the other. Neither past nor present has a complete meaning alone. How we formulate or represent the past shapes our understanding and views of the present (p. 4)". Colonial administrators and missionaries introduced social work in South Africa in the 1920s to address white poverty, particularly [white] orphans and juveniles [2–5].

To better understand the current structural issues, development policies, and programs in Africa, we need to know the history of colonialism and its vivid manifestations to date. Before colonialism, African societies were ethnic nationalities. Land ownership formed society's economic base while a kinship system guided the governance and social support system [6]. The social support system was collectivist

and centered around mutuality and accepted reciprocity. Collectivism as a cultural pattern emphasized the extended family, community, caste, tribes, and country [7]. There were no private-public dichotomies or hierarchies, gender roles were interdependent (equally valuable and flexible), and decisions were made with utmost concern for common goals in the spirit of cooperation and collaboration [6, 7].

Colonialism, through its introduction of capitalist principles, destroyed these existing structures and social support systems [6]. Specifically, the competition, increased capital, and free market economy placed African culture's inherent principles of cooperation and reciprocity on the back burner. The elevation of monetary considerations as the medium for exchanges of goods and services widened the distinction between the homestead and the workplace and reduced the importance of mutual reciprocity as the basis of welfare [6]. Thus, it disconnected people from their histories, landscapes, language, social relations, and their own ways of thinking, feeling, and interacting with the world [2, 8, 9].

In the current period of post-colonialism and globalization, which brought magnificent changes in the socioeconomic, educational, and political environment of the content, "Africans" cannot simply reclaim their traditional governance [10]. "African" leadership now works within the globalized socioeconomic and political framework, pioneered by undeniably powerful Western financial institutions. As leaders of the world economy, international financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) have significant influence in shaping policies all over the world, particularly in the "developing" countries of Sub-Saharan Africa. The IMF, WB, and other donors have required countries to adopt Poverty Reduction Strategies, Growth and Transformation Plans, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to access loans and grants [11]. Faced with little other choice, many of these Western-developed aims are now inherent in national policy documents governing African countries.

2. Methodology

This conceptual chapter analyzes literature regarding international development policies, [de]colonization, indigenous knowledge and methodology, and social work in Africa. From this analysis, it was evident that social work in Africa must challenge dominant models of research and practice while integrating traditional values and practices that have withstood centuries of oppression into culturally consonant forms of service and inquiry. Hence, decolonization is necessary.

3. Trends and impacts of international policies: a brief historical account

The 1960s was a decade of important historical developments and trends in the UN agenda as many countries received their independence from colonial governance. The UN's admission of these17 new countries brought to the forefront the issue of societal development as the "UN Development Decade" called for accelerated measures to eliminate illiteracy, hunger, and disease [12, 13]. Later, the UN's third New Development Strategy of the 1980s set poverty reduction goals, objectives, and targets to be reached by 1990. During this decade, the influence of the IMF and World Bank increased as they imposed Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) on the increasing number of poor countries seeking loans. These SAPS are designed to increase the flow of money to a country through promotion of exports and increased taxes while cutting social spending on education and health care, privatizing public sector enterprises, and imposing financial liberalization policies designed to remove restrictions on the flow of international capital in and out of the country.

The SAPs, however, ultimately failed to generate the intended economic growth for participating developing countries [12–14] because their conception of growth and economic wellbeing were primarily shaped by Western corporate values and failed to account for cultural contexts [15].

In the 1990s, following the failure of the SAPs, the UN's focus shifted to institutional development, including good governance, transparency, accountability, decentralization, and social security. In the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), participants agreed to adopt rights-based approaches to promote sexual and reproductive health, achieve universal education, promote gender equality and empower women, reduce child mortality, and improve maternal health.

These decisions formed the foundation of the well-known Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set forth in the 2000 Millennium Declaration. The MDGs tried to take a holistic approach to development, combining the economic policies of the 1980s to address poverty and economic development with the 1990s rights-based approach to social issues [12, 13, 16]. The MDGs were tremendously popular as 189 countries across world endorsed them. Such a large constituency ensured the legitimacy of the MDGs and ensured consensus among development actors, including among policy makers (at the national and international level), multilateral and bilateral institutions, and other stakeholders. Saith [17] argued that the MDGs reinforced solidarity and purpose, galvanized the international community, and improved the targeting and flow of aid. The MDGs also instrumentalized the development objectives by providing templates of targets and indicators, which enhanced the monitoring and evaluation of projects [17]. Focusing on development and the meeting of specific "goals," the MDGs blazed a narrow and technocratic path to define the complex and ambiguous concept of "development" [16].

Some have argued that classical economic reasoning formed the basis for the MDGs and that they are intertwined with the "grand neo-liberal strategic agenda" [17, 18]. The MDG project places great emphasis on financial resource mobilization and technical solutions, but far less on transforming power relations that are partly responsible for current levels of poverty in developing, and developed, countries [17]; UN, 2008, HR/PUB/08/3. Saith [17] stresses that "... the entire MDG scaffolding and accompanying text is insufficiently [17] global in its approach. It tends to ghettoize the problem of development and locates it firmly in the third world—as if development is fundamentally and exclusively an issue of absolute levels of living" (p. 1184). Easterly [14] argues that MDGs are poorly and arbitrarily designed to measure progress against poverty and deprivation, and that their design makes Africa look worse than it really is.

Despite the critics of the MDGs, the UN followed a similar trend to approve another global agenda—Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Similar to the MDGs that promised to address extreme poverty in a comprehensive manner and with a focused framework [19], SDGs aim to end world poverty by 2030, fight inequality and protect the environment. Also wildly popular, the SDGs were unanimously endorsed by 193 member states as a successor to the MDGs. And similarly technocratic, the SDGs have 17 overarching goals with 169 targets (September 25, 2015).

As an example, Ethiopia, my country of origin, endorsed and aligned its national policies with international policies, including the MDGs and the SDGs. For instance, the 5 year Growth and Transformation Plan I (GTP I-2010/11-2014/15) aligned its specific objectives and indicators with the MDGs. During that time, Ethiopia showed progress but did not fully meet the outlined objectives. After endorsing the SDGs, UNDP reports indicate that Ethiopia is mainstreaming the SDGs into national priorities and strategies (July 30, 2015). Confirming the progress of Ethiopia in mainstreaming SDGs, UNDP (April 26, 2016) revealed that

"The National Planning Commission is undertaking an exercise to build on Ethiopia's current five-year development plan to develop a 15-year perspective plan (2016–2030) to allow the country fully alignment with SDGs." UNDP has also pledged to support the undergoing formulation process. In addition, numerous national and international organizations started to collaborate with the UN and UN member nations to achieve these goals.

Examining the socioeconomic and political dimensions in the development, ratification, and adaptation of international development policies, there is a huge power imbalance between the "developed" Western and Northern nations that provide loans and grants, and the "impoverished" Southern nations that need loans and grants to provide health, education, and development programs. Western nations' financial power bestowed on them the power to develop and enforce policies as a requirement to access loans and grants. In this structural reality, countries ratifying and/or adopting these policies, particularly grassroots, have minimal or no say in the development of policies that directly or indirectly influence their day-to-day livelihood. Understanding this context is the basis for understanding systemic oppressions, and why barriers exist to the implementation of policies and programs.

The power dynamics are a major challenge for "developing" countries like Ethiopia and ultimately provide them with little to no choice. As an impoverished country targeted for nearly all international programs, Ethiopia requires large grants to fight what amounts in some cases to life-threatening conditions. The cost of those grants, however, is the forced acceptance and implementation of often ineffective Western values contrary to the very foundation of the society.

Policy makers and donors would be wise to take a culturally competent approach when determining how best to address core issues like extreme poverty, access to universal education, maternal, and infant mortality. To have relevant and sustainable socioeconomic policies in Africa, the starting point must be the community—the targets [2]. This requires decolonizing the process of policy formulation and intervention program planning [8, 9, 20]. A responsible and self-determinative process requires allowing target communities to design, implement, and evaluate programs that enhance their wellbeing within the framework of their own society rather than a dogmatic Western framework tailored to somehow globally "fit" any given nation or community irrespective of individual circumstance.

Social work, as a "a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people [21]" must play a significant role in the process of decolonization, through acknowledging and using indigenous approaches in practice and academia, as well as facilitating discussions among various stakeholders. This process begins at the educational level. Academic must decolonize and revise their curriculums to promote indigenous knowledge and include introducing and deconstructing macro-level concepts such as international and national policies.

4. Indigenous knowledge-the principal tool for decolonization

While institutions like the World Bank have acknowledged that knowledge is the key to sustainable social and economic development, they continue to disregard the importance of the source from which that knowledge flows. Building on local knowledge, rather than globalized western principles, is the first step to mobilize capital [22]. Indeed, development policies, in the past several decades, have been consistently criticized for expert-led, top-down approaches, which fail to address structural problems that are specific to individual African nations [23–25]. National policies, therefore, must reflect on structural issues giving due attention to the

sociocultural and economic realities of citizens in the individualized circumstances in which they exist rather than the demonstrably flawed "one size fits all" approach of the past 50 years as Tewodros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the Director-General of World Health Organization, who also served as the Minister of Foreigner Affairs, and Minister of Health for Ethiopia argued, "country ownership is the surest way for developing counties to chart their own courses of development and overcome the challenges they face in building effective and productive state" (p. 1127). It is vital to challenge tailor made, neoliberal and neocolonial policies and programs to exercise true self-determination and live in a just world. "*The Master's tools will never dismantle the master's house* [26]." True self-determination begins with using indigenous knowledge to design indigenous policies, programs, and school curriculums. Indigenous knowledge provides culturally appropriate solutions for particular contexts [2, 6, 27].

The heterogeneous nature of the indigenous approach necessitates careful attention to particularized circumstances. Indigenous practicum accounts for differences in gender, age, class, caste, occupational, and other lines and even between individuals of similar social status [25]. Indigenous knowledge comes from a range of sources embedded in current and past community practices, institutions, relationships, and rituals; it is ever-evolving and usually tacit [22, 25, 28, 29]. Getty [29] affirms that indigenous knowledge arises from both observation and interaction with the biological and social environments and spiritual insights. Indigenous knowledge is passed between generations using idioms tales, symbols, myths, and rites [9, 25, 27, 30, 31].

Moreover, a fundamental tenant of indigenous worldview is collectivism, and a belief that all life, living, and non-living is sacred, related, and reciprocal [9, 10, 28, 29]. Thus, there existence is a strong sense of unity with the environment and a lack of hierarchical structures [28].

All of the aforementioned principles regarding = indigenous knowledge challenges the "internationalization" and "standardization" of theories, concepts, and methodologies so pervasive in recent international policy and counsel in favor of decolonization [6, 27]. Gray and Coates [27] argue that indigenous approaches can "be understood as a process of decentering colonial discourse and power structures through tactics that can be resistant (p. 623)." Indeed, such approaches require moving away from adopting or contextualizing Western theories and practice approaches, instead going back to one's roots to seek knowledge and direction [2, 8, 27].

Seeking knowledge and direction from the grassroots, the elders, the ritual leaders, the spirits, and the cosmos may well reverse the hierarchical power structure that dictate policies using "expert" based, top-down approaches policy makers at every level of the hierarchy, must recognize their privilege, validate indigenous wisdom, and discard their power as professionals and scholars [32].

5. Indigenous methodologies

Policies are generally dictated by research using particularized methodologies. "Methodology legitimizes and delegitimizes, validates and invalidates, approves and disapproves, passes and fails, claims to knowledge and knowledge production" [33]. Methodology frames the question being asked, determines the set of instruments and methods to be employed, and shapes the analysis [33–35].

For Tuhiwai Smith [9] research is one of the ways in which the underlying code of imperialism is regulated and realized. It is regulated through the formal rules of individual scholarly disciplines and scientific paradigms and the institutions that support them. Research is realized in the myriad of representations and ideological constructions of the "Other" in scholarly and "popular" works, and in

the principles that help to select official histories and school curricula [9, 29, 33]. Critically, "Western" methodologies only acknowledge things that are perceivable by the five human senses—taste, touch, sight, smell, and audition—as legitimate evidence of knowledge. The rest—such as gods or spirits—is dismissed as fictitious [9, 25, 33]. However, in non-western societies, including "Africans," spirituality and esthetics structure the multitude's life [33]. Given this context, indigenous research is not socially or politically neutral, yet, it should not be taken as pre- or anti-science [25, 33].

Writing about indigenous research methods and methodologies, Cardinal (2001, cited in [29], p. 182) noted, "Indigenous cultures are rich with ways of gathering, discovering, and uncovering the knowledge." Indigenous research challenges the so-called objective, value-free, and scientific process for observing and analyzing human reality due to the emphasis placed on deterministic models of analysis and its denial of culture as a mediating force [9, 20, 36]. Indigenous research is always grounded in principles centered on autonomy, home, family, and kinship as it presupposes a shared collective community vision [34].

Policy researchers in "Africa" should require indigenous research protocols. Indigenous research protocols require building relationships and collaborations between the researcher and research participants so as to forge trust, equity, and partnership in the whole process [37]. This research paradigm is appropriate to the needs of indigenous communities in their struggle for self-determination as it can emancipate sustainable social change [37]. Moreover, it is empowering for people to be recognized as experts in their own sociocultural and economic contexts and to articulate their own problems and contribute their opinions in solving these problems.

To effectively employ indigenous methodologies, researchers must challenge their traditional notions of objective control between researchers and research participants [35]. Researchers need to be self-aware and reflective of their biases and stereotypes. They also need to gauge their relationship with research participants and the community as a whole to ensure that they have respected self-determination and accurately captured voices.

Education policies, to be relevant, must consider the sociocultural realities of a given community. By using indigenous approaches, it is possible to develop local, empirically based knowledge [9, 20, 27, 30]. Use of indigenous approaches would also assist in decolonizing the processes of research, curriculum development, and program planning [30, 31, 33, 35], changing the "top-down," with "bottom-up" approach.

For example in Ethiopia, the development of social work education has two predominant time periods—from 1959 to 1974 and the post 2004 "re-birth" of social work [38]. 1974 marked the rise of the Socialist Regime in Ethiopia that associated social work with the profession of the bourgeois; hence, the department of social work became the department of applied sociology [3, 38]. Social work was not re-opened as a master's program until a 2004 collaboration with University of Illinois at Chicago, Jane Addams College of Social Work. I was one of the fortunate 38 students that were part of the "first" cohort. Currently, 13 universities run social work programs at the BSW and graduate levels (MSW and PhD) [38]. The curriculums of the program mostly mirror social work curriculums in the U.S.A. For instance: (a) the programs use CSWE education policy and accreditation standards; (b) the core courses involve human behavior in the social environment, research, policy, practice, and field practicum; and (c) most of the textbooks used are also similar. Therefore, despite the effort of social work educators to contextualize the class activities and assignments, the curriculums require revision and transformations to have relevance and reflect the sociocultural realities.

Decolonizing is not a onetime event, but a process of decentering colonial discourse and power structures [27]. The process of decolonization requires criticizing the underlying assumptions, motivation, and values that are enacted with imperialism and [neo] colonialism, while producing and/or revealing ethically and culturally acceptable approaches to the study of issues involving indigenous people [9, 20]. It must be emphasized that decolonization does not negate collaboration with external partners and experts and seeking resources for capacity building.

6. Possible challenges

It is important to acknowledge that indigenous knowledge development has various challenges. Sillitoe and Marzano [25] pointed out that incorporating local knowledge and values into the development process, which is dominated by foreign ideas and hierarchy, requires substantial time, effort, and resources. In addition, indigenous knowledge is neither static nor uniform. Its dynamism makes the representation of indigenous knowledge difficult. And, its specificity hampers its incorporation in development policies. Moreover, in its current state, indigenous knowledge research lacks conceptual or methodological coherence making indigenous knowledge studies fragmented.

For social work schools, the challenge will be balancing the need of global presence (using standardized curriculums) and local relevance (acknowledging and building on indigenous knowledge). Global presence is important for schools since it helps in building image, attracting international students, and possibly more grants and revenue for the school.

Despite these challenges, Sillitoe and Marzano [25] affirmed that indigenous knowledge research plays a significant role in facilitating meaningful communication between development staff-social workers in our case and local people, "informing outsiders about local knowledge and insiders about what "scientific" technology offers, so that both can better understand the alternatives and realize their comparative advantages" (p. 17). Moreover, using indigenous approaches have long-term economic advantages since they would help us save money that is wasted on programs that do not work or bring about sustainable change.

6.1 Suggested actions that can be taken to decolonize social work

As referenced above, "Africans" cannot return to their traditional governance structures because of the change in socioeconomic and political environment driven by forced globalization and forced implementation of Western policies [10]. Thus, it is important to work within the current globalized structure while integrating traditional values and practices that have withstood centuries of oppression into culturally consonant forms of service and inquiry through Indigenous approaches [2]. In using indigenous approaches, it is important to:

6.1.1 Provide space for the grassroots

Indigenous approaches allow community members to voice their needs and help to capture and understand important nuances within a given context. Moreover, community members have an opportunity to speak out and actively engage in various platforms to support their wellbeing. The collective voice of the grassroots also provides proper directions to policy "makers" to address their needs based on their priorities, ensuring sustainable change.

6.1.2 Consider diversity, history, and contemporary realities

Indigenous approaches consider diversity, history, and contemporary realities [39]. Africa is a culturally diverse continent [6, 30]. Cultural and linguistic difference exists even within a country. For example, the languages spoken in Ethiopia are more than 80; in Nigeria, 250; Ghana, 76; South Africa, 23; and Botswana, 28 [6]. Religion and spirituality also play significant roles in individual and communal life [6, 29]. Thus, in the search for indigenous knowledge and applying indigenous approaches, it is important to pay attention to varying social structures and patterns of communication. Secular approaches that ignore these cultural nuances do not effectively address socioeconomic problems. In indigenous approaches, there is no standard policy and/or program to be used and universally replicated, yielding similar results [25, 39, 40].

6.1.3 Pay attention to local realities—rural-based life

Social work education, research, and practice in Africa must pay particular attention to local realities of the communities, most of which reside in rural areas and operate in a collectivist culture. The World Bank data (2018) shows that the rural population of Sub-Saharan Africa is 645 million and it is projected to be 702 million by 2025. Rural economies, and those who reside in rural areas, have largely been disregarded when developing national development priorities [41]. Regardless of the exponential growth of cities and increasing rural urban migration in the developing world, the rural communities will continue to harbor a significant proportion of the population of Africa that must be taken into account [41].

6.1.4 Facilitate learning within the continent of Africa and beyond

Higher learning institutions in Africa should take the initiative to create a platform where they share indigenous knowledge and practices through intra-continental exchange programs for African faculty. Specifically, they should revise the curricula, produce indigenous text books, and draft publications to share with the rest of the world [2]. These beginnings will make a space for reciprocity in the flow of knowledge from the "global south" to the "North" and "West."

7. Conclusion

Silliote and Marzano [25] and Midgely [24, 40] argue that the perpetuation of inappropriate policies and programs is partly due to the failure of politicians and policymakers to realize the complexity of development and the contextual nature of problems, which vary across culture and history. There is no tailor-made or generic "solution" to problems.

Therefore, acknowledging indigenous wisdom and incorporating the voices of the grassroots in policies and programs will provide us a different perspective and sustainable solution to issues related to development. We must empower people to articulate their problems and contribute their share in solving those problems since only they live with them in a given sociocultural and economic context. In this manner, indigenous approaches will serve as an intersection bringing policy, intervention, and grassroots together.

Indigenous approaches are crucial for Africans to assess the impact of imperialism and its manifestation in colonialism, liberalism, globalization, and Western forms of research. Continued reliance on the Western model and policies that are

prescribed for Africans will only serve to perpetuate, if not enhance, the current challenges facing the continent. Without action, African countries are certain to replicate the failed and ineffective policies associated with imperialism and [neo] colonialism.

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Chapter 2

Enhancing Service Provision for Immigrant Families Experiencing Domestic Violence through Partnerships between Mainstream Service Providers and Cultural Brokers

Janki Shankar and Zetilda Ellis

Abstract

Domestic violence among immigrant families and communities resettling in Canada is a growing area of concern for all stakeholders. Efforts to develop and implement culturally meaningful policy and practice initiatives to address this violence have been hampered by the diversity that exists among immigrant families, lack of information on how violence plays out in these families and inadequate resources. Since domestic violence and child abuse often co-occur in the same families, there is a growing trend among organizations like Children's Services to employ formalized partnerships with cultural brokers to build respectful relationships with immigrant families and provide culturally relevant interventions. This research-based paper describes the range of services cultural brokers render as part of this partnership, explores the challenges they experience as working partners, and makes recommendations for strengthening the partnership. The findings have implications for social work practitioners and other stakeholders who are interested in using community-based approaches for improving services for immigrant families that are involved or at risk of getting involved with Children's Services.

Keywords: domestic violence, cultural brokers, Children's Services, partnerships, challenges

1. Introduction

Domestic violence is a global social problem and a human rights violation that affects women and children in developed and developing countries regardless of culture, religion, and sociodemographic characteristics. In its broadest sense, domestic violence (DV) includes all acts of violence that occur between relatives, intimate partners, or other individuals, but also child maltreatment, youth violence, some forms of sexual violence and elder abuse [1]. The most common form of violence studied is the one perpetrated by an intimate partner or a former partner [2]. Findings on the prevalence of DV among immigrant women have been mixed.

A few population-based studies have shown that the prevalence of any type of DV is lower among immigrant women compared with nonimmigrant women [3, 4], with those recently settled (<10 years) at significantly lower risk of abuse than longer term immigrants [5]. Smaller community-based studies with nonrepresentative samples, however, suggest that the prevalence of DV among immigrant women is higher than prevalence rates reported from population-based surveys [6–8] and reach as high as 60% in some studies [9]. While findings on prevalence rates of DV among immigrant women are inconclusive, a finding that has been consistently reported across many studies is that immigrant women are less likely than nonimmigrant women to report DV and access formal support services [3–5]. This has significant implications for the health and well-being of not only these women but also their children. Child abuse often co-occurs in families where there is DV [9, 10]. It is estimated that that in at least 30–60% of families where either child maltreatment or domestic violence is identified, the other form of violence will also be present [11].

Despite increasing concern among DV and child welfare agencies, policymakers, and researchers in Canada to provide appropriate prevention and intervention services for immigrant women and children experiencing DV, progress has been slow. This is because of the diversity that exists among immigrant families, the lack of data on how violence plays out among the different families that have relocated to Canada, and the failure on the part of service systems to identify and respond appropriately to the needs of immigrant families experiencing violence [12]. To address these issues and in view of the frequency with which DV is present in the caseloads of statutory child protection workers [13, 14], many child welfare agencies in Canada are developing formal partnerships with community representatives or cultural brokers to build trusting and respectful relationships with immigrant families. In this context, it is important to understand how these partnership arrangements are working from the perspective of the cultural brokers and what is needed to optimize their service capacity.

2. Literature review

2.1 Reasons why immigrant women fail to report and access DV services

In Canada, as in several countries, there are policies and programs that can help women who experience DV to access social, health, and legal services—through lodging a complaint either in the court or with the police. However, few immigrant women lodge such complaints, and even if they do, they often withdraw these because of family and community pressures [15]. Immigrant women face several barriers to lodging complaints about DV. These barriers include factors like embarrassment, stigma associated with reporting DV in some communities, financial dependence on the perpetrator, fears of deportation and loss of children, especially if they have been sponsored by their spouse, a desire to preserve family honor and community censure for disclosing violence [16–18]. Other factors that have been cited as barriers to disclosing DV and seeking help are language difficulties [19]; low levels of trust toward their neighbors and the people with whom they work or go to school with; unfair treatment from public hospitals and persons in authority like service providers who are integral in women's help-seeking for DV [16]; and discrimination due to ethnicity, nationality, and social class [20–24]. These latter factors influence immigrant women's position in the social structure, and they experience multiple obstacles to seeking support to end abusive relationships compared to nonimmigrant women [23, 25, 26].

It is also recognized that sometimes behaviors occur in immigrant families that are not always recognized by family members as violence or crimes This may

happen for example when immigrants, especially newcomer women, do not know that violence toward them (or any other family member) is a crime or that they are victims of violence [27]. They may also lack knowledge of services and supports they can access when they are at risk of experiencing violence and may have little awareness of their right to seek support and protection from DV. Immigrant women experiencing violence are also more likely than their Canadian-born counterparts to have young children living in the home, a finding that is a matter of great concern given the well-documented negative impact of children witnessing violence [28–30].

These findings underscore the importance of culturally and linguistically appropriate prevention and intervention services for immigrant families, especially women and children who are experiencing or are at risk of experiencing DV. Since mainstream statutory service providers like child welfare may lack understanding of the sociocultural context in which violence occurs in immigrant families [19, 31–33] cultural brokers can play a bridging role and prepare the ground for culturally sensitive interventions.

2.2 Cultural brokers as community partners

Singh [34] defines cultural brokers as "people acculturated in one or more minority cultures and the mainstream culture" (p. 3) and can bridge the two cultures for the purpose of facilitating accurate communication. The brokers share the language and/or culture of the families/communities they serve and act as a bridge between systems and communities to increase understanding, reduce tensions that can arise from sociocultural misunderstandings, and address invisible power disparities [35]. In the case of newcomers to the community, cultural brokers may help them resettle, liaise with, and advocate on their behalf with service providers [36]. Although the term cultural broker is rarely found in the social work literature, working collaboratively with cultural brokers is consistent with the profession's commitment to cultural competency and aligned with community-based practice approaches found in the child welfare literature [37, 38].

Cultural brokers who partner with organizations like child welfare Services provide a variety of support services for immigrant families who are either involved with or at risk of involvement with the child welfare system. They can work toward building a trusting relationship between child welfare workers and the families they serve by a) helping to weather the conflicts and disagreements that may arise between child welfare workers and the family and b) remaining committed to improving the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families. However, such partnerships can be fraught with challenges if they are poorly planned and executed and cultural brokers can experience frustrations and anxieties arising from power imbalances and their multiple and sometimes conflicting community roles [36, 39]. Currently, there is little information on the challenges cultural brokers experience in meeting the demands of their roles as partners with child welfare agencies and as community advocates. Given that cultural brokers are increasingly being called upon by organizations like child welfare in countries like Canada that have high levels of immigration, to provide a variety of support services for families involved with the child welfare system, or at risk of becoming involved, there is a distinct need for greater research into the challenges cultural brokers face as well as the benefits and limitations of this approach.

3. The Current Study

This study was conducted with brokers from a multicultural brokers' cooperative that is based in a major city in Western Canada and has been serving

immigrant populations in the city and surrounding areas for 25 years. The cooperative has over 90 trained cultural brokers who provide services to 23 linguistic and ethnic groups. They offer services in variety of settings like perinatal clinics and schools. As part of their role, they provide intercultural consultancy and cultural sensitivity training to mainstream service providers. The brokers also engage in training and receive ongoing supervision from trained social workers and psychologists to ensure appropriate fit with families and overall practice [40].

In 2013, the broker cooperative was invited and entered into a formal partnership with Children's Services, the child welfare agency in the region for providing culturally responsive individual and family-centered care, child and youth support, family mediation and follow-up care for immigrant families where there is domestic violence. While the brokers have been partnering with Children's Services in providing services for immigrant families involved with the system, they have also continued with their long-term role and commitment to providing various kinds of support to families in their own communities.

Lately the brokers have been experiencing challenges in meeting some of the demands that arise from their partnership with Children's Services and balancing these in the context of their role as community leaders and advocates. During the time of this study (2015–2019), they were feeling that their experience with families and challenges arising from the partnership were being lost within the mainstream stream service provision. The coordinator of the cooperative, with the consent of the brokers, therefore invited the first author to undertake a study that would allow the brokers to voice the challenges arising from their multiple roles as partners and prominent members in their own communities and highlight their perspectives on how these can be addressed for the benefit of all the parties involved. The researcher, who is a registered social worker from an ethnocultural background and a faculty member agreed to undertake the study on behalf of the Faculty of Social Work, which is committed to working with community organizations to improve outcomes for new immigrant families. The researcher was aware of the critical need for more culturally responsive services for new immigrant families that are involved with Children's Services. This study can shed light on how to optimize service capacity and partnership arrangements between cultural brokers and mainstream organizations.

3.1 Methods

3.1.1 Aims

The specific aims of the study are: (a) to examine the experiences of cultural brokers on the challenges of working with ethnocultural families involved with Children's Services and (b) to understand the demands that the partnership with Children's Services place on them.

3.1.2 Study design

A qualitative research design using focus group interviews with cultural brokers was selected as the most appropriate method for conducting this study. The mutual support from others in the group who have shared similar experiences with service providers from Children's Services and immigrant families and the possibility of a more open discussion relating to potential problems with the partnership are benefits of this form of data collection [41].

3.1.3 Recruitment of participants

Selection of participants was based on the following criteria: the brokers must be working closely with immigrant families who are involved with Children's Services; and they must be willing to articulate the challenges that they were experiencing in their multiple roles as partners with Children's Services and as community members. Three focus groups were conducted during Fall 2015. The first focus group had 10 participants, second had seven and the third had five participants. Five brokers participated in all the three focus groups.

3.1.4 Data collection

A semi-structured interview schedule developed in consultation with the coordinator of the Multicultural Brokers Co-operative was used to elicit the perspectives of the brokers. Discussion questions included items inviting firsthand experience such as "what issues come up for brokers who are working with Children's Services," "what kinds of supports do brokers need to work as partners of Children's Services," "what challenges do brokers face when working in their respective communities," "what are the common causes for the violence in immigrant families and how situations reach a stage of crisis," and "what are the longer term needs of these families." The focus group discussions were facilitated by the first author and a graduate student who took notes as a reference for the analysis phase. The discussions were audio recorded with participants' written consent and transcribed verbatim for coding and analysis. Each focus group discussion lasted for about 90–120 minutes.

3.1.5 Data analysis

Data were analyzed using a qualitative descriptive approach in order to directly describe the phenomena being investigated, and to ensure the analysis remained true to the accounts provided by participants. Transcripts were independently viewed by the two authors who, after several readings, developed codes, which were subsequently distilled into themes and subthemes along with supporting excerpts. The themes and subthemes are presented in the results and are a true reflection of the voices of the participants [42]. Rigor (trustworthiness and authenticity) of qualitative findings was demonstrated through interrater review completed between the two research investigators, debriefing after initial data analysis was completed, and theme corroboration [43]. Ethics approval for this study was obtained by the Multicultural Brokers Cooperative through the community organizations ethics approval body.

4. Results

Three themes emerged from the analysis of the focus group interview data: (1) challenges arising from the partnership with Children's Services; (2) challenges arising from their roles as cultural brokers and community advocates; and (3) factors that increase the risk of violence in immigrant families and lead to involvement with Children's Services.

4.1 Demographic profile of participants

Twelve brokers, all women between the ages of 30 and 60 participated in the focus group discussions. They represented 10 ethnocultural communities—Eritrean, Syrian,

Somalian, Iranian, Indian, Pakistani, Chinese, Spanish, Sudanese and Pilipino. All the participants were first generation immigrants, who have lived in Canada between 5 and 40 years. All of them had resident status, with the majority being citizens. All have overseas postsecondary qualifications in various fields, are bilingual—can speak both English and their native language. They have been working with the cooperative for a minimum period of 3 years. They are well known in their respective communities and serve multiple roles. They help newcomer families during the process of resettlement, are advocates for their communities, serve as family conflict mediators, and are community leaders and educators who work in the interest of their respective communities. At the time of the focus group, all the participants were working alongside Children's Services workers helping to interspret cultural issues, delivering culturally relevant services to families, facilitating cross-cultural communication between families and Children's Services workers, educating families about policies and procedures of Children's Services, raising awareness about domestic and child protection issues and referring families to available community resources. They were also receiving ongoing supervision from trained social workers and psychologists for dealing with complex issues that arise when working with families.

4.2 Challenges arising from the partnership with Children's Services

The participants faced many challenges when working in partnership with Children's Services. Some of these arose in the context of helping the immigrant families who are involved with Children's Services to follow through with the Family Enhancement Agreement (FEA). This agreement falls within the larger Alberta Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act (2019), which provides authority for Children's Services in Alberta to provide services in support of children who are abused, neglected, or otherwise in need of intervention. Although the Act allows for children to be apprehended if they are assessed as not safe in their own homes, every effort must be made to support the family to allow the children to remain in their homes.

Every child receiving services under the FEA must have a Family Enhancement Plan, which is based on the assessment information and is intended to meet the child's needs for intervention and evaluate progress [44]. The Plan is developed by the caseworker from Children's Services by engaging the family, natural support network, and cultural support. It identifies goals and tasks to follow through in order to keep the child/children safe. It identifies the persons responsible for each task, timeframe for completion, and corresponding signs of achievement. It also identifies task items for which the caseworker is responsible, including frequency of home visits. The caseworker is expected to review and record on the family enhancement plan whether tasks are completed within the indicated timeframes. After a period not exceeding 90 days, a review must be conducted by the caseworker and if needed another plan is completed. A copy of the family enhancement plan is provided to all the parties who are involved in developing the plan. If during the review the caseworker is convinced that the parents have followed the terms specified in the plan, Children's Services may close their file.

The study participants reported that they play a major role in facilitating this time limited-plan by guiding the family through it, explaining the objectives of the plan and the outcome, their responsibilities as parents, and consequences if the plan is not followed.

4.2.1 Dissonance between the goals of the brokers and Children's Services

Although the participants viewed the family enhancement agreement and plan as less intrusive and controlling compared to previous Children's Services

interventions, they pointed out, based on their experience, that these did not stop family violence as it often continued in "other forms." This meant that physical violence would decrease but other forms of violence often continued and these included verbal, financial, and emotional abuse. There was consensus among participants regarding the challenges of facilitating the family enhancement plans. The first challenge was balancing accountability to Children's Services while working in the interest of the whole family. Participants stated that they experienced "dissonance" between the mission of their organization (the Brokers Cooperative), which is to mitigate domestic violence and the goal of Children's Services, which is to keep children safe. Participants shared that they experienced a constant struggle to reduce violence and keep the children safe, while keeping the family together. The following excerpt exemplifies their difficulties:

> *Their (Children's Services) goal is how to protect the children from the violence. For us, how to protect the children from violence, and how to reduce the violence affecting the whole family. When we are involved it is a tough job for us how to deal with the family violence, and their goal too. So, we have two goals – on one hand, how to keep a balance between them and the family? It is very tough job, especially when you are very devoted to your mission.*

4.2.2 Premature closure of files by Children's Services

Another related challenge for the participants arose when the Children's Services workers, after interviewing the parents and the children, determined that domestic violence has ceased, and children are safe, close the file, and subsequently pass on the file to the brokers for follow-up. The participants shared that children from immigrant communities are often instructed by parents not to discuss family problems with strangers. This means that when children are interviewed by Children's Services, they paint a picture of a loving family although this does not necessarily reflect the reality of what is happening within the home. One participant summarized the situation as follows:

> *According to the plan, they go and talk to the parents. And they go to interview the children, and the children are educated it's the family secret; you do not have to tell strangers....They close the file- as they do not see family violence anymore, it's given to us, then we go in and we see it's a huge problem.*

The file closure on the part of the Children's Services workers created at least three problems for the participants. The first arose because the family tended to lose interest in working toward improving relationships when their file is closed by Children's Services. This made it difficult for the brokers who are now accountable to Children's Services for the outcome of the family goal-setting plan. The second problem came up because once the file is closed by Children's Services, the breath of work done by the brokers and the time invested by them with the family are not documented in the family's case files as these have already been closed. As explained by one of the brokers:

> *in setting a plan around the man. Talking to them about their wellbeing, how to care about partner, how to deal with each other, mediating, including them in the group. But all this does not show in Children Services because they have already closed the file.*

Another participant added:

> *Children Services just close the file and give it to us; and sometimes they set a plan and the plan must be followed by us and the family. Children's Services are not involved in finding a solution, they are only involved in the monitoring.*

The third problem arose because of insufficient resources for the brokers in terms of having enough funds to employ additional staff and their roles being vulnerable to budget cuts. As a result, the brokers ended up with a large caseload of families to follow-up that they were unable to close but have been closed by Children's Services.

4.2.3 Lack of a clear definition of their role within a multidisciplinary context

The participants expressed that their role is not clearly defined or understood by service providers from the multidisciplinary teams that they work with. These include health care workers, psychologists, social workers, and nurses. They alluded to these professionals having clearly assigned roles, but their role, being vulnerable to budget cuts, impacted the services they can provide for immigrant families. As such, the brokers struggled with defining their identity as part of the professional team although many aspects of the work they did overlapped with those of social workers. As one participant put it:

> *People understand what a nurse does, what a doctor does, what a cleaning lady does, what housekeeping does. But what does a cultural broker do. How is this (their role as cultural brokers) different from a social worker?*

A related challenge for the participants when working with professionals from other disciplines is figuring out which aspects of their work complement those of other members of the multidisciplinary team. The difficulty also included sharing of information and finding the best way to work as a team in the interest of the families. In this context, one of the participants added:

> *It's a new collaborative practice and we now need more shared clarity on how to be complementary. This is a new area we are moving into now.*

4.3 Tensions arising from multiple roles and responsibilities

As discussed earlier, the participant brokers also served multiple roles in their communities. They are recognized by their community members as educators, advocates, and leaders and are expected to work in the interest of the whole community. Participants experienced tensions while trying to balance their different roles and responsibilities.

4.3.1 Challenges arising while balancing their multiple roles

In their role as cultural brokers, participants must inform Children's Services if DV is a persisting problem in the families they are "assigned" to work with, and children are exposed to the violence. The participants shared that in doing so they run the risk of not only losing the trust of the family but also being seen by their community members as agents of Children's Services. As community leaders, one of their roles involves educating families about DV and child protection issues and providing encouragement and support to victims of abuse (mostly women), to

report violence and seek formal protection for themselves and their children. Since community members often do not support women who report domestic violence and seek support from external agencies, participants feared that their actions of supporting these women may potentially jeopardize the good relationships developed with other community members who view these actions as letting down their community.

They also shared that their actions of supporting women victims of abuse are perceived by some men as being woman-centric and failing to take a fair approach to addressing family conflict. The following excerpts highlight the tensions experienced by the participants in some of these contexts:

i. *In so many cases when the police and Children Services or the court is involved, the blame is put on the woman, on the wife who reports the case to the police. They (community members) wonder why we are supporting someone who reported the husband.*

ii. *I'm concerned about the point that our role is created by the community and even by the men that we are supporting the victim. So, it is very hard for me to put myself in the midpoint that is not be judged that I am always supporting the woman, the victim. So, playing this role, and keeping myself in the midpoint, is very challenging. Because of our fear that we will be judged this way, we do not know how to create a balance between the two parties.*

4.3.2 Working with abusive men

Participants shared that since men are often the authority figures in many immigrant families, educating them about domestic violence was perceived by some as challenging this culturally sanctioned role. While working with abusive men, participants therefore did not confront them about their cultural beliefs. Instead they initiated a negotiating process with the objective of educating them about the law and the consequences for them and their family if they continued the violence. This included explaining the role of Children's Services and the criminal justice system and the financial impact on the family. As explained by one participant:

> *I've said to families (meaning the man), 'if this happens again, this is what is going to happen - the police is gonna come; they will arrest you; you are gonna lose time at work; it will create another financial stress for your family and it is costly, $250 an hour to $350 an hour. This is going to be your reality. So, you have the choice of whether this is gonna happen again. And even if no one calls in the house, a neighbor is gonna call like they did last time'.*

The big challenge however was identifying and dealing with abusive men who knew the system well, were manipulative and posed as victims instead of perpetrators.

4.3.3 Threats to personal safety

Some participants reported that they had been accused by immigrant women's husbands for causing the break-up of their families by informing Children's Services or supporting their wives to report violence and seek safety. This had led to threats of physical harm for at least three participants. One participant shared a husband's rant in the following quote: "We were fine, everything was going hunky-dory, and now you come in and you are empowering her, and you are telling her things that

she should not know. There is no need for her to know." The participants compared the increased risk of harm they faced in their work with that faced by child welfare staff. They felt that their risk was much higher as child welfare staff did not reside within their communities. They spoke to their direct involvement and interaction with activities and members within their community, all of which helped in serving their community better, but at the same time also put them at increased risk for harm since they are more visible to persons who have committed violence and have been reported to the police. As a result of these safety concerns, participants explained that they need guidance on protocols to keep themselves safe when carrying out their work. In this context, one of the participants stated: "There needs to be a lot more direction for us in figuring out when it is safe, and when it is not for us."

4.4 Factors that increase the risk of violence in immigrant families and lead to involvement with Children's Services

Participants identified three factors that increased these risks, especially among newcomer families (<10 years in Canada).

4.4.1 Changes in traditional roles after migration

Participants shared that in many new immigrant families, there is a shift in traditional gender roles on migration, whereby females (wives) now find themselves in the role of breadwinners, as they are usually the first ones to gain employment, in part due to their willingness to take up menial, low-paying jobs. Their male partners (husbands), who are the traditional breadwinners, have a more difficult time getting jobs and, even when they do, many are disillusioned because the jobs that are available to them, are often low grade, and well below their educational achievement, and job status gained in their country of origin. In the absence of community support programs, this shift in family roles and the added stress associated with settlement (financial, acculturative, racism, and discrimination) changed the power dynamics within immigrant families with some men resorting to violence as a response to re-establishing their control as head of the family.

In the case of families where DV is already a pre-existing problem before migration, women felt empowered when they learnt that violence is a crime in Canada, and they have access to DV support resources that are not available in their country of origin. As reported by a participant:

> *back home was less family violence (women having accepted their subordinate role), but here since woman was getting more power, they do not have to suffer it. They have somewhere they can reach out to some other people and cut this violence that they are suffering from.*

4.4.2 Risk of violence when living with extended family

Participants reported that often women living with extended family members experienced violence not only from their husbands but also from their in-laws. The most common was daughters-in-law experiencing abuse both from husbands and the mothers-in-law who justified their sons' violent behaviors by blaming their daughters-in-law as responsible for the violence. A participant recalled what a mother who lived with her son and daughter-in-law had told her:

> *My son is good. I know he is a little bit upset. He is a little bit out of control. He is a little bit aggressive, but he has a good heart, but she does not know how to bring out the goodness in him.*

4.4.3 Risk of violence arising from undiagnosed and untreated mental health and addiction issues

Participants stated that undiagnosed and untreated mental health problems are a significant issue in many immigrant families that they work with, especially those that have experienced trauma of persecution in their country of origin. While those who suffered from unresolved trauma often found it difficult to talk about their experiences because of the associated pain, others did not seek or accept help because of the stigma associated with mental illness in their communities, lack of information on available services, and sometimes fear and lack of trust in formal systems of care. One of the participants reported, "left untreated, their condition deteriorates, those who suffer become less productive at work and within their homes, and this spirals into a domestic crisis." Participants shared that many family caregivers also put themselves at risk of harm by not seeking court intervention to have their mentally ill relative committed to a mental health facility, even after repeatedly hearing threats of harm from their relative. This was because of lack of knowledge of this option.

A widespread problem that participants had noted in new immigrant families especially among women is complaints of lack of sleep and unexplained illnesses. These conditions often led to disruptions in their daily activities and had negative effects on their ability to fulfill their parenting and household duties. Husbands who lacked understanding of what is happening with their wives mistook their behavior for "laziness" and resorted to punishing them by using physical violence.

Another mental health issue that featured very prominently in the caseloads of many participants is addictions among immigrant males. The addictions ranged from alcohol abuse, which was the most prevalent, to gambling, and internet pornography, among others. Participants reported that in many new immigrant families and communities, addiction is not viewed as a problem needing treatment, especially when the addicted male member is still capable of holding his job. His addiction-related abuse toward his family members would be brushed aside by family and community members and they would instead focus on his otherwise good qualities and this served as catalyst for the addicted member to not seek treatment. One of the participants recalled what one female member from her community had shared with her about her brother's addiction:

> *He goes to work. There is no problem. So, he has a few drinks. He drinks at home, so again that's an okay thing. He only gets mad when he is drunk. Otherwise he is a good father and a good husband.*

Participants also shared that since mainstream understanding and treatment for addiction did not fit with the conceptualization of immigrants, men who recognized that they need help or are mandated to get help do not have available to them support programs or interventions that meet their needs from a cultural perspective.

5. Discussion

There are only a few studies that have examined the challenges cultural brokers face when working in partnership with mainstream statutory organizations like Children's Services. In a study conducted by Siegel, Montana, and Hernandez [36], cultural brokers expressed that they were viewed by Children's Services workers as *interfering* and as *outsiders* who were greeted with a "who do you think you are?" attitude, rather than community partners working together for the safety and well-being of children. Although the brokers in the current study did not mention such

attitudes from Children's Services workers, the reasons for some of the frustrations they experienced arising from premature closure of files could be due to factors identified by previous research. These include inadequate organizational preparedness and training for Children's Services workers to work with cultural brokers, engage in shared decision-making about how best to collaboratively address the needs of immigrant families and inadequate introduction of cultural brokers' role to Children's Services workers and other service providers [36]. Thus, despite the existence of a formal partnership between Children's Services and the cultural brokers at the organizational level, it is likely that inadequacies related to planning, coordination, communication, and team work led to cultural brokers' feelings of power imbalance, being taken advantage of, their time and work with families not being acknowledged, and their difficulty in defining their identity within professional service delivery teams.

Another factor that can pose as an impediment to collaborative working between partnering organizations is differences in their mission/goals and accountabilities [45, 46]. Although child protection advocates argue that "the best interests of children cannot be separated from the best interests of their mothers" ([47], p. 7), in practice Children's Services is solely concerned with the rights and safety of children and makes decisions about their safety independently of the safety needs of their mothers [48]. It can use its statutory powers to remove the child from the family if DV continues, an action that indirectly blames and punishes the victim of DV (usually the non-abusing mother) for her inability to protect her children from the abuser. The brokers found it very challenging to align themselves with the narrow focus of Children's Services because they believe in working with the family to mitigate DV and empowering mothers to take steps to ensure their safety and that of their children [40].

The brokers also experienced tensions from another front—conducting themselves as brokers for Children's Services while also serving as advocates/leaders in their marginalized communities. As suggested by previous research, these tensions and dilemmas can arise in the context of the competing responsibilities that some of these roles involve and highlight the tenuous role of the brokers [39]. The brokers recognized the source of these tensions, which is an important first step to addressing them. For example, some of them were accessing professional supervision to deal with abusive immigrant men with strong patriarchal mindsets. Nevertheless, they lacked the resources and support to deal with their safety concerns and fears arising from being seen by community members as agents of Children's Services and "breakers" of families.

The brokers' perspectives on factors that increase the risk of violence and involvement with Children's Services in new immigrant families are supported by past research. For example, the increase in the risk of domestic violence in the context changed family dynamics and threat to traditional masculinities after migration to countries like Canada is supported by previous studies [49–51]. Immigrant women are more likely to live with extended family and are at increased risk of experiencing abuse from extended family members, especially mothers-in-law [52]. A significant body of research supports the brokers' observations of the high incidence of mental health difficulties in new immigrant families, the barriers they face in accessing mental health services like language difficulties, stigma, cultural perceptions of mental illness and addictions, fear and distrust of authorities, lack of cultural safety and information about available services [53–57], and the scarcity of culturally responsive mental health services and community support programs to address these barriers [58, 59]. These findings have implications for the training of health care providers, DV service providers including cultural brokers and Children's Services workers.

5.1 Implications for practice and policy

The findings of this study suggest that cultural brokers can serve as a significant resource for Children's Services for improving outcomes for immigrant families. However, the partnership between Children's Services and the Brokers Cooperative must be planned properly and executed professionally if the goals are to be achieved. In the following section, we discuss some broad guidelines for improving this partnership based on the findings of this study.

5.1.1 Planning the partnership

At the planning stage, the two partners, in this case Children's Services and the Brokers Cooperative, must not only be clear about the purpose of the partnership but also take into consideration the capacity and resources of their partner and how they can work together despite differences in their goals. Partners with different goals can still work together if they can identify and agree on some common values and principles, as a precursor to defining more specific aims and objectives [60, 61]. In the case of the current partners, a common value/principle could be building better relationships with immigrant families. In terms of assessing capacity and resources, Children's Services is a far more resource-rich partner in terms of power, staff strength, and funds and this can easily set off a power imbalance between the staff of each organization unless roles and expectations are clarified at the very outset. Therefore, planning must include mutual agreement on roles and expectations of each partner and clarity on the depth of the partnership [46]. These include issues like commitment to sharing knowledge and information about families, consultation on needs of families and power sharing in decision-making, level of engagement in developing and executing the family plan, stage/s when brokers will be involved, and how decisions related to file closure and follow-up are made.

In terms of sharing information between these partners, there can be an impasse if agreement is not reached on when and how much information will be shared and the limits of confidentiality. For example, since Children's Services has not been historically concerned with the safety needs of mothers, the brokers may not like to share confidential information about the mothers with Children's Services. This is because they work from a non-statutory perspective and believe in empowering mothers. In turn, the child protection service may not be confident that the brokers will share all available information they gather about a family and encourage women to cooperate with their investigations. This may involve exercising their statutory power and bringing pressure on the mother to leave the abusive relationship (or taking her children away), without taking into consideration the challenges she and the children will face after leaving the abusive partner [62]. An agreement must be reached on these and similar important issues to build mutual trust.

During the planning stage, the training and supervision needs of front-line service partners must also be taken into consideration. Cultural brokers must receive training in Children's Services program activities and purposes, child welfare mandates, and how to work with the juvenile court [36]. Similarly, Children's Services workers must be made aware of the resources cultural brokers bring to the partnership in terms of cultural knowledge and experience. At the planning stage, decisions will also have to be made by team leaders about strategies to monitor progress and outcomes and building trust among the Children's Services workers and the brokers.

5.1.2 Implementing the partnership

The next step toward developing a good partnership will involve Children's Services organizing training workshops to prepare their staff to work with the brokers. These workshops must be offered periodically due to the high turnover of staff in Children's Services. During these workshops, policy and management support for the partnership will have to be made explicit. The role of the brokers will have to be clarified including what they will not undertake unless they have adequate support from Children's Services workers. The training workshops must also include how to work collaboratively, share power and develop relationships of mutual trust and respect. This will encourage Children's Services workers to consult with brokers before file closure, keep files open for a longer time so that the brokers can be more effective with families, and assign families to brokers early on rather than after decision to close, so that they can work with Children Services workers for a longer period.

Since the brokers face risks to their safety while working in their communities, Children's Services can provide access to safety training protocols that they offer to their own staff. There are other areas where Children's Services can offer support to the brokers. They can support the brokers to get additional funding so that they can recruit more staff to share the heavy caseload that many of them currently have. A mechanism must be developed whereby the work done by brokers with the families they follow-up is recorded in the family case files held by Children's Services. In view of increasing evidence that reduction in DV will also lead to a reduction in the number of referrals to child welfare [10, 11, 14], Children' s Services can help the brokers to initiate preventative programs like mobilizing leadership from within immigrant communities to bring about changes in the patriarchal mindsets of community members. Such preventative programs can also help to alleviate the brokers' fears of being seen by community members as working against the interests of their community.

5.1.3 Capacity building for cultural brokers and front-line service providers

The brokers in the current study identified the following areas of training for enhancing their capacity and improving outcomes for immigrant families experiencing violence. These include training in family conflict mediation and training to work with immigrant male perpetrators who are manipulative. Since the brokers would like to work more collaboratively with Children's Services workers and service providers from other organizations, they identified the need for training in collaborative practice—a new way of working that allows service providers to share and exchange information, focus on their individual areas of expertise with families, and introduces new members of the team in ways that are welcoming [63]. The brokers believe that such training will also benefit other service providers.

The findings related to mental health difficulties in new immigrant families underscore the critical need for mental health outreach services to provide training to health care workers on creating culturally safe spaces, identifying and responding to the needs of immigrant women, and being alert to the signs and risks of family violence that are often missed due to lack of cultural understanding of DV and work overload [64]. Since DV and child abuse often co-occur in families [10, 11], health care workers in partnership with cultural brokers working with immigrant parents experiencing mental health difficulties can develop specific parenting-related supports for these parents, which may help to prevent issues that lead to Children's Services involvement. Further, Children's Services in partnership with cultural brokers and community groups can help to initiate DV preventative programs like support groups for newcomer immigrant men to help them deal with issues like changing power dynamics in

their families and threat to traditional roles. Such programs are already in existence in some regions and must be further promoted. Another DV preventative program that must be promoted and can reduce the risk of Children's Services intervention is the parenting in two cultures training for newcomer immigrant parents [65], which is currently being offered by some settlement service agencies in Canada. Finally faith-based harm reduction/prevention programs like the HOPE Project of ASPIRE Program run by Muslim Food Bank and Community Services (MFBCS), a nonprofit registered charity, must be initiated in immigrant communities as these have the potential to reduce the incidence of drug and alcohol use among community members through culturally relevant education and interventions [66].

6. Conclusion

This study has shed light on how to optimize partnership arrangements between cultural brokers and mainstream organizations like Children's Services from the perspectives of cultural brokers. The study has limitations because of the small sample size of twelve brokers, with only five brokers who participated in all the three focus groups. This sample size however is reasonable for a qualitative inquiry [43]. Despite the small sample size, the findings are significant because they add to the small and growing body of evidence-based knowledge on community-based approaches like the use of cultural brokers as partners to improve outcomes for immigrant families resettling in countries like Canada. It is recommended that future studies on such partnerships include a larger sample of cultural brokers and involve as participants service providers from Children's Services and immigrant families who receive services from cultural brokers. This will provide a more nuanced picture of partnership challenges from different perspectives and how these can be addressed to improve outcomes for immigrant families experiencing violence.

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Chapter 3

The Role of Social Work Education in Fostering Empowerment of People of African Descent: The Significance of the History of Slavery and Colonialism

Eric Kyere and Lalit Khandare

Abstract

Both historical and contemporary accounts suggest that Africa has been and continues to be a significant player in global affairs through its supply of valued resources in the form of human capital, rich cultural heritage and mineral resources, including gold, diamond, oil, and vast lasnd mass. Indeed, the tremendous resources (both human and natural) and opportunities that Africa and its people possess are what attracted European powers to the continent for exploitation through slavery and colonization. Although, in theory, African countries have achieved independence, the process of geopolitical retreat of European or Western control of African states, has failed to achieve decoloniality in Africa and among descendants of Africa. Guided by empowerment and strength perspective, the chapter applies observations and critical dialog to contend that for an empowering and transformative social work education and practice in Africa and with African descents to occur, the history and narratives around transatlantic slavery trade (TST) and colonialism need to be a critical component of the discourse of social work education and practice.

Keywords: social work education, African and African descent, slavery colonialism, decoloniality, empowerment

1. Introduction

According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) 2018 report, many African countries scored low on the human development indices and indicators—key developmental indicators that measure development from a multidimensional perspective. Indeed, evidence suggests that African countries, sub-Saharan Africa in particular, have consistently been ranked underdeveloped as indicated by poverty, conflicts, war, shorter life expectancy, underutilized resources, and western exploitations [1–4]. Recent analysis of human capital development of 195 countries from 1990 to 2016 along four indicators—educational attainment, learning, functional health, and survival—suggests that African countries are worse performers on these indicators [3]. Accounts of scholars such as Rodney [4] about *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Griffiths [1] *on the*

Scramble for Africa, and more recently, *Slavery's Capitalism: a New History of American Economic Development* [5] and the expansion of neoliberal capitalism associated with globalization [6, 7] suggest that the continued struggles of the people of the African descent and Africa in general are linked to slavery, colonialism, and imperialistic policies of the western countries. According to Asante [8], the "inferiorization of Africa is a part of the philosophical and cultural fabric of Europeanization". Asante [8] concurs with other scholars that the fifteenth century transatlantic slave trade and nineteenth century colonization of Africa and Africans are assaults on Africa and Africans that have significantly impacted and continue to influence the people of African descent. Established western institutions including the church, schools, universities, and government supported both of these assaults and continue to do so in varied forms [6, 8, 9]. The political boundaries of Africa emerged 30 years following the Berlin Conference in 1884. Often described as the *scramble for Africa*, the Berlin conference is where European powers gathered to decide on how to divide and conquer Africa and exploit its resources without Africans' involvement [1]. Boundaries were created mainly on physical and astronomical lines, thereby destroying the cultural and ethnic organization and structure of Africans [1]. The boundaries later became a source of conflict when tribesmen who attempted to relate to tribal groups from neighboring states were labeled as smugglers, fugitive, and illegal immigrants [1].

These geopolitical boundaries, conceptualized as colonialism, allowed a system of political and economic relations whereby the sovereignty of African nations or people rested on the power of Europeans or the Western world [6]. Colonialism in turn facilitated Western coloniality—a long-standing/or enduring patterns of social interactions and of power relations that emerged/established as a result of colonialism, defining culture, labor, knowledge production, and intersubjective relations that go beyond colonial administration [6]. At independence, although some level of European geopolitical retreat occurred, decoloniality was not and has not been realized [6]. African countries inherited European-created structures relative to power, being (identity and culture), and knowledge production and distribution [2, 6, 10]. Africans are, therefore, existing and operating within structures that were established according to the racial hierarchy of Europeans [10]. This means that European racialized formations and the associated subjugation and inferiorization of culture, language, and history of Africa and Africans under slavery and colonialism underlie post-colonial and independent African countries and the identity formation of the people of African descent [6, 7, 10].

Yet, the discourse by the western media and academics, about Africa and its descendants as culturally and intellectually inferior, impoverished, hopeless, politically and socially unstable, violent, corrupt, and lacking of leadership [8, 11–13], rarely connects these tropes about Africa and African people to the role of the west through slavery, colonialism, and neoliberalism. It is estimated that by 2050 one in every four individuals will be of African origin [14]. Additionally, both historical and contemporary accounts suggest that Africa has been and continues to be a significant player in global affairs through its supply of valued resources in the form of human capital, rich cultural heritage, and mineral resources, including gold, diamond, oil, and vast land mass [14, 15]. Indeed, the tremendous resources and opportunities of Africa and its people are what attracted European powers to the continent. However, the narratives of negativity about Africa and Africans seldom highlight the significant role and contributions of Africa and Africans to the world, western countries in particular. In instances where positivity about Africa and people of African origin is highlighted, it is counteracted with negative ones [2, 13]. This projection of Africa and its descendant overlooks the strengths and resources

of this group whose history of marginalization and underdevelopment is linked to their coloniality that has been established by European or Western exploitation through slavery, colonialism, and neoliberalism [7, 16]. Africa and Africans have become target of developmental aids whereby developed countries, majority of whom are from the west, and recently China, are viewed as saviors and facilitators of development through aid [2, 15].

However, in most of the intervention efforts, the history of the people of the African descent's enslavement and colonization and the continued European domination through neoliberalist policies [2, 7] are not considered as key to understanding the contextual realities of these post-colonial societies for conceptualizing contextually appropriate programs and policies. Even education in Africa and of African descendants is dominated by western theories, world views, and scholars, with limited attention to African-centered perspectives, knowledge, and histories [16, 17]. Consequently, the hopes, promises, liberation, and empowerment possibilities inherent in the cultural and historical narratives of Africa and its descendant are overlooked. Additionally, racist ideological patterns that undergird western hegemony are not interrogated and interrupted. Consequently, slavery and colonization's stubborn effects continue to shape the identity formation and subsequent developmental outcomes in Africa and of the people of African descent. This is so because slavery and colonization did not only occupy and transport Africa and Africans from their roots, they also planted an ideological seed of white superiority black inferiority in the psyche of many people of African descent [10, 15, 16] and Europeans as well [8]. This seed continues to germinate and shape Africa and Africans' interactions with the rest of the world. Even in education including social work education and practice in Africa, and with the people of African descent, themes of colonization, coloniality, and western imperialism dominate [6, 17–19]. Thus, Africa and people of African descent remain marginalized and are impacted by the legacy of slavery and colonialism [2, 8, 10].

2. Method and approach

Based on the above historical grounding of developmental paradigms, this chapter further uses exploratory decolonizing methodology, locating the knowledge from indigenous perspective as opposed to western traditions. Indigenous scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith [20] writes in her book Decolonizing Methodologies, "the ways in which scientific research is implicated in the worst excesses of colonialism remains a powerful remembered history for many of the worlds' colonized people." The devastating impacts of theories and research from western perspective on the indigenous or African population examined by Smith [20] and Kovach [21] show that for the future of empowering and transformative social work education and practice in Africa and with African descents, the history, culture, and narratives around transatlantic slavery (TST) and colonialism need to be critically cross-examined from African perspective. Rowe, Baldry and Earles [22] look into decolonizing social work research using critical social indigenous approaches. They argue that non-indigenous social workers who are oriented to western approaches require a paradigmatic shift to center the unique epistemological positioning of indigenous people to truly engage in social justice and equity-based transformation. Similar to these scholars, this chapter argues that western-dominated ideology and approaches to social change and development have led to the systematic impoverishment and dehumanization of Africa and African descendants. If social work education and practice in and with African descendants are to undone this damage, they must engage in a form of transgressional education that centers African-centered values, perspectives, and orientation

to life and human development. In the sections that follow, we review literature on social work education, practice and research in Africa and with the people of African descent, empowerment and related theoretical frameworks, and the significance of history of slavery and colonialism for social work in post-colonial African contexts. We then provide a discussion of empowerment possibilities of critical dialog on and observation of the transatlantic slavery and European colonization around slave dungeons in Ghana. We conclude the chapter with recommendations for future social work education, practice, and research in Africa and with African descendants including decentering western worldview, indigenization of the western worldview, and application of critical theoretical framework.

3. Social work in Africa and with the people of African descent

Social work in Africa and with African descended people emerged from, and is informed by, this European-dominated Africans' marginalization and oppression perspective [17–19, 23, 24]. The human rights framework and the social justice orientation that underpin social work [25, 26] suggest that social work is not only a promising field but also has an ethical obligation to contribute to preventing and addressing racism, oppression, marginalization, and the challenges that Africa and its descendants do confront in an increasing global community. However, social work education and practice in Africa and with African descendants continue to be driven by colonial and Western approaches [17]. According to Harms Smith [6], Social work education is grounded in ideological foundations rooted in the European project of colonial expansion, racist capitalism, and coloniality and its history is grounded in the social engineering of white supremacy. This is evident through the neoliberal policies that influence social work education in Africa with the emphasis on individual responsibility, limited state intervention and lack of social protection for the vulnerable, and the adoption of the free-market ideas as the best practice approach for solving problems [6, 7]. For example, social work education is heavily informed by western theorists and approaches, frameworks, and texts that were written to western audience and practitioners [6, 17]. Social work in Africa is therefore sterile because the graduates of African-based social work education by virtue of the western-dominated education receive and rely on western approaches and methods of social work practice in Africa and with their African-descendant client systems [17].

The question then is whether social work in Africa and with people of African origin is about perpetuating European domination or liberation from the injustices and oppressions associated with European dominations and empowerment of this population? According to Harms Smith [6], for social work education and practice in Africa and with African descendants to deliver it social justice goal, the epistemic colonization and what is termed *epistemicide,* which is evident in the ideologies and discourses of social work, must be excavated and held to account so that a contextually relevant and appropriate African-centered social work can flourish. That is, it is imperative that formal discourses and knowledge development and production and distribution in social work be interrogated, renewed, and transformed [6]. In doing so, it is important that theories, histories, and narratives about and by African descent and anticolonial form of knowledge are reclaimed. Transformative and liberatory social work in Africa and with African descendants aiming at holistic development, well-being, and positive social change in post-colonial African societies will do well to embrace decoloniality and its process as their basis for discourse and knowledge [6].

From the strength and empowerment perspective, this chapter contends that any approach toward the liberation and empowerment of the people of African descent outside of a broader and keener perspective of slavery and colonialism may perpetuate western imperialism and deculturalization of the people of African descent. In the process, social work could end up disempowering rather than empowering. By so doing, the cycle of instability, poverty, social unrest, Africa, and African's marginalization will remain unbroken. To this end, the Council on Social Work Education and social work degree programs, as part of globalization of social work, need to take a critical look into how the profession is training professionals and scholars to engage in practice and research in Africa and with the people of African descent.

4. Theoretical framework

4.1 Defining empowerment

The chapter is grounded in empowerment and strength-based approaches to social work practice and research. According to the World Bank's framework for tackling poverty, empowerment refers to the "expansion of assets and capabilities of poor/vulnerable or marginalized people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives" ([27], p. xviii). While assets are physical and financial, capabilities are inherent in people and engender the utilization of assets in different ways to increase/improve well-being. This definition of empowerment establishes a synergy between individuals/groups/communities and the state. The contention is that the state creates conditions within which individuals and communities function [27]. With respect to institution, Narayan [27] outlined four key elements as critical for context that support empowerment-based development. These include (1) access to information. This is a two-way communication for the flow of information from government to citizens and from citizens to government to ensure responsible citizens, and responsive and accountable government. (2) Inclusion and participation, which aim to promote the participation of the poor and marginalized group to ensure that limited public resource utilizations are based on local knowledge and priorities. (3) Accountability, which is intended to ensure that public officials, private organizations, and politicians are held accountable for their actions on the well-being of citizens. (4) Local organizational capacity, which supports communities, groups, and individuals' ability to collaborate and organize resources to solve a common problem. These four elements synergistically promote empowerment and liberation of local and poor communities [27].

A capability approach has broader view on empowerment with major focus around freedom. Sen and other scholars of this theory proposed, "capability is thus a kind of freedom: the substantive freedom to achieve alternative functioning combinations (or less formally put, the freedom to achieve various lifestyles)" ([28], p. 75). Accordingly, the freedom is a core parameter of development, more valuable than economic or material wealth. For example, not being enslaved is an important functioning. Sen believes that political and economic freedoms are both significant for our society but that civil and political freedom is essential to fulfill economic needs. The racism that initiated and legitimated slavery curtailed the freedom of many people of African descent and still does so today [29–32], confining many among African descent to remain socio-economically disempowered and poor due to local and global neoliberal policies [2, 19].

These conceptions of empowerment against the processes that have and continue to characterize interactions between the people of European descent and those of Africa as well as the westernization of social work noted in the literature [18, 19, 23], reveal that there is higher probability for social work education and practice in Africa and with African descendant to disempower, rather than empower them. According to Lee and Hudson [33], "social work at it best is an empowerment profession" (p. 143). From this conception of social work, Lee and Hudson contend that social work at any level of practice needs to attend to both the personal and environmental contexts of the client system. They further argued that a true empowerment is indicated by and rooted in the existential conditions of the client system(s). They have identified three interlocking concepts for achieving empowerment-based social work practice: (1) the development of a positive and potent sense of self, (2) the development of critical and comprehensive assessment of the social forces that shape one's existential experience, and (3) the development of functional competencies that necessitate liberation [34]. From this contention, an empowerment-based social work education and practice in Africa and with the people of African descent need to be rooted in the contextual realities of the people [6, 17]. Slavery, colonization, decolonization, and western imperialism are critical contextual features of the people of African descent [16, 18, 19, 23] and, therefore, need to be crucial part of social work discourse and knowledge about social work education and practice in Africa and with African descendant. A key aspect of social work empowerment process is the assessment of the sociopolitical and cultural context of the communities, families, and individuals who are to benefit from the process and the outcome of social work intervention [33]. It entails multiple perspectives including critical historical analysis where a group's history of oppression can be learned and understood. It also includes an ecological perspective that incorporates stress and resiliency skills by which groups with histories of oppression and marginalization cope with oppression including internalization of and resistance to oppression [33].

Similarly, from a strength-based practice approach, peoples, families, and communities are seen in the light of their competencies, capacities, hopes, talents, visions, possibilities, and values however distorted these may have become due to circumstances, history of oppression, and traumatic experiences [35, 36]. Rather than focusing on pathologies and ways to eradicate them, the strength perspective posits that social work can bring about positive change through the "identification, use, and enhancement of strength and resources" [37], p. 507. A social worker practicing from a strength perspective takes stock of what people know, and can do, no matter how disorganized they may seem [35]. It requires identification and documentation of individuals, families, and communities' internal and external resources including narratives about resistance and coping mechanisms to oppression to affect change [36, 37]. Cultural accounts of histories and narratives around survival, development, migration, and problem solving may provide hopes, inspiration, and meaning making that may serve liberatory function [36, 38]. For people of African descent, scholars have noted that the history of the enslavement, colonization, and decolonization is one important source to locate the narratives of hope, healing, liberation, inspirations, and development possibilities [38–41]. The enslaved Africans who were taken from different tribal groups forged families, built communities, and relied on one another to survive and resist slavery [41]. According to Hale-Benson [42], that sense of community, which is reflective of the *Ubuntu* philosophy, is culturally distinct characteristics of the people of African descent. It thus suggests that critical exploration of how enslaved Africans and Africans on the continent have resisted and coped with slavery and colonialism can reveal certain culturally relevant attributes that can

support thriving and thus can be applied to inform indigenous social work practice in Africa and with the people of African descent.

5. The significance of the history of slavery and colonialism

The transatlantic slave trade (TST) and European colonization, and the racist ideology that fueled these phenomenon, are not commonly discussed in the US and its institutions (including schools of social work) because of the uncomfortable feelings that the subjects may invoke [41]. Similarly, with the exception of South Africa, most African countries rarely do engage in discussion around the TST and European colonization and coloniality [10]. The discomfort that many feel around the subject of slavery can be explained in part by the dehumanizing and holocaustic nature of this enterprise [41]. While the dehumanization and trauma that characterized slavery and colonization of the people of African descent and continue to do so (see [16, 29, 43, 44]) are indisputable, they do not fully account for the significance of slavery and colonialism. Slavery, an enterprise employed for the development of the United States and Europe, also depicts the entrepreneurial, technological, irrigation skills, innovation, and the ingenuity of the people of African descent [5, 45]. In addition, it illustrates the resilient traits that enslaved Africans displayed: persistence, hard work, compassion, and loyalty to one another. These skills and potentials that Africans are noted to be endowed with were what led the Europeans to exploitatively engage in slavery and colonialism to accomplish the wealth-generating and profit-oriented motives of the Western world.

In [5] edited volume, *Slavery's Capitalism: A New History of American Economic Development,* they reveal these attributes of the enslaved Blacks and their link to the emergence of the United States as an economic power that paradoxically generates and distributes both wealth and poverty. Blacks under slavery were coerced to generate wealth through the plantations and yet, were deprived of their own labor. The accounts furnished by these authors unequivocally point out that while the slavery experiences invoke the feeling of the inhumanity of certain groups of people against others, they also reveal the tremendous human potential of the people of the African descent that can be recognized, nurtured, and leveraged upon for the common good. As speculated by the historian Edmund Morgan [46], the prize of an enslaved African was sometimes twice of what would have been paid for a White indentured slave. The reason was that compared to the European immigrant who was expected to survive slave-like conditions in the new colonies for about 5 years, the enslaved Black was expected to survive longer, which meant long-term profit for the owner.

Thus, the history of Africans' enslavement and colonization presents strength, resources, and capabilities that exploration of and critical dialog around how the people of African descent, those taken into slavery, and the communities devastated by slavery, colonialism, and western imperialism can produce what Saleebey [36] described as *generative factors*. These factors represent "remarkable and revelatory experiences that taken together dramatically increase learning, resource acquisition, and development, accentuating resilience and hardiness" ([36], p. 300). Delving into the narratives of slavery and European colonization of the people of African descent reveals patterns of coping and adjustment that supported thriving and can be identified to foster thriving today. Conversely, the exploration of the narratives can also highlight certain patterns of coping and adjustment that may not be relevant for thriving today (e.g., individual and collective trauma) in order to effectively address them [40]. Other scholars concur that critical and comprehensive understanding of the history of the people of African descent can serve liberation function [39]. Karenga [47] (cited in [39], p. 486) has contended that "History

is the substance and the mirror of people's humanity in others eyes as well as in their own eyes. It is ...not only what they have done, but also a reflection of who they are, what they can do, and equally important, what they can become as a result of the past which reveals their possibilities" (p. 69).

In the health field, the significance of history in assessment, diagnostic, and effective intervention is commonly recognized in the way health professionals ask for patient's history. Social workers have demonstrated the importance of history in understanding individuals' and families' cultural background and how intergenerational and historical patterns are useful for assessing client system and formulating intervention with genograms. Genogram is an assessment tool often used by social workers and counselors to assess complex family patterns from an eco-systemic perspective, including cultural, historical, and time dimensions to understand the link between the past and the present relative to clients' presenting problem [48–50]. We call on social work educators and researchers in Africa and with the people of African descent to apply the logic behind the use of genogram to critically explore slavery and colonialism as well as neoliberalism as the mechanism by which racism has evolved, is evolving, and adapts contextually to produce the same outcomes in post-colonial contexts where precarity, extreme socio-economic deprivation, and collective traumatization characterize human experiences and undermine the notions of human rights and social justice [6]. Furthermore, social workers should explore this history in order to identify and apply the cultural, spiritual, and psychological resources embedded in the resistance to slavery and colonialism to affect intervention in Africa and with the people of African descent. In the section below, we discuss the role of critical dialog in identifying and capitalizing on the empowerment possibilities of the history of TST and colonization of the people of African descent.

6. Critical observations and dialog around slave heritage sites

Guided by the three interlocking concepts described by the empowerment perspectives, (1) the development of a positive and potent sense of self, (2) the development of critical and comprehensive assessment of the social forces that shape one's existential experience, and (3) the development of functional competencies that necessitate liberation [34], and the *generative factors* described by the strength perspective [36], the first author engaged in critical dialog on and observation of the slave dungeons in Ghana. More specifically, in the summer of 2018, the first author observed and engaged in critical dialog with people of African descent who visited the Cape Coast and Elmina slave dungeons in Ghana to explore their cognitive and affective reactions to the architectural design of the buildings and the events that occurred there during TST. According to Ledwith [51] (cited in [6], p. 122), critical dialog is a method of equalizing power relationships between people and therefore leads to empowerment, which is about exploring new ways of knowing a paradigmatic shift that allows us to see our identities and realities within a system of competing oppressions. Critical dialog with the goal of conscientization provides opportunity to synergistically link relevant emerging themes to emotions and motivation to release the required energy for people to engage in praxis—the cycle of critical reflection and critical action [6, 52]. This process or strategy of problem posing or problematization rather than problem-solving leads to a new search for solutions to experiences charged with political significance [6]. The purpose of the critical dialog and observations related to TST and colonization through these slave dungeons was to ascertain whether such processes could facilitate *generative factors* and the empowerment possibilities that appeal to social

work and can be drawn upon to engage in liberation and empowered based social work education and practice in Africa and with African descents.

These critical dialogs and observations made at the slave dungeons revealed different emotions, meanings, and attitudes expressed by visitors including African descendants (those in Ghana and that of the diaspora). For the purpose of this chapter, only the findings related to African descendants are discussed. Upon touring the slave dungeons, many of these African descendants, in particular, Black Diasporas, felt angry at Whites for the nature of dehumanization, torture, horror, and deprivation that they subjected the enslaved Africans to. Secondly, upon hearing the role that African tribal leaders played in the slave trade, Black Diasporas felt angry at their African brothers and sisters in Ghana. On the other hand, beyond feeling angry at first, the Black Diasporas did express feeling empowered, liberated, strengthened, and hopeful. For example, upon critical reflections, several of the Black Diasporas disclosed that they felt stronger and empowered because if their ancestors had to go through this unbearable and unimaginable torture and dehumanization to produce them as African Americans, they have a lot to offer, both to appreciate the ancestors and also to advance social justice to create a world that alleviates social injustice. They expressed the need to believe in themselves and their ability to overcome adversity in order to engage in collective struggle for liberation through education. With respect to the Ghanaians who were observed touring the sites, their initial reactions seemed to be somewhat indifference.

However, when Ghanaians were engaged to critically reflect upon the racial hierarchy and the whiteness that characterize the slave dungeons in the context of their lived experiences, they were able to identify continued Western influences in several domains of life that affect their current living circumstances including education, culture, food, identity, politics, and economics. They also did make connection to potential agency, the superhuman abilities, and the spiritual and psychological strength that enabled the enslaved Africans who survived the experiences they endured in the dungeons, on the middle passage, and in the new world. For example, one participants expressed that from the racial hierarchy established by the Europeans, although it seems that Blacks are at the bottom, when one thinks of the contributions of the people of the African descent to the world despite the racial hostilities and dehumanization, people of the African descent are actually *the foundation upon which the rest of the world is built.*

Overall, findings generated from the critical dialog and observations made around the people of African descent's cognitive and affective reactions to the narratives on TST and European colonization of Africa and its descendants can serve liberation and empowerment possibilities. While coloniality and colonialism suggest racist brutalization where there is a systematic attempt to denigrate and deny any attribute of humanity to millions of African descents, an action that transforms consciousness and builds solidarity in and among the people of African descent through critical dialog and exploration of their history can be one effective mechanism to contribute to overthrow the colonial order [16]. It suggests that social work education and practice in Africa and with African descendants that center African perspectives and draw on knowledge, framework, and theories of anti-colonial rather than western scholars to engage with and facilitate such processes, embracing and celebrating cultural practices, historical heritage, and reclaiming of narratives, language, and histories have the potential to achieve liberatory and transformative goals [6].

However, scholars have raised concerns about current modes of social work education, practice, and research in Africa and with African descendants. They contend that social work in Africa is an instrument and a product of colonial and racial history in which foreign thought and theory are imposed over the indigenous people and their modes of helping and receiving help [6, 18, 19, 23, 24].

At independence, Africans inherited the racialized practices that accompanied slavery and colonialism [2, 10]. Current social work practice and research were part of such practices that accompanied slavery and colonialism. These scholars have stressed on the need for decolonizing the processes and approaches to social work education, practice, and research in Africa and with people of African origin. To achieve a decolonized social work in Africa and with African descendants, "we need to know the history of colonialism and its vivid manifestations to date as well as emerging history of culturally responsive indigenous social work" ([18], p. 807). Such an undertaking entails the need to challenge the dominant mode of western-oriented social work and research.

Moreover, it requires the integration of traditional values and practices that have withstood several centuries of oppression and marginalization into culturally appropriate ways of practice and service [18]. Such values and practices are found in the culture and history of the Africans prior to slavery and colonialism [23] as well as in the enslaved Africans [39–41]. For example, when one visits the slave dungeons in Ghana, as was evident in the observations made by the first author, the experiential nature of the tour visibly highlights the dehumanizing nature of the transatlantic slavery and the sociopolitical, economic, cultural, physical, and psychological impacts on Africa and people of African descent. The experiential nature of the visit to these slave dungeons helps situate the psychological trauma and material disadvantages associated with post-colonial African contexts and African descendants within the framework of structural violence [6, 16]. However, beyond the dehumanization and the associated epistemic injustices that TST and European colonization have inflicted on Africa and African descendants, a critical reflection of the enslaved Africans who survived, and the communities traumatized by the kind of structural violence associated with slavery, colonialism, and coloniality, can lead to the identification of the *death and adversity defying repertoire* by which African descents have endured racialized encounters. Such a set of repertoires entails cultural and psychological resources that social workers can capitalize on to effectively engage African descents to achieve liberation and empowerment.

Therefore, it is extremely critical that social workers engage in epistemic decoloniality as an emerging transformative discourse in social work education, practice, and research in Africa and with the people of African descent [6]. Decolonization of social work in Africa requires identification, interrogation, experimentation, and contestation of coloniality and the reproduction of whiteness in the knowledge and theoretical orientations that undergird right-based approach to social transformation in Africa and with African descendants [6]. Thus, critical and comprehensive understanding of the history of slavery, colonization, and continued struggles of the people of African descent is required to develop a conceptual understanding of decoloniality in social work education and practice in Africa [6]. Such historical contextual understanding will help social workers to be aware of the various ways in which western orientation to education, practice, and research manifest in order to interrupt it. Additionally, social workers' awareness of the history of African's enslavement and colonialism would improve assessment and ultimately intervention with the people of African descent.

7. Recommendation for social work education and research and conclusion

It is evident that the current mode of social work practice in Africa and with the people of African descent is hampered by the legacy of slavery and

colonialism, which are undergirded by neoliberal policies and practices of the west [23]. Social work in Africa and with people of Africans features American textbooks, inappropriate casework models, and adaptation approaches that seek to modify imported western ideas to fit the local context [23]. In the process, there is a disregard for local culture, which inhibits the indigenization of social work education and practice [6, 17]. Thus, European domination through slavery and colonialism has dislocated African descents from their cultural, economic, and political root. A decolonized social work in Africa and with African descents with the aims of correcting this dislocation and reorienting Africans to their cultural roots and heritage is urgently needed. Empowerment and strength-based approach to social work that delve into the history of cultural genocide of Africa and its descendants are the starting place to inform social work education and research that promote the human rights of people of African descent and advance social justice. Below we provide specific actions to consider in designing global social work curriculum relative to social work practice and research in Africa and with the people of African descent.

7.1 Decentering western worldview

Social work education, practice, and research in Africa and with the people of African descent need to shed the western worldview, focus, and values and encourage the development of Afrocentric frameworks whereby the values of human rights and social justice are conceptualized within the African frame of Ref. [6]. Currently, what is described as global/international social work appears to be a new imperialism privileging western social sciences and advancing Americanization of social science over locally relevant ideas [7, 19]. This form of global social work perpetuates and reproduces western hegemony, which undermines human dignity and the worth of African descents. To interrupt this form of universalizing western models of social work in Africa and with African descents, Afrocentric framework should be incorporated into global social work education and research that target people of African descent.

7.2 Indigenization of the western worldview

Related to the shedding of western values and worldview from social work in Africa and with African descents, we recommend the need to conceptualize western form of social work to be viewed from the perspective of indigenization. Indigenization here refers to the development of local, empirically based knowledge that offers culturally relevant approaches to social work education, practice, and research within a particular context [18]. Social work education based on western values and approaches thus should be limited to practice and research concerns with people of European descent. Then, the Afrocentric framework should be applied when practicing social work and doing research with the people of African descent. The implication is that social work programs in the west's global efforts need to design curriculum that incorporates specific contextual knowledge in the curriculum. In the case of social work in Africa and with the people of African descent, the fifteenth century transatlantic slavery and nineteenth century colonialism should be critical components of the curriculum. This does not mean a complete rejection of everything that is western. However, as the richness of culture, language, and history is embraced and celebrated, that which is of benefit should be considered and incorporated [6].

7.3 Application of critical theoretical framework

From the empowerment and strength perspectives, there is the need to apply critical practice framework informed by *Critical Theory*. Such critical practice should include: "(a) being aware of the historical and geopolitical context, (b) being aware of practitioner's own positionality and values (self-reflection), and (c) engaging in respectful partnership with clients" ([53], p. 9). Although this chapter draws on empowerment and strength perspectives to social work practice in Africa and with the people of African descent, coupling them with critical theories such as critical race theories, critical whiteness, anti-colonial theories, dialog, and consciousness raising can greatly enhance the usefulness of empowerment and strength perspectives to draw out the cultural, psychological, and liberation possibilities inherent in the narrative of the people of African descent [16].

In conclusion, although respect for human dignity and worth and social justice goals of social work are universal themes, local context influences how they are pursued. Despite this understanding, the current form of social work in Africa and with the people of African descent seems to be an imposition of western values, worldview, and hegemony with little attention to the cultural, political, economic, and social contexts and the historical forces underlying these contexts. In attention to the contextual realities of Africa and the people of African origin can severely undermine the ethical principles guided by human rights declarations that inform global social work education, practice, and research in Africa and with people of African descent. Slavery and colonialism are important foundational forces that underlie the structures and experiences of people of African descent. Empowerment and strength perspectives coupled with critical theories can provide strong theoretical frameworks to design culturally relevant social work education and research in Africa and with the people of Africa in ways that draw on the strength, hopes, promises, and possibilities inherent in the narratives of slavery and colonialism for transformative social work.

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Chapter 4

Empowerment Potential of Social Work Techniques among Practitioners in Israel and the USA

Khawla Zoabi and Iddo Gal

Abstract

Even though empowerment is an intervention approach that occupies an important place in social work, social workers' perceptions of intervention techniques that may empower their clients have not been examined. This paper reports the findings of a pilot study on the perceptions of social workers regarding the empowerment potential of various intervention techniques. Data were collected on convenience samples of social workers in Israel and the USA. The findings indicate that the social workers in the two countries broadly agree on the high empowerment potential of techniques aimed at helping clients to change their behaviors so as to make their conduct more functional and to augment their control over their lives but have differing perceptions regarding the empowerment potential of other approaches, including therapeutic approaches, aspects of service delivery, and means of providing support. Further study is recommended to better understand the relationship between social workers' perceptions of the empowerment potential of different approaches and techniques and their cultural backgrounds.

Keywords: empowerment, intervention techniques, nationality groups, cultural differences

1. Introduction

In the recent decades, empowerment has become an important theme in the social and behavioral sciences, and ideas about empowerment appear in the literature of a number of knowledge areas [1], adult education being a salient example [2, 3]. In social work, empowerment now has several meanings, referring both to the desired condition or state for which professional interventions aim and to the intervention methods to use in order to reach that state [4].

The social work literature views the empowerment process, whether at the individual, group, or community level, as involving clients' movement from feelings of helplessness to a sense of control over their behaviors and events in their lives [5, 6]. Gutierrez [7] has conceptualized empowerment as the acquisition of personal, interpersonal, or political power to improve the lives of marginalized people. The literature has explored in some detail approaches that can be used to help empower groups and communities (e.g., [8–11]). However, there is less clarity on the intervention methods that can be used to promote empowerment at the level of the individual. Among other things, little is known about practitioners' thinking about intervention

techniques that may empower their individual clients. This is the case despite the fact that individual-level interventions are part and parcel of the work of social workers worldwide, whether in elder care, child welfare and protection, substance abuse, domestic violence, or many other areas of practice. A similar gap was recently noted in research on strength-based practice [12].

Although the fundamental principles of the empowerment approach have been explored extensively in the theoretical and research literatures of social work, neither of these literatures is very specific as to which intervention approaches and techniques are the most appropriate to apply when working with individual clients [13]. Although social workers wishing to foster their clients' empowerment [14, 15] have free rein in choosing and integrating a wide range of approaches in their practice, there has been little if any study to date of which approaches they prefer for the purpose. The main aim of the present study is thus to better understand how social workers perceive the empowering potential of techniques that can be part of their professional repertoire in their work at the individual level. Before stating the goals of the study, the remainder of this section reviews the literature on empowerment while focusing on techniques that can be used to foster empowerment at the individual level.

1.1 Empowerment: definitions, processes, and potentials

Empowerment refers both to the state where people feel that they can control their destiny and can take action to achieve their goals [16] and to the processes that enable them to attain that state. Most theoretical models of empowerment are based on the premise that all persons have the capacities to deal constructively with the challenges in their lives [2, 11, 16, 17], but that various external and/or internal factors may prevent these capacities from being fulfilled. Initially, the professional literature on empowerment focused on improving social policy and social services, especially for the socially disadvantaged [8, 18, 19]. Over time, the concept of empowerment took on additional meanings [16, 20, 21], especially attaining the desired existential condition for individuals, groups, or communities [4]. In addition, the term has been used to describe various intervention methods and processes ("empowering intervention") that must be implemented to reach a desired end state. Some researchers see empowerment as a particular orientation which reflects both a concept and a process [22].

The purpose of empowering interventions is to bring about and support a process by which a person or group moves from a state of helplessness or passivity to a sense of greater control over their lives and more ability to make decisions, to actively influence the course of their lives, and to attain their goals [17, 19, 23–27]. Through empowerment-based intervention, people can learn to change their emotions and manage situations so as to maintain a sense of control [16, 28] and develop interpersonal skills, such as the abilities to negotiate, to express their thoughts and feelings more clearly, and to better manage their anger [21, 28, 29].

The empowerment process may include changes on the intrapersonal, interpersonal, or the community levels [6, 21, 24, 28]. On the intrapersonal level, empowerment involves acquiring knowledge, skills, and coping tools (e.g., independent action, negotiation, cooperation) needed for personal growth and action in one's social arena [10, 21, 28]. On the individual level, it increases persons' self-esteem [30, 31], decision-making ability, and sense of being able to act and achieve [16, 23], which in turn augment their confidence in their ability to manage their failures and to draw upon their inner strengths to carry out their tasks [32]. Other expected personal benefits of empowerment are increased motivation [16, 33] and augmented self-efficacy [34, 35]. At the interpersonal level, empowerment increases persons'

understanding of the need to build interactions with others [19, 33] and entails the development of various interpersonal and social skills [19, 28, 30, 36], including cooperation with others [7, 30, 37, 38] and ability to contribute to the work of groups, organizations, and other social entities [6].

At the community level, empowerment means, among other things, increasing one's awareness of existing differences in power, influence, and/or availability of resources in one's own or the community's environment, and developing understanding of the structural processes or systemic factors that create barriers that individuals or groups must contend with [6, 28, 39]. It also means increasing persons' participation in policymaking processes, self-help and mutual support activities, and social and community activities, as well as belonging to activity groups at various levels [6, 40].

1.2 Empowerment-related intervention techniques at the individual level

The present study examines social workers' perceptions of the potential of various intervention techniques to empower individuals. For this purpose, we first constructed a comprehensive list of such techniques, drawing upon O'Hare and colleagues' [41, 42] classification of intervention techniques. Based on the analysis of the responses of veteran social workers and graduate students in social work, and using a preliminary database of 75 techniques representing a variety of intervention procedures and approaches, O'Hare and colleagues identified 26 techniques that were used more than others and grouped them into four types: case management, therapy, insight, and support. Based on this work, they compiled a questionnaire, the Practice Skills Inventory (PSI) [43]. In two follow-up studies [43, 44], they validated the conceptual framework they had developed and showed that experienced social workers do indeed use the various techniques cited in the PSI questionnaire.

For the present study, we created an empirical tool to examine the use of the four categories of techniques described by O'Hare and Collins [43] and O'Hare et al. [44], as follows:

Case management techniques are used in the provision of social services [45]. Since applicants (i.e., clients, service recipients) usually need help in daily life tasks, the techniques include activities and services such as needs assessment, organizing service delivery, counseling, advocacy, help in procuring social assistance payments or with employment, housing, transportation, medical care, and so on [45]. Case management techniques are based, in part, on the assumption that social workers should mediate between applicants and the people and resources in the community and that they should help to engage other services or assistance that applicants may be unable or unmotivated to access [45, 46]. Since case management techniques may be applied mostly without the applicant's involvement [45], they may appear to have little empowerment potential [47]. However, inasmuch as they help applicants take an active part in defining their needs, implementing various activities, and attaining their goals, social workers may regard some of them as having some potential to foster clients' empowerment [48, 49].

Therapeutic techniques help applicants better understand their personal relationships and analyze how environmental factors affect their problems [43]. Such understanding may encourage persons to take measures to reduce the risks they face and to enlist others in helping them deal with the social and political obstacles they encounter [50]. The techniques include focusing on their clients' strengths, supporting the development of the skills and qualifications they need, and cultivating a sense of self-worth and enthusiasm to make decisions more effectively [51, 52]. In the view of social workers, these techniques may give applicants the tools to cope

with the stresses they face and to minimize dysfunctional ways of thinking that only add to their problems [53].

Support techniques can be used by social workers to help their clients feel comfortable, to forge a relationship with them based on trust and empathy, and to facilitate the implementation of the therapeutic plan [54]. They are necessary for the empowerment process in that they provide emotional and social support to clients in the difficult process of change [5, 6, 19]. Among other things, they may foster a comfortable working environment [55] and increase clients' self-confidence, motivation to work on their problems in therapy [54, 56], and readiness to open up to and confide in the social worker [43].

Insight techniques enable clients to carry out methodical self-examination so as to better understand themselves in their social and cultural contexts [57]. In the course of fostering insight, social workers help their clients to discover and reveal their feelings; to understand the past difficulties, experiences, and relationships that contributed to their present condition [54, 58]; and to learn from the past [59]. Developing insight in these and other matters involves strengthening clients' critical awareness [9, 60], which allows them to assess their ability to change their situations, solve problems, and achieve their goals [43]. Studies show that developing insight is essential to the empowerment process [60, 61].

1.3 Research goals

The present study focuses on the four above discussed intervention approaches, case management, therapy, support, and insight, which together encompass the key methods available for helping individual clients. The work is a pilot study with three goals. First, we examine social workers' perceptions of the empowerment potential of methods from all four types reviewed above, using a new research instrument described below. Second, we seek to explore how practitioners' perceptions of the empowerment potential of different techniques are related to or affected by their level of exposure to the issue of empowerment in the course of their professional training or later on at work.

Third, we seek preliminary evidence regarding the suitability of the research instrument for examining the perceptions of social workers from different cultures. This is because it is well documented that social workers' cultural backgrounds affect their perceptions of the causes, nature, and solutions of problems [62–65] as well as the techniques and strategies they use [66, 67]. Hence, the study was conducted on social workers from two different countries and cultures: Israel and the USA. Our intent is not to compare the perceptions of practitioners sampled from these two cultures, since we use convenience samples at this preliminary stage. Instead, we aim to examine patterns of results in order to inform hypothesis-building and methodologies for future studies in this unexplored area.

2. Methods

2.1 Participants and procedure

The study sample consisted of 260 social workers from two countries: Israel (57% of the sample) and the USA (43% of the sample). Participants in Israel were selected from 27 Jewish and Arab communities, to provide a cross section of social workers in various positions at a range of Israeli welfare agencies and organizations.

All the sampled social workers were engaged mainly in providing direct therapy to individuals or families. The sampling process combined stratified sampling and cluster sampling. Welfare offices were divided into two ethnic groups (based on whether the office in question was situated in a Jewish or Arab community), with a sample of offices within each stratum, to ensure representation of communities of different characteristics. Using directories published by the Israeli Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, we contacted the director of each office to obtain approval of the data collection and to set up visiting dates. Explanations were provided about the study and the questionnaire to be put to the participants; respondents' anonymity was assured. Most of the questionnaires were completed on site during the visit, but some were sent back by standard mail. In the Israeli sample, 220 questionnaires were handed out and 148 (67%) returned, with precisely half the respondents (74) being Jews and the other half (74) Arab.

The second group consisted of a convenience sample of 112 social workers in the USA—comprising 43% of the study sample. Data were collected in three ways, to provide a varied sample of social workers of different backgrounds working in diverse contexts: (a) questionnaires were sent to 299 randomly selected members of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) [68], 41 of whom responded; (b) questionnaires were sent to 199 social workers listed in the Yellow Pages and other online databases, 46 of whom responded; and (c) questionnaires were sent to 300 Boston University graduate students who were employed as social workers, 25 of whom responded. Each questionnaire was accompanied by a cover letter about the questionnaire and the anonymity of participants and a prepaid envelope for returning it by mail.

Characteristics of the study participants in both samples are presented in **Table 1**. As can be seen, the percentages of men and women and the percentages of full-time and part-time workers were similar in the two groups. A larger percentage of the American respondents held master's degrees, and they handled a smaller number of cases than their Israeli counterparts. In addition, the American respondents were older (mean age 48.28, SD 13.15) than the Israeli respondents (mean age 35.95, SD 9.76).

Variable	**USA (%)**	**Israel (%)**
Gender		
Men	21.4	15.5
Women	78.6	84.5
Education		
Bachelor's degree	24.1	76.0
Master's degree and above	75.9	24.0
Job type		
Full-time	39.3	50.7
Part-time	60.7	49.3
Number of applicants under social worker's care		
1–40 applicants	64.3	37.2
40+ applicants	25.9	55.9
Unknown	9.8	6.9

Table 1.
Characteristics of participants in the two study groups, in percentage (N = 260).

Intervention techniques	**US Mean (SD)**	**Israel Mean (SD)**	**T**
Case management			
Assessing clients' their level of material resources (i.e., food, clothing, shelter)	2.94 (1.19)	3.08 (0.89)	–1.02
Advocating on behalf of clients	3.16 (1.05)	3.15 (1.05)	0.08
Analyzing social problems and policies relevant to the client's problem	3.59 (1.01)	2.85 (1.16)	5.39**
Monitoring the delivery of services provided by other practitioners	2.40 (0.98)	3.14 (1.16)	–5.39**
Providing information about other services available to clients	3.02 (0.95)	3.76 (1.03)	–5.88**
Making referrals to other services	2.84 (1.06)	2.26 (1.11)	–3.04**
Networking with agencies to coordinate services	2.85 (1.12)	3.27 (1.06)	–3.02**
Therapy			
Helping clients analyze how environmental factors affect their problems	4.23 (0.90)	3.80 (0.90)	3.80**
Encouraging clients to take action on their problems	3.41 (1.12)	4.49 (0.68)	–8.98**
Creating self-anchored scales with clients to monitor their progress	3.80 (0.96)	4.16 (0.72)	–5.15**
Helping clients reduce dysfunctional ways of thinking that contribute to their problems	4.01 (0.91)	3.88 (0.88)	–1.00
Helping clients practice their new problem-solving skills outside of treatment visits	4.25 (0.84)	4.16 (0.77)	–1.82
Teaching clients specific skills to deal with certain problems	3.86 (0.92)	4.07 (0.81)	–3.28**
Educating clients about how to prevent certain problems from re-occurring	3.75 (0.90)	4.20 (0.74)	1.18
Teaching clients skills to relieve their stress	4.13 (0.88)	3.91 (0.85)	0.95
Helping clients better understand their current personal relationships	4.00 (0.68)	4.28 (0.70)	–1.92
Coaching clients in how to make decisions more effectively	4.00 (0.93)	4.25 (0.71)	–4.32**
Teaching clients how to monitor their own behaviors	4.05 (0.88)	4.54 (0.61)	2.03
Support			
Reflecting clients' thoughts and feeling to help them feel understood	3.83 (0.94)	4.25 (0.79)	–2.89**
Providing emotional support for clients	3.61 (1.03)	3.43 (0.98)	–2.42*
Pointing out clients' successes in order to increase their self-confidence	3.56 (1.09)	3.56 (0.91)	–4.97**
Helping clients to feel motivated to work on their problems in treatment	3.83 (0.94)	4.25 (0.79)	–3.81**
Helping clients feel like they want to open up to you	3.61 (1.03)	3.43 (0.98)	1.47
Insight			
Exploring with clients how past relationships contribute to the understanding of their current problems	3.56 (1.09)	3.56 (0.91)	0.01

Intervention techniques	US Mean (SD)	Israel Mean (SD)	T
Gentle probing to help clients uncover troubling feelings	4.05 (0.86)	3.69 (0.99)	3.10**
Helping clients learn from past experiences	3.75 (1.02)	3.91 (0.85)	–1.33

**p<.05, **p<.001, ***p<.0001*

Table 2.
Location and dispersion values of intervention techniques among subjects in Israel (N = 148) and the USA (N = 112).

Type	Mean	SD	Number of techniques of this type	Cronbach α
Case management	3.11	0.76	7	0.82
Insight	3.82	0.73	3	0.70
Therapy	3.97	0.54	11	0.82
Support	4.04	0.59	5	0.72

Table 3.
Location and dispersion values in ratings of intervention techniques, by type.

2.2 Instruments

Participants answered a two-part questionnaire. The first part consisted of 26 Likert-type items that gauged the participants' perceptions of the empowerment potential of intervention techniques of the four types discussed earlier. For US sample, the items were taken from the Practice Skills Inventory questionnaire developed by O'Hare et al. [42]; for the Israeli sample, names of the different techniques were translated and adapted for the Israeli context [69]. A description of the questionnaire items is provided in **Table 2**, grouped by intervention type. The subjects were asked to rate the empowerment potential of the technique described in each item on a Likert scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high). **Table 3** presents the Cronbach's alphas of the ratings of the techniques of each type. These show reliability scores within the acceptable range and not less than 0.70.

The second part of the questionnaire comprised items that ranked the respondent's level of exposure to the issue of empowerment on a Likert scale (from 1 = low, to 5 = high) in three contexts: during their academic studies, through written materials at the workplace, and through information provided at a lecture, continued professional training, or instruction at the workplace. In addition, this part included questions about personal and professional background variables, including gender, age, education, number of applicants under their care, years of experience, and others. So as not to inadvertently lead the participants to social desirability responses, the questionnaire did not explicitly use the term *empowerment* in its title or define the concept.

3. Findings

Table 2 shows the participants' mean ratings of the empowerment potential of the 26 intervention techniques. As can be seen, on a scale of 1–5, the mean range from 2.26 (for item 6, "Making referrals to other services" in the Israeli sample) to 4.54 (item 18, "Teaching clients how to monitor their own behaviors," in the Israeli sample), suggesting that there is substantial variability in the Israeli subjects

perceptions of the empowering potential of different techniques, both within each sample and across the two samples. **Table 2** also shows that the empowerment potential of half the items (13 of 26) was rated higher by the Israeli respondents than by their US counterparts. In most cases, the difference, although not large in absolute terms, is statistically significant. The biggest difference was in the rating of item 9 ("Encouraging clients to take action on their problems."), which the Israeli participants rated as being of very high empowerment potential (4.49), but the US group rated only as moderate (3.41).

There were also notable differences in standard deviations between the two groups. These are of interest as they reflect the in-group variability in the respondents' views of the empowerment potential of each technique. For example, on the item with the largest inter-group mean difference (item 9), the ratings of Israeli group showed a great deal of consensus (SD = 0.68), while those of the US group showed a much larger dispersion (SD = 1.12). Although the differences were obtained only in convenience samples, which raises questions about their representativeness, these findings suggest that cultural differences may affect perceptions of the empowerment potential of intervention techniques.

Next, to gain a more comprehensive picture of the subjects' perceptions of the empowerment potential of the various techniques, we calculated each respondent's mean rating on the items in each of the four types of interventions (as featured in the leftmost column of **Table 2**). Descriptive statistics for these grouped findings are presented in **Table 3**, and the three key patterns in these findings are discussed below.

First, as the grand means in **Table 3** show, the interventions with the highest overall mean ratings are those of the therapy and support types, followed closely by those of the insight type. Interventions of the case management type are perceived as having comparatively low empowerment potential. Repeated measures analyses of variance showed that the differences were significant: $F(3,777) = 203.099$ ($p < 0.0001$). A Bonferroni adjusted paired comparisons test showed a significant difference (with confidence level of 95%) between the mean ratings of case management techniques and those of the other three types. The ratings of insight, therapy, and support techniques were significantly higher than the rating of case management techniques and did not differ significantly from one another.

Second, **Table 3** also shows that although the mean rating of case management techniques is significantly lower than the ratings of the other three types, it is not low in absolute terms. Rated at well over 3 on a scale of 1–5, these techniques too are perceived as having substantial empowerment potential.

Third, as can be seen in both **Tables 2** and **3**, there is noticeable variation in perceptions of the empowerment potentials of different techniques: **Table 2** shows relatively large standard deviations and hence less consensus among respondents in the ratings of the empowerment potentials of insight and case management techniques compared to the potentials of therapy and support techniques. In general, there is considerable variation in the perceived empowerment potential of different techniques of all types: the ratings of more than half the techniques (16 of 26) range across the entire spectrum of the 1–5 scale, while the ratings of the 10 other techniques range between 2 and 5.

A separate analysis was conducted on respondents' self-reported exposure to information about empowerment and its association with empowerment potential ratings. The data are based on three questions, each asking the respondents to rate their level of exposure to empowerment issues in one of three contexts: academic

studies (i.e., as part of the basic studies in social work), written materials at work (i.e., reading professional papers or practice-related manuals), and oral training at work (i.e., participation in workshops, lectures, etc.).

Table 4 presents the distribution of exposure ratings in these three contexts, separately for the Israel and US samples. As can be seen, mean ratings, on a 0–4 scale, show a consistent pattern across both samples. Overall, mean ratings are not high and in some contexts even low. Respondents report more exposure to empowerment issues as part of basic academic training and lower levels of exposure at work, especially in the context of oral training, with the Israel sample ratings being somewhat higher. It is important to highlight that a sizeable proportion of both samples reports "very little" and even "no" level of exposure to empowerment in all contexts, with 24–46% in these two lowest categories in the Israeli sample and 18–70% in the US sample. (Note: We intentionally do not test for the significance

Context	Mean	SD	Extent of exposure to empowerment				
			0 No	1 Very little/ superficial	2 Some	3 Intermediate level	4 A lot
Israeli sample (*N = 148*)							
Academic studies	2.46	1.29	10.9	12.9	21.1	29.9	25.2
Written materials at work	2.13	1.25	16.9	10.1	27.0	35.1	10.8
Training at work	1.64	1.34	29.7	15.5	24.3	21.6	8.8
US sample (*N = 112*)							
Academic studies	2.66	1.37	12.5	5.4	25.0	17.9	39.3
Written materials at work	1.17	1.33	46.4	15.2	22.3	7.1	8.9
Training at work	0.97	1.48	56.3	13.4	18.8	5.4	5.4

Table 4.
Level of exposure to information about empowerment, in three contexts, by country.

Level of exposure	Type of intervention	Context of exposure			
		Written		Training	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Low (0–2)	Case management	2.86	0.82	3.00	0.82
	Insight	3.87	0.83	3.86	0.75
	Therapy	3.84	0.65	3.93	0.53
	Support	3.96	0.71	4.00	0.60
High (3–4)	Case management	3.22	0.71	3.19	0.72
	Insight	3.79	0.69	3.79	0.72
	Therapy	4.02	0.47	4.01	0.54
	Support	4.08	0.53	4.08	0.58

Table 5.
Mean ratings of empowering potentials of intervention techniques, by grouped level of exposure to information about empowerment and context of exposure (combined sample, N = 260).

of the differences between the samples in this regard, both because the sampling processes were not fully comparable and because our purpose is not to compare the samples but to gain an overall evaluation of patterns).

Finally, **Table 5** shows the associations between respondents' exposure to information about empowerment and their ratings of the empowerment potential of different techniques. For this analysis, and to simplify the presentation of results, we grouped respondents into two groups based on their level of exposure to empowerment, with one group containing those reporting no to little exposure (range 0–2) and the other group containing those with higher levels of exposure. Bonferroni parity comparisons show that regardless of the degree of exposure (lower or higher) or means of exposure (in writing or orally), the pattern of findings presented in **Table 3** was repeated. That is, case management-type interventions continued to be viewed as having lower empowerment potential, while the potentials of the other three types of techniques were rated as significantly higher. **Table 5** highlights that even respondents with relatively little or no exposure to empowerment issues, who constitute a sizable portion of the combined sample, on average rated most of the techniques as having a moderate or high empowering potential, and their ratings do not differ significantly from those of respondents with higher levels of exposure to empowerment.

4. Discussion

Even though the construct of empowerment occupies an important place in both social work practice and literature and with regard to both group-level and individual level practice, social workers' views of the empowering potential of different intervention techniques have not been studied empirically or systematically. The current study is a first attempt to shed light on this topic, with a focus on techniques that are suitable for individual-level social work interventions, as classified by O'Hare and Collins [43] and O'Hare et al. [44] into four broad types: case management, support, therapy, and insight. In order to collect preliminary evidence regarding the suitability of the research instrument for examining the perceptions of social workers from different cultures, we surveyed social workers both in Israeli (Jewish and Arab) and the USA. Given the exploratory nature of the study, the intention was not to statistically compare these two sample (which were gathered in different ways) but rather to look for overall patterns that may inform further research and theorizing.

The study yielded several surprising and important findings. First, the social workers rated all four types of intervention techniques as having quite high potential to foster empowerment at the individual-level. This finding raises questions about the validity of our assumptions. Given the importance ascribed to self-awareness and insight in the professional literature [54, 57, 58], our theory-based assumption was that social workers would regard intervention techniques in the areas of therapy and insight as having much higher potential to foster individual empowerment than case management and support techniques. Yet, the findings show that even though case management techniques were seen as having somewhat lower potential than therapy and insight techniques, their potentials, too, were rated as relatively high. Further, the pattern of findings was the same in the Israeli and US samples, suggesting that the findings are not limited to one culture but reflect a broad perception among social workers from diverse backgrounds.

Second, the degree of exposure to the information about empowerment-related techniques seemed to have little effect on the perceptions of the empowering

potential of the various techniques. Practitioners who reported having received little or no exposure to empowerment had almost the same views as practitioners who reported having received information about the subject, whether in their basic training and on the job. A similar pattern was noted by Douglas et al. [12], who reported that having a social work degree was not associated with strength-based practice, which is closely related to empowerment.

Third, the findings highlight substantial variability in social workers' perceptions of the empowering potential of the same techniques, even where the workers came from the same national culture. Such variability is also evident in the rather high standard deviations, which reflect an underlying dispersion of ratings of empowering potential. These three findings imply that perceptions of what is meant by empowerment and by "empowering" interventions may not be universal or even agreed upon. The lack of agreement may stem from a range of other differences, including in social work education and training, in the work environment, in agency-level or managerial messages, and/or in cultural factors, to name just a few. Further study is required to identify the sources or reasons for the lack of agreement observed in this study.

Taken together, the three key findings presented above highlight the need to further understand and critically evaluate how notions of empowerment are conveyed in the course of social work training, both during the initial education and training and later on as part of various professional development activities. Of concern is the wide diversity both in the levels of exposure to information about empowerment in these contexts and in the actual perceptions of the potentials of different interventions or methods to foster empowerment at the individual level. The diversities imply that although social workers may use the same professional terminology related to empowerment, they may ascribe different meanings to the words.

5. Conclusions and future directions

The above discussion has implications for social work education, practice, and research. In terms of education, they suggest a need for further investment in training. In terms of practice, they suggest the need for greater consensus among social workers on the link between their practice and system-wide goals related to clients' empowerment [70]. In terms of research, they point to the need for further study of on two related issues: the perceptions of social workers in individual level practice regarding fostering their clients' empowerment and the factors that may explain or are correlated with their diversity of views.

The present study is an exploratory investigation which used new research tools based on brief descriptions of 26 intervention techniques in four areas: case management, support, therapy, and insight. The findings suggest that these techniques, each in its own way, have the potential to help clients to reduce their dysfunctional ways of thinking, to employ their new problem-solving skills outside the treatment context, and to make use of their strengths and prior achievements and understand their personal relationships, to prevent certain problems from recurring and to monitor current behaviors and set goals for the future. However, clearly the range of possible techniques that can be used as part of individual-level intervention is not limited to this collection and can be broader. Future research is needed to expand the pool of techniques covered in the present study and to examine their factorial structure.

It is important to distinguish between social workers' perceptions of or attitudes towards various practice methods and how they actually use the methods in their practice. The present study queried workers' perceptions of or beliefs about

methods but not their use of the methods. Nor did it ask their explanations for their beliefs or use of the methods. It would be of interest to examine *why* many social workers believe that case management techniques have relatively good potential to foster client empowerment. Mixed-method qualitative studies are recommended to answer this question and to gain as deeper understanding of workers' personal meanings and perceptions of their actual practice [71, 72].

The present study employed convenience samples from two countries, Israel and the USA, to generate preliminary information about social workers' use of empowerment techniques. Future research, conducted on nationally representative samples, should examine the possible influence of cultural factors on notions of what constitutes empowerment and on ideas about what practices may support individual empowerment.

Overall, this exploratory study contributes to highlighting an important gap in the research on social work practice. Although the findings show that practitioners from different cultural backgrounds hold somewhat different views of what methods can help them to empower their clients, little cross-country comparison has been conducted on this subject. Given the paucity of systematic research on this subject to date [14, 15], further research is needed to gain better understanding of the factors that affect both the choice and the impact of intervention methods that social workers actually employ in attempting to promote their clients' empowerment at the individual level.

In closing, it is essential to reiterate that the present study has focused on empowerment in the context of work with individual clients of social services. To date, the social work literature emphasizes that empowerment process can or should be addressed or promoted at the group or community level, where clients can explore collective notions of helplessness and ways of developing a joint sense of control over their behaviors and social environments [5, 6]. Little is known about how social workers perceive the relative efficacy or empowering potential of different intervention methods that are suitable for group-level or community work. The methodology developed for the present study may be applied, with adaptations where necessary, to future research, with the aim of promoting effective practice that can contribute to client empowerment at the individual, group, and community levels.

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Chapter 5

Teaching Innovations in Social Work Education

Maria Wolmesjö

Abstract

The aim of this chapter is to discuss how the use of creative methods can support students to become aware of global social challenges and give opportunity to reflect on sustainable solutions in relation to different social contexts. Further on, the aim is to discuss preconditions needed. The method used is Future workshop, which is combined with other creative methods as storytelling, scenario, painting, drama, reflective thinking, etc. Data is gathered, from a Swedish perspective during 20 years of being a social worker, lecturer and researcher in social work and national and international collaboration. Results shows, by using different creative methods in education and research, students are allowed to "think outside the box" and new perspectives on common challenges and solutions can be identified. This chapter intends to contribute to a discussion of preconditions needed for using creative methods and multidisciplinary collaboration in the social work programme. The conclusion is working with creative methods needs lecturers who have knowledge of different methods, flexibility to choose between those and confidence in the students to find new solutions. The biggest challenge is not the students, it's often other colleagues. Support from the managerial level is therefore crucial when introducing creative teaching methods in social work education.

Keywords: creative teaching methods, collaboration, social work, sustainability, user participation

1. Introduction

As part of their daily work, social workers have to handle several and often severe ethical dilemmas, regardless if they work with children, youths or adults in different social-exposed positions or situations. This is significant for social workers and shared internationally. There is a high awareness of several social problems which are too complex to handle by a single actor, which highlight the need of a global collaboration [1]. During the social work education, students need to develop and increase an awareness of the global social challenges, learn about different methods and gain knowledge of various tools to find new and sustainable solutions for social challenges. They also need to gain experience on how to collaborate across boarders internationally with other social workers, interdisciplinarily and multiprofessionally with other actors who can challenge their own perspective.

Being a lecturer in social work and meeting engaged social work students, you have a pedagogic responsibility to find educational methods which will prepare students to handle different ethical dilemmas and keep the inspiration and the belief in that "everything is possible", as you often have as a young student. The more complex a problem is, the higher is the need of looking at it from different

perspectives. It is important to advance society via the classroom [2], and an openness of new innovative models will enrich the knowledge. This is something which can be difficult to do on your own. To be able to find sustainable solutions on complex global social challenges, there is a need of inter- and transdisciplinary and interprofessional collaboration as well as including users' perspective.

As a young lecturer in social work education in Sweden, I started to use different creative methods (as painting, lyrics, drama, interactive lectures built on specific scenarios, etc.) in different courses in the social work programme. From the beginning this was based on a personal interest, without having any formal education of specific creative teaching methods [3]. I noticed students appreciated the opportunity to use what they called nonacademic methods to understand the theory and practice from a new holistic perspective. Several years later, when I came in contact with creative methods as teaching methods in general and Future workshop [4] in particular, this strengthened me to further develop the methods and different techniques I have started to use. From experiences in education, including implementing user participation in the social work programme [5], I now also use creative methods and art-based research in my research to develop project ideas, gather empirical data and implement the result [6, 7].

The aim of this chapter is to critically analyze and discuss how the use of creative methods can support students to become aware of global social challenges and give the opportunity to reflect on similar and diverse sustainable solutions in relation to different social contexts. Further on, the aim is to discuss what preconditions are needed. Empirical data used in this chapter is gained from own experiences (i.e. of being a manager, lecturer, director of studies, head of department and researcher during a period of more than 20 years) in social work at different universities in Sweden. Data is gathered from different courses and from various research studies. Being a reader of this chapter, regardless if you are a student, lecturer, researcher, professional social worker, user representative or someone else engaged in social work education, you are invited to share some of my experiences in this field.

2. Creative methods: what, why and how?

What can be defined as a creative teaching method and what knowledge can creative methods contribute with to help students understand theory and practice in general and global social challenges and solutions in particular, in social work education? Why should we use these methods in social work education and research? If, and when, how can it be done in practice and what preconditions are needed?

Former research has pointed out creative teaching methods promote meaningfulness, motivation, inspiration, engagement and interaction between students. Student confidence is supported, and they are empowered to come up with new ideas to solve problems and reflect on a theory and practice as a "whole" [8]. Creativity can make a difference at micro, meso and macro levels by giving voice to people [9, 10], promoting the role of art and developing communication [11] and exploring options for sustainable living [12].

The creative teaching methods, which are presented in this chapter, are inspired by a method called Future workshop [4], which is described briefly below. This has then been developed and combined with other creative methods as storytelling, scenario, painting, drama, reflective thinking, etc. Data presented below is gathered, from a Swedish perspective during a period of more than 20 years of being a social worker and lecturer in social work and from doing social work research in different international collaboration projects in different countries. Empirical examples presented are chosen from different studies.

2.1 Future workshop

One of the methods I have been inspired of and developed further is based on Future workshops [4, 13]. Future workshop is a method or technique, which was created during the 1970s by Robert Jungk (1913–1994) to enable participants to develop new ideas and solutions of social problems and suggestions on what the future should look like. It is built on the participants, their experiences, ideas and contribution to develop common action plans for social changes. It is raised from the idea of all persons having an equal value and individual responsibility. Structure of the Future workshop consists of four different phases: a critique, a visionary, an implementation and an evaluation phase. Framed by a hard structure and rules, different techniques are used to accommodate creativity and make it possible for the participants to "think outside the box". The method of Future workshop itself supports you as a leader to encourage participant commitment, even thou hard work is required to plan, prepare and carry out the workshop through all the different phases. How this can be used in practice in different settings is explained further down.

3. Social work education: from a Swedish perspective

The social work programme in Sweden [14] consists of 3.5 years, divided into seven semesters, six on bachelor level and one semester on advanced/master level. During the fifth semester, students, during supervision from practitioners and lecturers, will have the opportunity to gain experiences from the practical field of social work by spending time at one or several social work placements. During the last semester, there are some optional courses at advanced level. Even thou there is a national curriculum of the programme, there are options for each university and its lecturer providing the social work programme, to form the separate courses of curriculum. This structure gives several opportunities to use creative teaching methods in different courses at various levels.

Demands on efficiency and cost-benefits have increased in general, which make the discussion of how to handle ethical dilemmas even more important. In Sweden, which is a small country who has been known for its universal welfare policy, in general, cutdowns in public services and support, for example, have led to changes in eldercare and care of persons with disabilities and increased the need of family support [15–17].

Important values as a professional in social work, from a Swedish perspective, is independency, autonomy and the possibility for users to choose the services provided as well as the persons or organization who should be the main care giver. User perspective and participation of those who is in need of the services and support offered is an important value even for managers [18, 19]. These values have affected the social work programme as well, and specific courses have been developed where creative teaching methods are used and users/user representatives are taking part [20].

4. Creative teaching methods: some examples

4.1 Storytelling and role play

When working at Linnaeus University in Växjö from 1996 to 2012, I had the opportunity to be responsible of international courses where students from different countries and with different disciplinary backgrounds wanted to gain knowledge in social welfare in general and social work with older people and persons with

disabilities in particular. Creative methods, as individual storytelling, were created based on fictive cases—formed by students gathering data from their own country. These cases then were used to enable students to communicate and share experiences of global challenges. Based on students' told stories, role play was used, where students had the opportunity to "change identities" and ask each other questions and gain knowledge on what it would be like to be exposed to different social challenges and live in other countries than the one they were used to. Together, students then had to find common solution on how to handle challenges and ethical dilemmas.

> *It was a good experience to take the role of the user or a relative. Even thou most of us are becoming to be social workers, we realized we often forgot to ask the user and the relatives of their opinions. (student).*

Being able to compare similarities and dissimilarities of preconditions in different countries, they gained knowledge of common global challenges and were able to find out different ways of solutions. Since students were depending on each other's different language and cultural skills to find out information from different countries, they also had the opportunity to practice international collaboration.

> *By using creative methods, it has been easier to gain new perspectives, better understand other cultures and find some friend during the way. (student).*

Here, I would like to point out there is no *right* or *best* way to solve similar problems. Preconditions vary in different countries, and students became aware of this by reflecting from different perspectives/roles together.

4.2 Visualizing social challenges and reflecting on solutions

Another experience where different creative teaching methods were used is from a former Nordic-Baltic collaboration where 37 students from 5 different universities took part in an international course on human rights and public health [1]. In a creative workshop, students from different countries were asked to rank the grand social challenges they thought were important to prioritize in a near future. Important challenges were environmental and climate change issues as earthquakes, floods, water pollutions, increased high temperature, etc., which can cause large-scale social challenges as lack of housing, increased illnesses, poverty, hunger, etc. Other social challenges, which were discussed, were the increasing of life expectancy and, as a result of this, a larger amount of older people in need of care, compared to the amount of people in caregiving ages. Further examples of global social challenges were migration, trafficking, begging, alcohol and drug policies and the rapid technological development. Gender equalities were discussed, both in informal relations and in labour. An example of a gender equality issue, important for students, was abortion, if it should be allowed or not and who is the one responsible to decide if it should be carried through or not.

> *Many serious questions were discussed in a good atmosphere. This was supportive to understand similar social problems needs to be handle in different ways regarding to the cultural context. (student).*

By using creative methods and letting students in mixed groups (with representatives from different countries and disciplines), use flipboard and pencils to draw

a picture on how they viewed these challenges, students got the possibility to deal with severe global challenges and visualize a common picture. From this picture, they were asked to reflect on what is needed to be changed and create a common vision. By allowing students to use their imagination and develop a fantasy or a vision of *best world ever*, they started a process, which enables them to formulate goals on what is needed to be done and how to prioritize. This made it possible to continue the work and create ideas for concrete action plans. In their exam papers, they then were obligated to compare at least two different countries and discuss similarities and differences and share the knowledge they have gained from the international collaboration. Below are some of the comments from students examining the course:

> *We have work hard in the study program but had a great time doing it! (student).*

> *I have attained knowledge of certain areas I have not had earlier. (student).*

4.3 Cre-active workshops

In an ongoing study on value-based eldercare in India and Sweden [21], I had the opportunity to conduct a lecture built on a creative workshop in India (2019). Almost 30 students, lecturers, managers, professionals and user representatives from India and Sweden attended the workshop. After introduction and presentations, there first step was to brainstorm on what they thought is the biggest challenges in eldercare from different perspectives. Participants took responsibility of writing their ideas down on post-it notes, which then were put directly on the wall. By using creative methods, it was possible to give voice to students, who should not have shared their experiences in a group like this otherwise. Participants were then gathered in a small group for discussion, clustering and prioritizing. By letting participants move around and do a "walkie-talkie" by reading and talking about what other groups had presented on post-it notes placed on the wall, a large amount of challenges, clusters and prioritizes were exposed and shared by all participants in a small amount of time.

> *I liked your teaching methods, they allowed us to share knowledge and express our experiences on more equal terms, regardless if you are a professor, a professional or a student. (student).*

After locating the challenges, and having created a common picture of the most important challenges, participants were asked to sit down. Second step was different pictures of creative thinking (i.e. using daily ordinary product in creative unusual ways) were shown to inspire participants to use their imagination and be creative focusing on what it will look like when eldercare is the best way ever, when everything is possible. My experience from meeting several groups in different contexts is to enable people to think creative thoughts, they need to be in a positive state of mind. By using small exercises (e.g. think of something, which make you smile, come up with ideas on how to use an ordinary thing in an unusual way, share a creative idea with the person next to you), you can change your ability to be more creative. What happens in a room when you allow people to use their fantasy, my experience is they start to think about the possibilities instead of the hindrances, which they often do otherwise. There are creative solutions even of the hindrances they have defined just minutes ago!

> *You have released so much positive energy in the room, I hope we are able to take care of this and further the processes. (professional).*

Third step was letting the group close their eyes in a cre-active pause and reflect on their visions and prioritize what was the most important thing to start working with. Based on their own engagement, they then were able to, if wanted, create a network and sign up for continuing work with the ideas they have suggested. My experience is most of what has been suggested as a vision in creative workshops like this has been possible to transform into action plans!

> *I am impressed of the ideas we have come up with and the processes, which have been started in a very small amount of time (professor).*

To summarize, results shows when using different creative methods in education and research, students and/or other participants are allowed to "think outside the box". New perspectives on common global challenges and innovative and sustainable solutions can be identified and developed.

5. Critical analysis and discussion

Above, I have shared some of my experiences of working with creative methods in social work education and research. This chapter also intends to contribute to a discussion of preconditions needed for using creative methods and multidisciplinary collaboration in the social work programme. For every lecture or different parts of a research project, there is a need of preparation and planning for a beginning, a middle and an ending where different creative methods can be used to broaden students' perspective as well as give lecturers new insights! Depending on the size of the group, the room (size, location, furniture), time limits, material available and of course the aim you have with the lecture or your research project, there are different creative methods you can chose between. Below, I present a "model" of four steps, which can be used as a guide to create your own cre-active toolbox. For each step I discuss on, from my experiences, what preconditions are needed, or at least wanted, written from a Swedish perspective. This of course can differ according to the experience you already have gained, the students you will work together with and in what context the cre-active toolbox is going to be used.

5.1 The cre-active toolbox

The word *cre-active* is invented and used to underline, working with creativity is active work, which demands a lot of brain gym. The good news is cre-activity can be trained and further developed!

5.1.1 The preparation

The *hard work* of using creative methods in social work education and research actually starts before meeting the students and other persons invited to take part in a creative teaching method. Being well prepared enables you as a lecturer/researcher to choose between different techniques in your cre-active toolbox, which you have brought into the classroom or research field. What about the students you are going to meet? How many are they? What are their expectations? How can they be prepared for taking part in creative teaching methods? Is it optional to participate?

One of the most important preconditions to be aware of, even before introducing creative methods to students, is attitudes of colleagues and managers towards using creative teaching methods in the social work programme. In what courses will this be introduced, how, when and by whom? How will the use of creative methods in one course affect the other courses? Perhaps, there is a need of education on different methods, building relations with copartners and international colleagues before even meeting the students. Having support by your manager is substantial.

One experience I have is it is good to prepare students and other participants on what they are going to take part of. A special invitation will make them feel welcome and make it easier for you to introduce a new way of working. Other preconditions are having confidence in using different creative methods as a lecturer/research leader. I suggest to start by using material and techniques you feel familiar with and build your cre-active toolbox by adding new "tool" one by one. Choose a material and exercises you like to work with and know how to use; if it is new for you—practice before you will use it!

5.1.2 The beginning

When I start a lecture or when I meet new people in other situations, I start to shake my students' hand (or great them with bowing, depending on the culture). This still surprises many of my students. What I try to do is creating a positive climate and building a relation with those who will participate and have chosen to take part and enter the room. This can be done in different ways, how this is done of course depends on who you are as a person. The next step is letting students (and other participants) present themselves into each other. Depending if it is a group of people who are used to work together or not, I give them different tasks or exercises to work with (as speed date, interviews, a single question to ask someone else, etc.) Asking the students of their expectations of taking part of a lecture, using creative teaching methods, will support them to take responsibility of what knowledge to gain during the specific lecture.

Preconditions to be aware of can be related to the group you are going to meet, how many students are there, what do you know about them, what course are they in, what about accessibility to the facility and the room you are going to use, how to put the furniture, what available technical devices are is required, etc. (i.e. is it possible to do what you want to do?). One of the most important preconditions of enabling students and other participants to be creative is making them comfortable and secure.

5.1.3 The middle

During a lecture or in different parts of a research project, working with creative methods can be confusing. You have started a process, without knowing what the result will look like. For some persons this can be very stressful. Even thou I have chosen to point out there is activity involved in the cre-active process, I want to highlight reflection time is an important part of this activity process. Time to reload and get new energy is as important as being "body and brain cre-active"; therefore creative pauses needs to be incorporated in the process.

By adding different exercises and a sense of humor, you can make people in general feel better, be more effective and enjoy what they are doing. We know from earlier research that humor at work can make us stay healthier, become more open and creative and decrease the risk of stress and burnout. Even our memory and ability to learn is affected by pleasure. According to earlier research, we can improve every skill with 30 percent in a month if it is fun [22].

One of the preconditions to make a creative process work is to believe in the power of people and have trust in what they can achieve when giving the possibilities. Before asking people to engage and create visions, etc., it is good to decide and let participants know what the purpose using a certain creative method is. My experience is you as a lecturer/research leader have to create a "safe environment" for people so they will allow themselves to be innovative.

5.1.4 The ending

By using creative methods where students have been active and created different materials, which also can be exposed directly and part of the common documentation, you can get an evaluation, just by looking around in the room. Asking students and other participants to reflect and make a single comment of what knowledge they have gained and how they will use this in the future will give another perspective of the evaluation.

One of the preconditions when using creative methods is you have to be aware if there is a time limit. You want to end the lecture when students and other participants feel they "understand" the result of the creative activities they have taken part of. You want them to see that they have come up with more creative and innovative ideas and gained other results than they are used to, when using traditional methods.

Working with creative methods is fun, but it is also demanding; you have to stay alert and be flexible to adjust the methods needed according to the situation. Having the possibility to work with a colleague or copartner through different creative teaching methods is then recommended.

6. Conclusion

The conclusion is working with creative teaching methods needs certain preconditions at different levels: organizational, structural and individual. Working with cre-activity means you have to be brave and have trust in other people—they might come up with something new you never thought of by yourself!

- Lecturers need to have knowledge of different methods, flexibility to choose between those and confidence in the students/participants.

- The biggest challenge when implementing creative methods in social work education and research is not the students, but other colleagues. Support from management/head of department is therefore crucial.

- Students should get an opportunity to try different creative models, focusing not only on *what, how* and *when* to do social work but also on *how* to do this.

- In general, collaboration with representatives from user organizations and professional social workers from different fields and their collaborative partners as well as national and international collaboration between different social work programmes needs to be further developed.

- New information and communication technology (i.e. smart phones, social media, artificial intelligence, etc.) needs to be developed and used in collaboration with persons from other disciplines and profession to add new and develop innovative solution on common global social challenges.

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Chapter 6

The Appealability of the Social Work Profession in the United States: Possible Explanations

Rigaud Joseph and Herbert Shon

Abstract

In many parts of the world, the social work profession has continued to become a magnet for students from various backgrounds. This field has attracted local and international students with prior expertise in other disciplines, including but not limited to, sociology, psychology, criminal justice, education, and law. This chapter, among other things, presents an overview of the social work profession in the United States, highlights the uniqueness of this discipline, and explains the rise in enrollment in the twenty-first century. It is hypothesized that the appealability of social work is associated with (a) a quest for social justice, (b) a pragmatic path toward direct practice, (c) a commitment for social services delivery, and (d) a passion for empowerment. Understanding the rationale behind the appealability of the profession is crucial for social work educators to meet the needs of their student body in a world deeply ravaged by contemporary social problems.

Keywords: social work, social work education, social problems, social justice, social work practice

1. Introduction

The profession of social work has been in existence across North America since late 1900s [1]. Two reputable organizations oversee the profession of social work in the United States: The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) as governing body with regard to accreditation standards and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) as professional body in terms of ethical standards. The CSWE was formed in 1952, following the merging of the American Association of Schools of Social Work (AASSW)—formerly the Association of Training Schools for Professional Social Workers—and the National Association of Schools of Social Administration (NASSA). The original mission of the CSWE was to promote and regulate social work education in the US and in Canada [2].

Roughly three decades before the creation of NASW, social workers in the United States organized themselves under the auspices of the National Social Workers' Exchange. By the early 1950s, there were several major social work organizations with national recognition. In 1955, seven of them—American Association of Social Workers, American Association of Psychiatric Social Workers, American Association of Group Workers, Association for the Study of Community Organization, American Association of Medical Social Workers, National Association of School Social Workers and Social Work Research Group—merged

into a single entity: NASW [3]. The newly established organization was purported to further the professional status of social work.

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, the largest percentage of mental health and family services professionals reported having social work degrees [4]. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, social work has become one of the fastest growing community and social service occupations in the United States (US) in the twenty-first century [5]. The US accounted for more than 680,000 employed social workers in 2016. This number is expected to reach 790,000 by 2026 [6]. This chapter focuses on the appealability of the social work profession in the US by proposing to explore the following questions:

a. To what extent has social work education in the United States experienced a growth in enrollment in the past decade?

b. What explains the uniqueness of the social work profession in the United States in the twenty-first century?

c. What is the rationale behind the appealability of the social work profession in the United States in the twenty-first century?

d. In what ways can social work education in the United States best assess/meet the needs of social work students in the twenty-first century?

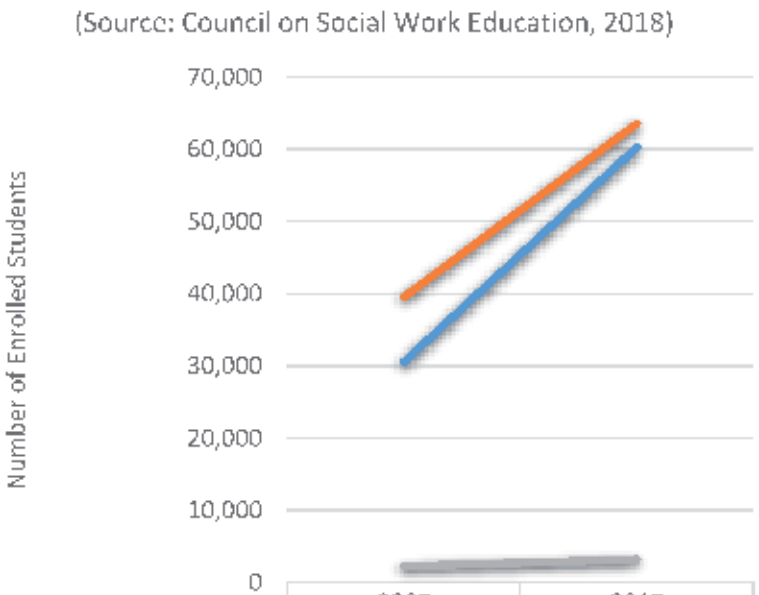
To answer these questions, the authors made an unsystematic review of the literature, gleaning information from both published and unpublished sources. Much of the information presented in this chapter originated from peer-reviewed outlets, such as journal articles and books. Yet, the authors also included materials (mainly statistical information) from reputable electronic databases in this conceptual paper.

2. The profession of social work in the United States

2.1 Scope of education

According to the CSWE, American colleges and universities offered 518 bachelor's degrees, 255 master's degrees, and 89 doctoral degrees in social work in 2017, serving 127,079 students in the process [7]. This is an overall 75% increase from a decade ago when only 72,309 students sought a social work degree. In fact, based on CSWE's (2008) data, in 2007 the higher education enrollment for social work in the United States (US) reached 30,554 students for baccalaureate programs, 39,508 students for master's programs, and 2247 students for doctoral programs [8]. **Figure 1** below shows the substantial growth in enrollment for the decade 2007–2017. The increase in enrollment was particularly sharp for undergraduate social work education. Compared to the undergraduate and graduate programs, doctoral enrollment (PhD and DSW) underwent a less impressive improvement between 2007 and 2017. Yet, this was still a 43% jump over the decade [7, 8].

Combining undergraduate and graduate education statistics for the 2016–2017 academic year, the authors found that social work remains a predominantly female profession with 86.3% of students, on average, identifying as female [7]. With regard to race, the profession has become more diverse with minority students representing almost half of the student body in 2017 [7]. In terms of age, approximately two-thirds of students enrolled in social work programs across the US during the 2016–2017 academic year were below the age of 40 [7]. It is important to



	2007	2017
Bachelor's degree	30,554	60,306
Master's degree	39,508	63,569
Doctoral degree	2,247	3,204

Figure 1.
Number of social work students in the United States for 2007 and 2017.

acknowledge that these demographic proportions only reflect a national picture of the profession in the US. National data may tell a completely different story at the subnational level, that is, across states, counties, and municipalities.

2.2 Validity of the profession

Farley, Smith, and Boyle defined social work as "an art, a science, and a profession that helps people solve *personal*, *group* (especially family), and *community* problems and attain satisfying *personal*, *group*, and *community* relationship through social work practice" [9]. However, the credibility of social work was under attack soon after its inception. **Table 1** below exhibits 18 criteria or characteristics or a profession proposed by four scholars from various academic backgrounds.

Using a six-criteria grid, Flexner found that social work did not meet the conditions for a profession [10]. Flexner based his critique on the failure of social work to take final decision on critical issues (responsibility), define a clear goal (practical purpose), and have educational specializations (curriculum) [11]. Hence, for Flexner, social work is more of a helping profession rather than a profession per se. It is important to mention that the criteria under which Flexner (2015) appraised the profession were selected arbitrarily. Arguably, by stating that "social work is not a profession" based on his de facto criteria, Flexner somehow tarnishes the reputation of the field forever. However, no one would quarrel with the idea that his remarks did more good than harm to the profession. After all, Flexner's remark raised awareness within the social work community on how to improve the profession. In other words, since Flexner's assessment of the social work came at a relatively early stage in the development of the field, this set the stage for the depositaries of the profession to take remedial actions.

Authors	Criteria	Criteria met
Flexner (1915)	Knowledge and responsibility	Yes
	Esotericism	Yes
	Practical purpose	Yes
	Curriculum	Yes
	Commitment	Yes
	Social welfare	Yes
Wickenden (1941)	Common heritage of knowledge	Yes
	Educational institution	Yes
	Professional bodies	Yes
	Public recognition	Yes
	Maintenance and improvement	Yes
	Client confidential relationship	Yes
Greenwood (1957)	Systematic theory	Yes
	Authority	Yes
	Community sanction	Yes
	Ethical codes	Yes
	Professional culture	Yes
Abbott (1988)	Jurisdiction	Yes

Adapted from the work of Flexner, Wickenden, Greenwood, and Abbott.

Table 1.
The validity of the social work profession.

In 1957, Ernest Greenwood, University of California, Berkeley social welfare researcher and professor, launched a significant counterargument to Flexner's claim that "social work is not a profession." In his essay, "Attributes of a Profession," Greenwood stipulated that social work is a profession [12]. The difference between Flexner and Greenwood lies in the criteria of selection upon which the scholars based their respective argument. As exhibited in **Table 1**, Greenwood's framework includes the following criteria: systematic theory, professional authority, community sanction, ethical codes, and culture. The criteria in this framework are fundamentally different from those found in Flexner's model (see Flexner's work as described above [10]).

Although not part of the feud between Flexner and Greenwood, Wickenden and Abbott contributed heavily to the discussion [13, 14]. Common heritage of knowledge and skills, educational institution, professional bodies, public recognition, maintenance and improvement, and confidential relationship between practitioners and clients are criteria suggested by Wickenden [13]. Abbott's notion of *jurisdiction* implies the uniqueness of social work [14]. More consideration will be given to Abbott's sense of professional jurisdiction in the next section.

Today, the field of social work meets the criteria for a profession as expressed in the work of Flexner, Wickenden, Greenwood, and Abbott through:

a. the implementation of core courses and competencies (curriculum/common body of knowledge and skills/jurisdiction),

b. the proliferation of social work degrees across many colleges and universities (educational institution),

c. the establishment of the professional bodies (NASW and CSWE),

d. the National Social Work Month recognition granted by the Reagan administration in 1984 (public recognition),

e. continuing education and professional development (maintenance and improvement),

f. the NASW Code of Ethics (confidentiality, code of ethics),

g. the person-in-environment theory (esotericism, systematic theory, jurisdiction),

h. and group/subgroup membership, norms, beliefs, values, and decorum such as NASW chapters (professional culture).

Meanwhile, the profession of social work still faces some forms of modern criticism. Gambrill argued that social work has not moved much beyond an authority-based approach, which develops tolerance for assumptions and takes for granted top-to-bottom interventions [15]. Gambrill particularly bemoaned the lack of client involvement regarding informed participation in services, program effectiveness, and empowerment for advocacy [15].

Other scholars echoed Gambrill's concern in reference to effectiveness of social programs. In particular, Joseph and Stoefller and Joseph contended that, in the United States, lawmakers and social services agencies do not always implement macro policies based on empirical evidence [16–18]. Therefore, the social work profession has an obligation to question the effectiveness of programs. Before advocating for the expansion of social policies, it would be standard practice for social workers to know whether those policies are effective in the first place [16–18].

With much of the funding for social services coming from the government, social work stakeholders may feel compelled to play by the rules defined unilaterally by the funding source. Opposing the government would tantamount to conflict of interest charges against social services organizations. It is important to mention that if social work becomes a fulcrum through which the government implements unscientific interventions, then the authority-based criticism leveled by Gambrill against the profession is justified. As far as social work is concerned, becoming an extension of any unfair system is nothing short of heresy.

Fortunately, social workers in general (scholars, researchers, graduate students, and clinicians) are committed to science, evidenced-based practice, and advocacy. Therefore, despite the concerns previously mentioned, the profession of social work still stands on scientific grounds and remains arguably the first and last line of defense against the system. As criticism only serves to make a profession stronger, members of the social work community need to figure out how to work with the government without losing their independence. The next section describes why social work is different from all other professions.

2.3 Uniqueness of the profession

Kirst-Ashman (2013) argued that social work draws on many other disciplines for its knowledge base [19]. These include but are not limited to sociology, psychology, political science, psychiatry, economics, and law [19]. However, social work differs quite significantly for other professions with respect to:

1. ***Mission/purpose***: According to NASW, "The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet basic and complex needs of all people, with a particular focus on those who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty" [20]. Poverty and social justice have always been pivotal concepts in defining the mission of social work both in the US and abroad [17, 21]. Joseph argued that the strong emphasis on poverty and social justice within the social work community is the divider between social work and other professions [17].

2. ***Eclecticism***: Social work also embraces the generalist practice model, which consists in the application of a broad range of skills toward solving problems at the individual, family/group, organization, community, and society level [22]. The University of Missouri School of Social work put it best by asserting that "[social work's]…unique approach to problem-solving and interventions is evidenced in direct clinical practice, policy planning and administration; community-level and state-level services; private and public sectors; and teaching, research, and scholarship" [23]. The generalist practice model also offers social workers an opportunity to play many roles in working with clients. These include working as a case manager, negotiator, mediator, facilitator, educator, community organizer, evaluator, and public speaker. Furthermore, under this model, social workers work side by side with client throughout a seven-step process: engagement, assessment, planning, implementation, evaluation, termination, and follow-up [22]. Many disciplines—nursing, medicine, psychology, counseling, etc.—apply some aspect of the generalist model, especially regarding the aforementioned steps. However, the level of intervention is narrower inside these disciplines. Indeed, nurses and physicians mostly provide micro-level services.

3. ***Theoretical guidance***: According to NASW, "Social work is different from other professions, because we focus both on the person and their environment. Social workers deal with the external factors that impact a person's situation and outlook" [20]. Other professions such as psychiatry and mental health embrace primarily the medical model where the focus is on issues that are intrinsic to patients. Social work is the leading profession vis-à-vis understanding complex social problems and human behavior in the social environment.

4. ***Advocacy***: Social advocacy is another feature of the social work profession. In fact, it is not incumbent upon other fields of study to represent clients at the macro level. The California State University Bakersfield wrote that "The profession of social work is grounded in a commitment to serving vulnerable and oppressed populations and advocating for public policies that promote social justice" [24]. Social workers are ethically bound to advocate with, and at the behest of, their clients.

5. ***Code of ethics***: Many professions develop codes of ethics; however, the NASW Code of Ethics is sui generis. It is the official document that guides social workers' actions.

2.4 Social work curriculum and student interests

Adapted from the 2018 CSWE's report, **Table 2** presents glimpses of the social work specializations and internship foci as offered by colleges and universities in the

Intervention level	**Programs**
Clinical practice	113
Non-clinical practice	134
Fields of practice	**Programs**
Children, youth, and families	64
Health/integrated health	51
Mental health	44
Aging/gerontology	41
School social work	33
Addictions	15
Field Placements	**Students**
Community mental health	9392
Health/mental health	7569
School social work	6769
Child welfare	6727
Family services	5725
Gerontology	1458

Source: Council on Social Work Education, 2018.

Table 2.
Levels of intervention, areas of practice specialization, and field placements for social work students in US universities in 2017.

US in 2017. As seen in **Table 1**, social work schools in the US still provide students an opportunity to focus on micro practice, macro practice, or both. The clinical track allows students to provide direct practice to individuals, groups, and families. The macro tracks include areas such as advanced generalist practice, community practice, policy practice, program evaluation, and administration and management [7].

Many scholars—Butler and Coleman, 1997; Huber and Orlando, 1993; Hymans, 2000; Kasper and Wiegand, 1999; Miller, Tice, and Hall, 2008; Reisch, 2016; Wolk, Pray, Weismiller, and Dempsey, 1996—raised doubt about social work educators prioritizing the clinical track over the policy track in designing curricula [25–31]. This concern, however, seems not to show up in the overall social work curriculum in the US. Another concern deals with field practicum. Koerin, Reeves, and Rosenblum, Miller et al., Raber and Richter, and Sui claimed that social work students in a direct practice track are more likely to be being more suitable to micro practice. Existing field placements are more suitable to social work students with a direct practice track as opposed to those who prefer a nonclinical setting [29, 32–34]. This issue appears to be more in alignment with the information in **Table 1** where most students were placed in micro settings in 2017. Important topics such as poverty and social justice, advocacy and community organizing were basically not the focus of social work field practicum across the US in 2017.

3. Appealability of social work

The existing literature contains several explanations for social work as a career choice. Among them are the following: genuine, intrinsic commitment to service (altruism) [35–37]; connection to social work identity (social work idealism) [35];

adverse life experiences including trauma, addictions, and family illness [38–40]; versatility of social work with respect to employment and upward mobility [41]; and previous work/volunteer experience [37]. It is worth noting, however, that most of these studies were conducted decades ago [35, 38, 40, 41] and thus may not accurately reflect the reasons why students enter the field of social work. Another limitation is the fact that the majority of these studies were primarily designed to explore the choice of a social work career primarily at the individual (micro) level [35–41].

In a distant attempt to address the two limitations above, Colby and Dziegielewski [42] posited that the appealability of social work is due to the profession's proven ability to address challenges facing communities across the globe [2]. This chapter builds on Colby and Dziegielewski's [42] work by attributing antecedents to choice of a social work career mostly to macro issues. More specifically, this conceptual chapter contends that the appealability of social work in the twenty-first century can be linked to factors such as (a) a quest for social justice, (b) a pragmatic path toward direct practice, (c) a commitment for social services delivery, and (d) a passion for empowerment. Each of these factors is described below.

3.1 A quest for social justice (macro practice)

Most prospective social work students may develop disdain for the sociopolitical and economic system in which they and their loved ones live. As a result, these students may want to learn how to become an advocate not only for their own behalf but also for those who cannot represent themselves. Social work is the perfect destination for such students. Macro social work issues such as income inequality, poverty, homelessness, and institutional racism and discrimination can become a magnet for applicants, especially those with minority backgrounds. Indeed, the average full-time students from historically underrepresented groups accounted for 46.4% of the combined undergraduate and graduate enrollment in 2017 [7]. This percentage does not reflect the general population in the US where minority racial groups together represent less than 40%. However, it is hardly surprising to see disadvantaged people edge toward social work. In fact, the profession of social work has always been a refuge for minority students, including black, immigrant, women and Asian students.

3.2 A desire for clinical/direct practice (micro practice)

Compared to psychology, marriage and family therapy, mental health, and counseling, social work offers a more pragmatic path toward become a licensed professional. The advanced standing option in the master's program is shorter and thus more cost-effective. Psychologists need a doctoral degree and many years of clinical experience to secure licensure. The road to licensure is much more straightforward for social workers who potentially can become a licensed professional in as little as 3 years beyond a baccalaureate degree. It is a different story for psychology.

3.3 A commitment for social services delivery/administration

Another group of students may be fed up with the phenomenon of red tape in the social welfare system. These students may want to bring about change into the system by tearing down the bureaucratic wall that prevents their clients from accessing social services. Such students are extremely passionate about social service delivery and may have been themselves victims of the social service system in the past. Social workers are generally thought of as people who

commit to authentic acts of service to others. Service is one of the six core values of the social work profession [43].

3.4 A passion for empowerment

Another group of students may conclude that the best way to help clients is to empower them. Social workers who embrace empowerment are knowledgeable about community resources and value linking clients to these resources. In effect, a large chunk of social workers' daily professional activities has to do with case management. Undergraduate social workers are passionate individuals whose purpose is to help clients become masters of their own lives.

4. Conclusions

This chapter overviewed the profession of social work in the US and formulates possible hypotheses for the appealability of the discipline in the twenty-first century. Although not intended to extend the literature empirically, this chapter conceptually contributes to the debate on the reasons why students choose social work above other professions. This chapter raises the bar to new heights by adding a macro perspective to the discussion, something that has vastly evaded previous work. Based on the current nature of the profession of social work in the US (as previously described), this chapter concludes that the appealability of social work in the twenty-first century is driven by many possibilities, including social justice issues, direct practice, service delivery, and empowerment. Other possibilities from the literature include a genuine desire to help others, professional idealism, personal and family life events, career outlook, and previous social work experience.

Social work is bound to become even more appealing over time as online/distance education continues to rise. In other words, the suitability for distance learning may play a preponderant role in increasing the popularity of social work across the globe. As things stand, the CSWE has accredited 28 full-time and/or part-time programs at the baccalaureate level and 85 programs at the master's level. These programs are also offered by some renowned schools, including University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, University of Buffalo, University of Alabama, Michigan State University, Arizona State University, Columbia University, and many universities in the California state system [44]. In 2017, there were 21 baccalaureate programs and 44 mater's programs operating fully online, and 409 international students graduated with a master's degree in social work in the same year [7].

It is therefore important for social work educators to assess what social work students expect from the curriculum that will enable them to meet their own, unique intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for pursuing an education and career in social work in the first place. One way to do so is to look at students' personal statements that elucidate their primary motivation for social work. That is, application materials could inform schools of social work of the unique composition and interests of each entering cohort. Such data could help social work programs design their curricula in a way that is as relevant as possible to the needs of students. This would also help inform field directors of the need to assess the adequacy of their current field placements or explore the potential for new ones. In addition, the information can help make social work programs become more responsive to students' personal and professional learning needs, and better prepare them for their intended areas of practice. Furthermore, new data could help keep social work curricula dynamic and ready to deal with contemporary social changes not only in the US but also across

the entire planet. The broad range of social issues in this changing world may give rise to new, burgeoning areas of social work practice.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Section 2

Empowering Social Work Research and Field Practice

Chapter 7

Irish Field Education/Social Work Placement: The Making of Multi-Touch eBooks as a 'Wrap Around' Resource

Marguerita McGovern

Abstract

Social Work placement can be the stimulating experience hoped for or the dreaded experience gained. Professional training values, whether these are influenced by globalization and/or indigenization are principled on the sharing of ideas and debates based on a multi-disciplinary integrated narrative approach. By presenting actual 'lived experiences' in the form of aural and video podcasts and linking these with research and theory, in our eBook Project, students, field supervisors and tutors were helped to explore for example, the use of language, supervision, reflective practice. This made the learning experience more modern, interesting and easily accessible for reviewing anytime anywhere. In practice placement, the understanding is not only what is learned but how it is learned. This Irish wraparound innovation regarding the inclusion of live recordings for teaching and learning brought together a shared focused and a thoughtful and inventive approach to the fundamental work related experience.

Keywords: E-learning, podcasts, social work, fieldwork practicum, practice teachers, tutors, social work students, fieldwork practice, fieldwork educators.

1. Introduction

A trainee sailor gets into a boat and the instructing Captain says "Away you go now. Take the boat out beyond the harbor and watch out for the rocks". The trainee gathers up all the knowledge they have acquired from their course and steers the boat out. There is so much to think about, there is too much to remember. This is not a simulation or a role play, this is real. Beyond the water-break it looks like a storm is moving in, what next, what is the best course of action, who can I ask for help?

Moving into fluid placement from the shore of academic knowledge is like the first time the trainee sailor sets sail in a boat. It is real, it is immediate and it can be exhilarating or scary.

The area of Fieldwork placement as an integral part of social work training has been well documented in research literature over the past 10 years (see [1–6]). All agree it is an essential and worthwhile experience in addition to a learning platform for students. It is where theory to practice is most relevant and the contextualization of academic knowledge is progressed.

In the history of social work education, there has always been a practical as well as a theoretical component to education and training. In reality the lines around the ambitious principles of placement can become blurred due to inattention by universities, inadequate pre-placement training for students and practice teachers, as well as unrealistic expectations. Furthermore limited availability of placements and the 'mis-fit' of understanding on why placement sites and placement supervisors need to work in tandem with educational establishments disrupt securing the best professionally trained social workers of tomorrow.

1.1 Globalization and indigenization

One of the greatest challenges within the concept of a global framework for social work is the inter-country, inter-cultural debate, involving interchanges and influences. The word indigenization in this context looks at taking research and empirical practice wisdom, re-positioning it and using it to form a scaffold for a developing profession. Growing professional identity in the context of economic policies, socio-cultural backgrounds and political regimes as in the studies of China [7–9] the Asian-Pacific [10] and Africa [11], fuels the debate on what is possible or impossible in changing environments.

In the developing world of social work education, much is written about modules, patterns and focus [12–14]. Indeed, we strive to have a better understanding of the social, cultural and environmental costs of a hyper-connected and layered world. This brings with it the need to offer academically robust social work education that encompasses important paradigms for practice. This is a framework rather than a constitution. Paradigms can 'ask questions, pose challenges and be adapted and developed for specific times, spaces and places' [15]. McGregor argues that for social work in the twenty-first century these paradigms need to challenge the dominant position of English/European-based texts and approaches. The aspiration is to develop more informed all-encompassing practices in addition to the best established texts while including specific and cultural knowledge [16, 17]. The aim is to look for a modern paradigm framework taking into consideration balance between a general frame of reference and one that is adaptable to the context of time, space and place [18].

It is interesting that much of the debate around indigenization comes from a West into East position and may or may not have to do with the perceived economic wealth of either region. However, in these changing times of limited resources all countries both rich and poor may have something to offer each other in the debate on establishing and using limited resources and the building of professionalism and education within the realm of social work.

The globalization of social work is seen as the process of International integration influenced by an interchange of world views. Social workers and social work courses around the world continually see local and wider world links within their training/educational courses, own work profiles and more specifically within their own practice case work. Economic situations, tribal and religious wars, health scares, and political regimes, can all contribute to unhealthy, unstable communities. The aim for a healthier society is to achieve sustainable, collaborative outcomes which, influenced by the skills of social work professionalism, creates a variety of multi-faceted, pragmatic solutions to highly complex problems, both individual and social [19, 20]. Further studies on global agendas and international social work are covered in Jones and Truell [21], Doel et al. [22] and Russell et al. [23]. British social work academic Lisa Dominelli also turns her attention to globalization and professional practices (see [24]) informing the more recent publication of 'Global social work in a Political context: Radical Perspectives' by Ferguson et al. [25]. For further

reading, Gray and Webb [26] critique world norms in social work suggesting that certain adopted approaches can undermine traditional expertise and working behaviors, these in turn then work against the proficiency of professional judgment.

Here we have our boat analogy again. We can move from narrow inlets to expansive seas. We can take the knowledge, values and skills we learn in one area and see how they transpose and develop in another area. Social work practice can begin as one entity and develop as another. It can be heavily influenced by specific influences, be that country or culture. In an Irish context this can be seen by the previously mentioned research work of Skehill [27, 28] and the more recent publication of 'Social Work in Ireland: Changes and Continuities' edited by Christy et al. [29]. This brings about a continuous debate on professional social work, oscillating between past, present and future desirable positions. These discourses on social work professional identity in a world context are at times framed as a West informing the East debate. It is suggested that the end point needs to be an open exchange of views taking in traditions, cultures, the role of policy makers, coupled with the desire for an efficient and effective professionally-run service for the vulnerable in society. This should be regardless of where that society is geographically located.

The International Federation of Social Work [30] began a process in 2004 to develop a clearer professional leadership in response to the evidence of worldwide low morale and loss of confidence felt by some social work practitioners. In particular the areas of education, social work practice and sustainable social development were investigated. This culminated in a policy statement titled 'Globalization and the Environment'. The statement makes practical suggestions about how social workers, in partnership with local people and communities, can work to promote the positives of global interaction and minimize harm [30]. The optimum vehicle for a social work service is a proficient individual and family social work delivery system, one that is sustainable and where workers are respected and recognized. Foucault [31] called this a 'power to govern' where in order for social work to exist there has to be a heightened knowledge where attributes are accorded to the social worker in having space and authority to arbitrate and manage within their domain.

There is an obvious challenge here within the debate of globalization and social work where the make-up, functions and designation of the term 'social worker' - and the duties performed - vary throughout the world. Researchers Bain and Evans [32] and Frost [33] pose the question 'Is there a European social work identity?' If we uphold and teach the values of self-realization and social determination then why would we want professional identity to be homogenized? The possible solution is to recognize the good parts, the best constituent elements of a model for identity and in addition recognize best local practice and couple this with agency support and endorsement. Indeed the research of Gray [9, 13] encapsulates the sensible approach of recognizing in social work education the elements of 'culture, economics, politics and social realities.' Interlacing these with the essential elements of fieldwork placement; professionally trained placement supervisors, a variety of placement sites, essential University support and a consideration of time, place and culture, may anticipate a more integrated outcome. This expects a Governmental policy and educational delivery partnership, together with professional organizations across borders and across countries to establish a profession and professional identity respected by all.

In the 2019 study by Rasell et al. of a two-year multiethnic social work program, with an approximate intake of 17 students per cohort, interconnected with five International Universities [23], the most interesting aspect of this research suggested that '*The 'international' acts as a frame of reference for studies rather than a particular body of knowledge and skills to be transmitted to students*' (p.14). In all, this seems a fair goal but its delivery may prove more challenging. The debate around

globalization and indigenization of social work courses transferred and transported across borders and countries will continue. The most important question is 'Will the social work course be Fit for Purpose?' Regardless of location, the answer to this question will determine and challenge the success of both the academic and practical elements of any further education.

1.2 The absolute central position of placement within social work training

How many newly-designed social work courses start with deciding the academic subjects and modules necessary for the course and not a scoping exercise to see the variety and quality of possible statutory and voluntary placements? How many courses are led by academic insistence and not practice relevance? Within the current literature on placement education there appears to be a growing concern regarding placement learning opportunities [4], staff capacity and actual desk space [34]. The time may be coming for a rethink. Think of social work training as a doughnut (a circular bun with a hole in the middle) in order to acquire the specific skills required for interaction with individuals and families, courses may need to readjust their designs. Put the academic modules in the middle of the doughnut and the placement around the outside. Currently it would appear that most social work course designs are the other way round with the emphasis and importance on the bigger circumference given over to academic modules and the practice placement filling up the middle. This does not take away from the importance of all the integral subjects such as theory, vulnerable populations, social justice etc. but it will shift the thinking into a space that might be valued more, that is, the absolute role of teaching and learning on placement. It might also offer a catalyst for critically thinking about, for example, the subject of law as it is found in the practice learning setting. Further comments on this topic will be discussed in the concluding section of this chapter.

2. The e-Book project

To understand the fundamental importance of student placement within professional social work training, in 2015–2017 this author [35] decided to work with MSW students, practice teachers and tutors to design a 'wrap around' set of eBooks encompassing the most important aspects of teaching and learning on placement. This was to be a new multi-touch downloadable eBook experience, viewed as a series of seven eBooks which would present short videos and aural podcasts made by social work students, practice teachers, tutors, subject experts and pre-placement trainers. It would also suggest current academic subject references. Placement topics such as language, professional identity and placement expectations and beginnings were to be covered in the first eBook with assessment, supervision, feedback, home visiting, reflective practice, the failing student and placement endings all covered in subsequent eBooks. MSW students, practice teachers, tutors and pre-placement trainers were to have their say in a thoughtful, inventive approach to the fundamental fieldwork experience. It is suggested that at present, access to social work knowledge is juggled between text books, lecture-based teaching and limited digital resources. These new eBooks where to show a collective learning experience made by and for practice teachers, students and all stakeholders in fieldwork training. They would be used in conjunction with pre-placement training for the students and the in-service training for the practice teachers and Tutors. The resource would also be available online to all students throughout their 2 years MSW course for reference across both first and second year placement. It was hoped the

eBooks could shape and help the thinking process for fieldwork practice by making knowledge and discussion through video and aural podcasts, academic text and suggested references more accessible, mobile and downloadable anytime, anywhere.

2.1 The pedagogical reasoning for eBook education

The pedagogical basis for the eBooks encompassed not only that of creative teaching [36–38] but also the pedagogical importance of narrative enquiry [39, 40]. The uniqueness of the eBooks contributed to by the NUI Galway staff, students, practice teachers and tutors included in particular, the use of podcasting to produce content on specific topics such as language awareness, professional identity, cultural competence, feedback, reflective practice, the experience of failing and groupwork. The immediacy of the spoken word in sharing personal and professional opinions demonstrated the openness, validity and strength of the experiences by the contributors. The making of the eBooks at NUI Galway, gave a sense of Irish indigenous practice that now can be offered as a globally transferable resource. Dale [41] promotes this view of the benefits in education of podcasting and notes increased motivation among students in writing, improved fluency and enhanced listening skills. This is in addition to the students acquiring technical competencies and an increased awareness of the use of new media in social and professional settings, leading to reinforced learning. Indeed using podcasting as an adjunct to teaching and assessment methods in higher education has had some further exposure in the following research [42–48].

It is an important point that using this innovative curriculum design and engaging with virtual learning technologies, this may necessitate individual and group upskilling for both educators and students. This new and forward-thinking approach to academic knowledge delivery is further investigated in the studies of Cartney [49] and Waldman and Rafferty [50] who suggest that the relevance of podcasting (in particular lecture material) may have some benefit but that the broader context to forward social work education and personal contact with students must not be belittled or ignored. By using podcasting as a creative technology to forward student learning, the authors caution us not to hold the development of the personal contact with social work students to ransom against the rush to be technologically creative [50]. The application of technology to teaching is integrated with reliable and proven educational approaches [41, 51–53], these studies build on Laurillard's [54] book which suggests the approach of a 'Conversational Framework'. Here, teaching is seen as a fluid practice which *negotiates* knowledge as opposed to a static view of *imparting* knowledge. Didactic teaching is therefore moved and shifted into a modern integrated arena which values the sharing of ideas and issue debates. The argument here is not to see the debate as one thing or another i.e. podcasting versus didactic teaching, but to incorporate new technology methods into teaching therefore giving the recipients and the deliverer a more exciting and worthwhile experience.

2.2 How the e-Books were made

Information was elicited from students, practice teachers, tutors and other social work educators as to what they defined as the most important topics in the area of fieldwork placement. This was achieved with discussion groups in class and outside meetings with agency social workers. The participants on the NUI Galway Postgraduate Diploma in Practice Teaching, Supervision and Management course were also vocal in what they saw as important in the fieldwork relationship and development of the student's professional identity. Pre 2016 across a period of 2 years

(2013–2015) a number of excellent podcasts and short videos had already been made by MSW students, practice teachers and visiting experts and it was expected to use these as a starting resource and add to it with current short video and aural podcasts. Over a period of 2 years NUI Galway has benefited from the expertise of acclaimed in-house and visiting professionals. Professor Mark Doel as external examiner of the MSW program at NUI Galway (2012–2015) gave generously of his time in contributing to two of the eBooks (eBook 1 and eBook 6 [35, 55]). In particular, his short video on 'Why is Groupwork Important?' [55] allowed the viewer not only to visually recognize and connect with the author, but be impressed by the sincerity of his delivery and practical wisdom. Marian Bogo and Pamela Trevithick [56] are eminent authors in the fundamental principles of social work practice, thus giving depth and credence to their expressed opinions within the eBooks. Both came to Ireland in 2015 and spoke eloquently on the topics of feedback and current social work practice with advice for practice teachers. Australian academics Lynn McPherson [56] and published author Helen Cleak [57] engaged the listener in both the safety issues for placement and the universally important elements of how to 'finish well' the placement experience.

The experts continued with Professor Pat Dolan [35], a UNESCO Professor and Director of the Child and Family Research Centre at NUI Galway, sharing his considered opinion on the video podcast in eBook 1 [35] 'What is Professional Identity?. He suggests for the listener a global view and one which has multi setting and dimensional elements. In many ways *all* of the contributors to the eBooks were experts in the messages or opinions they imparted because it was their imparted wisdom, put into words, which they believed to be most relevant in relation to the various settings and topics. Other Irish Universities also contributed, University College Cork were represented by their BSW/MSW staff Mary Wilson and Deirdre Quirke [55]. In all, the contribution of NUI Galway Professor of Social Work Caroline McGregor [56] provided an expert overarching view of the foundational principles of social work, presented in an engaging, modern and technological way on the MSW program.

Ultimately, it was the author's 11 years of professional experience with the NUI Galway Masters in Social Work program and her 35 years experience within the social work profession that consolidated all the information and eventually made the judgment on content. Attention is drawn to **Table 1**.

Book 1	Social work placement: New approaches. New thinking	Language Professional identity Expectations and beginnings
Book 2	Social work placement: New approaches. New thinking	Assessment Creative supervision Feedback
Book 3	Social work placement: New approaches. New thinking	Home visiting—Urban and rural Cultural competence Virtual training
Book 4	Social work placement: New approaches. New thinking	Reflective practice influenced by emotional intelligence
Book 5	Social work placement: New approaches. New thinking	Failing forward
Book 6	Social work placement: New approaches. New thinking	Imaginative groupwork
Book 7	Social work placement: New approaches. New thinking	Finishing well

Table 1.
Titles and contents of each eBook.

(The importance of social work theory was not discounted but due to the wealth of textbooks in this area, a decision was made not to include this topic in the current selection but possibly in the future).

2.3 Downloading requirements and distribution

Initially all eBooks 1–7 were written in iBook Author and configured for MAC or iPad with iBooks 2 or later and iOS 5 or later, an iPhone with iOS 8.4 or later, or a MAC with OS × 10.9 or later.

Subsequently eBooks 2–7 can now also be downloaded as The PC/Android versions through Amazon Books and Kindle. These are common operating systems and not outside the general capability of downloadable eBooks. Copies of the eBooks 2–7 [55–60] were also uploaded onto the University's MSW PC computers and each person included in the making of the eBooks were presented with a personal USB containing all seven multi-touch eBooks. Work is continuing on the uploading of eBook 1 to PC/Android format. IBAN numbers were obtained through NUI Galway, and each University Library in the Republic of Ireland was offered the eBooks 2–7 as a free downloadable resource. Since 2017 The National University of Ireland, Galway Library's depository of academic research named ARAN/IRIS also welcomed the resource [61]. This made the eBooks technically free to both a National and International audience. (All free links to eBooks 2–7 appear in the References section of this Chapter).

2.4 The nuts and the bolts of making the multi-media sharing

All multi-media for the eBooks was produced over a period of 2 years. Recording the audio podcasts mainly with a hand-held digital recorder proved to be the most reliable and immediate way to capture thoughts and ideas. Students used these in class, where, for example, in a post placement class they would divide into small groups and each group would make a podcast on their experience of 'supervision on placement'. With regard to the professionals, a number of practice teachers and tutors who were somewhat 'shy' of the video process choose to take away a digital recorder, record their piece on, for example 'Supporting the student on Placement' and return the digital recorder to the Practice Learning Coordinator.

Short videos and audio pieces heightened interest amid written research sections of the eBooks. What was the best way to produce the short videos? Would it be filming on an iPad, phone or in the Studio? Interestingly the iPad proved a superb mobile and immediate resource for gathering short videos. Students too enjoyed the freedom of being able to work on their short videos outside of class time when they had access to the class iPad (see student video in Book 6: Imaginative Groupwork [55], p. 9).

Video recording within the NUI Galway Film Studio made the process more formal. NUI Galway affords its staff and students access to a small recording studio where, with the help of a professional technician recordings can be made. This model of filming worked well for interviews with leading authors such as the renowned author Pamela Trevithick (See Page 16 eBook 2 Social Work Placement: New Approaches. New Thinking. Assessment, Creative Supervision, Feedback [56]).

The use of both the aural podcasts and short videos helped to engage all the stakeholders within the placement experience. It presented to the students an application of learned theories, skills and roles, encouraging reflection, co-working, appreciating relevant evaluation and restyling action which was peer and expert led. The fundamental principle was one of 'sharing'. The sharing of information and the sharing of wisdom for all of the stakeholders involved. Permission for sharing

all of the gathered material was collected and all participants in the eBook project appreciated that their podcasts and videos would be on general release once the eBooks were published.

2.5 Commonalities of each eBook

Throughout each of the e-Books there were a number of commonalities. (a) Each opened with an introduction video made by the author (approx. 3 min). (b) Throughout the eBooks opinion pieces on specific topics were presented as short videos (approx. 3 min) and/or aural podcasts (approx. 3 min) by students, practice teachers or tutors connected with the National University of Ireland, Galway MSW program. (c) In order to have a ready-made discussion tool each e-Book finished with sections on: 'The University's Responsibility', 'New Approaches. New Thinking', 'Questions' and a relevant seven slide 'Power point/Keynote presentation'.

3. Social work education and social work placement

At the National University of Ireland, Galway (situated on the West coast of Ireland) we are geographically placed to the left of Europe, to the left of England and to the right of the United States of America and Canada. We are a very long way from Russia, China, Australia and Africa. In the Republic of Ireland we have five universities and 1 college of technology offering Bachelor of Social Work (Full time 4 years) and Masters in Social Work (Full time 2 years) degrees. At NUI Galway, we currently offer an MSW program (Full time 2 years/25 students) and a Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work Practice Teaching, Supervision and Management (Part time 1 year/12 students). The placement opportunities of a block 14 weeks (500 hours) in each year of the MSW (making up a total of 1000 supervised hours) involves a variety of professional social work agency placements both statutory and voluntary, with students supervised on-site by a professional social worker (Practice Teacher). In other countries these supervisors may be called Fieldwork Supervisors/Field Educators/Fieldwork Assessors. In the majority of our fieldwork placements the role of the Practice Teacher is carried out by a qualified professionally registered social worker already working in the agency. Supervision is termed as both formal and informal. Formal supervision is required and contracted to take place each week of placement for 1 hour. This covers areas such as the student social worker's case work, group work, theory to practice, unpinning of the appropriate legislation, and discussion on human rights and reflective practice. Informal supervision can take place at any time and includes general discussions with the practice teacher and communications within the team and agency. Practice teachers having agreed to take a student are offered three in-service training days in social work practice teaching and supervision. All social work courses in Ireland are registered and delivered under guidelines produced by CORU the Irish government registration body for social work. Each professional course (BSW, MSW) is evaluated by CORU for re-registration every 5 years.

Fieldwork Placement is 50% of the overall assessment of the NUI Galway Masters in Social Work program. Pre-placement training is offered as a 12-hour module delivered by the Practice Learning Coordinator (College Fieldwork Coordinator) to ready the students for placement. In-service training is also offered to Practice Teachers (Fieldwork Supervisors) as a 3-day in-service training or Continuous Professional Training opportunity. Currently this takes place on 1 day immediately before the student goes on placement, 1 day within the middle of

placement and 1 day towards the end of the 14-week placement. This training is conducted within the University by the Practice Learning Coordinator. Additionally at NUI Galway we offer a 1 year Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work Practice Teaching, Supervision and Management. Attendance is on a part-time basis for professionally qualified social workers currently employed in statutory and voluntary agencies. Social workers involved in this course must take a student on placement as part of the course.

Tutors are an integral part of the placement experience. At NUI Galway, tutors for the MSW program are both senior social work practitioners and academic staff. The role of the tutor as mentor is extremely important in the cycle of social work training. Carried into placement, the role of the tutor within the tri-partite meetings is crucial as supporter of the student and not assessor. Being able to listen to podcasts made by tutors and their ability to see their role became helpful to other tutors assessing the intricacies of the relationship and the skills needed to at times salvage ego and rebuild connections. At NUI Galway, each tutor is responsible for approximately four students and attend two meetings at the site of practice placement with the student and practice teacher. This is a pro-forma meeting and lasts 1 hour. Training each year is offered to Tutors on topics pertaining to their role and in general the link between students, the practice teacher, and the university. This level of preparedness for all stakeholders in the placement experience manages expectations, shares new knowledge and shows new practical learning methods. The optimum outcome is to lead the student and fieldwork supervisor into a more confident and focused learning environment where learning opportunities are available to teach and reflect on the needs of the student and Practice Teacher. Placement is therefore seen as a partnership, a shared learning and teaching experience, an integral part of social work professional training. The investment in building relationships and valuing the time, expertise and wisdom of practice teachers/fieldwork supervisors cannot be underestimated. The exposure of students to 'real time' pieces of work in a controlled class room setting before they go into placement, as well as the concerns and reflections shared by students build not just their confidence but as with all groups, that feeling of 'togetherness' which is important between students. The concept of collective preparedness for all stakeholders learning together leading towards a practical use of their knowledge is invaluable. As an introduction to the eBook series, eBook 1 and eBook 2 will be analyzed in more detail in the following sections.

4. Book 1: 'social work placement: new approaches, new thinking. Language—professional identity—beginnings and expectations

4.1 Language

'Let's start at the very beginning...'

The MSW students wanted to make 3 min podcasts on how they circumvented the ocean of communication in the boat of language. The podcasts chosen for the eBook reflected how some of the students learned about working in a multi-cultural environment. How some of them found the challenge of being of a different culture from their Irish co-workers and the value of learning and changing their use of language to be better understood and build better relationships. In one of the podcasts our first year MSW student Natalie is Austrian, she talks about having to pay particular attention to the tone of her speech and the inflections in her voice. Washington (MSW 1) is originally from Zimbabwe. He found he had to slow down his speech pattern, check with his clients/service users that he was being

understood and use his outgoing personality to help build relationships. Language gives us a picture, it helps us perceive our world and the world of those with whom we work and help. As stated in eBook 1 [35].

> *"The goal is not to homogenise how social workers talk with clients/service users, but to raise awareness and understand that the way we use language can have a remarkable impact on outcomes and thinking mechanisms" (p. 13).*

Seanan is Irish and a second year MSW student. He made his podcast by reflecting on his work in England with a group of homeless men. His slow pattern of speech and informal use of language he found was not conducive to relationship building. With the help of his supervisor he changed his interaction to be one of more precise delivery, focused and with a more checked task-centered orientation. The result was that of better understanding between the two parties of the direct meaning and purpose of the interaction.

4.2 Say what you mean—mean what you say

The theme of language rarely gets separate attention when we think about practice learning and placement but in fact, it is central and core to the elements of professional social work training.

"How are things with you?" the fieldwork supervisor asks.

"How are you getting on?" the tutor enquires.

"How are you finding your placement?" the College professor wants to know.

It is essential students are aware from the outset, before beginning placement that this use of language with little substance to the question will result in limited substance to the answer and confusion for both professional and student. Language is seldom neutral. We make choices when we use language, the intentions and the subsequent effects those choices have on individuals are important to assess. How we react and interact with each other is regulated by our use of language in conveying multiple messages. Language is our vehicle to communicate or miscommunicate. Value judgments about language can quickly become judgments about people. Can indigenous people be mocked for their use of language? Can those who have limited skill around words and meanings be disregarded and ignored? Social work students need to consider tone, symbols and signals. It is not only in *what* is said but in *how* it is being said that needs a 'sit up and take notice' position.

The engagement of multi-cultural groups in this discussion adds a further dimension. As is discussed in eBook 1 [35].

> *'The engagement of Agency referred individuals and families from multi-cultural groupings, where English may not be the 'first language' of choice can at times have repercussions around feelings of possible isolation within the family and society as a whole. [62–66] Across the social work services there may be a growing inability to assess the importance of language as it forms a bridge between what is said and what is understood. It is also important to assess how much the individual or family sees their language reinforcing their cultural and ethical identity or the possibility of this cultural identity becoming a barrier to engaging help. This is an important consideration in cross-cultural social work and exceptionally important for the practice teacher and social work student to empathize with and try and understand [67, 68]. Pomeroy and Nonaka [69] consider the extensive challenges to American social workers given their client base which in many instances is multi-national, multi-lingual and multi- cultural. In their study 'Language and Social Work: Are we communicating effectively?' The possible ways forward suggested are: to raise*

> *awareness of cultural diversity; to engage the help of client family members around translation; to work up the case fully before handing it over; to find pro-bono translators and remembering that technology (translation software) can be your friend, to use Skype communication and possibly encourage social work students to learn a new foreign language. [69] Some of these suggestions are relevant, some debatable. An interesting question is, should social work students be given the opportunity to study a second language and are there communities where the social work service could or should be offered in the predominant language of that community? See also Social Work Placement: New Approaches. New Thinking (Book 3) where a practice teacher talks about bi-lingual home visiting in a rural setting" [58].*

Dilmitis et al. [70] in their research article 'Language identity and HIV: Why do we keep talking about the responsible and responsive use of language?' shows us the relationship that language can have to people and additionally that language can have to identity. On placement social work students have a job to assess their interactions with individuals and families and how their use of language connects or disconnects to their making or breaking of relationships. Interestingly language is not static. Here in Ireland we have moved from words like 'handicapped', 'itinerant' and 'delinquent' to the much more acceptable identity words of 'disabled', 'traveler' and 'offender'. Are there words in your culture which you can suggest need changing, have changed? Words that describe a minority group, a type of condition, a behavior? How can you correct these words in your own vocabulary? Why should you correct these words? Here's the answer: Stigma. Be courageous, move the language forward. If you stigmatize a person or group value judgments will follow and you cannot guarantee that the understanding you have behind your own use of language in any given situation is the same as the next person's. Here is how to simply begin: on placement at your next case conference say 'This family etc.....' instead of 'This case etc.....' or 'These service users....' This change very simply resets the brain and resets the language.

4.3 Professional identity

The second section of eBook 1 looked at Professional Identity. This can be a difficult concept for students to understand and equally difficult at times for fieldwork supervisors to explain.

The eBook asked the questions "What does 'professionalism' in social work look like?" The question is, how is it possible to teach professionalism to students who possibly have never stood in a social work office? At times it is the reverse question that presents a clearer answer "What does bad professionalism look like? How might that show itself in social work practice? For this section of eBook 1 a recent graduate recorded a podcast on how she saw professional identity. She talked about 'organizational culture', being confident with power, responsibility and being aware of surrounding influences. She felt that professional identity changes as one moves from being a student on placement into being a paid social worker in an agency and she invites the listener to consider "What is being asked of you as a professional in a specific role in this specific agency? How will you do that job and what of your own self values and traits will you bring to the work?" Interestingly this leads on to the debate suggested in Weiss-Gal and Welbourne's [71] research advocating that 'power in professionalism has two patterns, one of which is (a) inside the person allowing them to have control and the ability to recognize the influences they can bring to their profession and (b) where power is seen as influenced by outside factors. Social workers, in this respect are able to influence others, consolidating a public perception that acknowledges social workers role in furthering shared

social aims (p. 293). In working with this eBook chapter the MSW students were asked to consider the Weiss-Gal and Welbourne [71] study, surveying social work in 10 countries producing eight commonalities of social work professionalism. It is worthwhile mentioning these: 'Public recognition; monopoly over types of work, professional autonomy; knowledge base; professional education; professional organization; codified ethical standards and prestige and remuneration of social work'(pp. 284-289).

As discussed in eBook 1, Section 2, Page 28, Levy et al. [72] explore professional identity as a 'complex factor [...] which involves internalisation of the group's values and norms as part of the individual's own behaviour and self-concept' (p. 744). In taking on a profession we take what is inside ourselves and bring it outside and in bringing it outside ourselves, we leave it open to interpretation and sway by many other influences. Using this eBook to teach Fieldwork supervisors the question was asked 'Does embracing a professional identity dilute ones own morals, values and/or ethics or are these outside of a professional identity? The following research was suggested for further study. Lam et al. [73] highlight the challenges of how student social workers must juxtaposition their own beliefs and values i.e. their personal persona, with their 'professional persona'. Connected with the MSW at NUI Galway, Ireland we have the UNESCO chair for Children and Families, Professor Pat Dolan. His insightful short video (4mins) helped the students to construct a framework for professional identity which was built on name, values, and place. In the whole eBook 1 [35] this was one of the most popular videos for its application and knowledge.

It is generally accepted that social work students want to learn how to be professionals [24, 74–76]. On placement they can do this by mirroring good professional practice and within supervision reflecting on the elements of what makes a skilled, proficient, capable and ethical worker. The inter-sharing of hearing and watching how others have managed their roles through the aural podcasts and videos became a powerful medium for learning and making links. Connecting up this dialog and sharing it while teaching students, practice teachers and tutors helps the introduction of the concept that a professional identity can be a life-long process and also a valuable career goal.

4.4 Placement beginnings and expectations

This was an important section to include in the eBook 1. It was a natural progression for students, fieldwork supervisors and tutors to look at the imminent move into placement once language and professional identity had been explored. Beginning with one of Europe's leading writers on social work, Mark Doel presented a more creative and metaphorical way of looking at placement. Mark's video and his 'Social Work Land Map' (recreated in the eBook) introduced 'the crossroads of cultural competence', 'the bridge of experience', 'the forests of assessment and paperwork'. Using this as a pre-placement teaching tool the MSW students especially enjoyed making their own 'Land Map of Placement' adding particular Irish phenomena such as 'the road to nowhere' and 'the sweet green grass of achievement'. *Following on from this, the included display of colorful mind maps and work on sticky notes gave all concerned the opportunity to express, not only how they saw placement and its connections, but the reflection of 'Who I am and What I bring' concentrating minds on introducing the 'use of self,' placement expectations and consideration of the different environment ahead portraying their own experience of beginning placement and their expectations.

The MSW student videos and group podcasts throughout this section were made by students post-placement. There is always the notion in students that 'everyone else is coping well except me' and for fieldwork supervisors and tutors that 'others

are doing this job much better than me'. These myths would appear to have been dispelled after listening to the honest reports of what practice teachers expected of students on placement, what students themselves encountered and how being prepared and discussing expectations reduced anxiety levels. The immediacy of the word with regard to these multi-media pieces led students to explore research in connected areas. Lynne McPherson came to NUI Galway as a Research fellow in 2016, directly after her published work on 'Safety as a Fifth Dimension of Supervision: Stories from the front line' [77]. Lynne's video presented her thoughts on feeling safe within supervision, recognizing stress and trauma and linking possible neurological elements connected with stress and trauma into the practice learning dynamic between fieldwork supervisor and student. Students can find themselves in high risk and low safety situations while on placement and this video signposted the way to recognize the importance of a safety dimension. It is suggested by the eBook author that regardless of placement site and agency setting, the discussion on safety must begin within the course teaching, flow into pre-placement training and continue out into the placement experience. There should be no one stakeholder responsible for the subject matter of safety. The suggestion in this eBook section outlines that it is too important a topic to leave to one person but that a collective commitment to this subject is required.

4.5 Students living with a disability and placement

Encouraging students from minority and marginalized populations is a commitment for a number of social work courses worldwide. With regard to disability, here the question is asked 'Is the picture one of the 'disabled student' or the 'enabled student'? Is it a question of ability or disability? The raising of this agenda ties in with this eBook's earlier section looking at language and the importance of its use and meaning. If social work principles and ethics are upheld then for the student living with a disability mental or physical that should mean equal opportunities where possible on placement, equal access and equal belief in ability and self-esteem. Notwithstanding there may be additional challenges for this student in the areas of transport, mobility, cost, stress, family, health or ill health, image etc. What is of paramount importance is open and honest discussion with a base line of 'reasonableness' for all concerned, concentrating on a strengths-based approach and not a weakness identification. Within this eBook section there are direct examples from past placements of how these conversations between student, practice teacher and tutor might begin.

4.6 New approaches—new thinking

As mentioned previously all of the eBooks finished with the author's reflection on what might be useful going forward. For the first eBook, 'Social Work Placement: New Approaches. New Thinking. Language - Professional Identity - Beginnings and Expectations', the overall message was that of connectivity. Regardless of what part you played in the production of placement there was a beginning point at which you could start to understand the delivery of language and the development of your understanding of communication. How you would envisage building a professional identity and what obstacles, like anxiety, you might have to surmount to achieve success. Not every student learns at the same pace, consideration should be given to the responsibility of the University in supporting all relationships within social work placements. Placement is not a 'creche' situation where individuals are 'dropped in' and 'picked up' by the university or college at the end of the duration of placement. Each member of the placement process should feel as if they have a stake in the outcome of the interaction, they should feel valued and that their contribution

is worthwhile. A clear indication of how this can work is through feedback. It is presumed that there is a flow of feedback during placement between student and fieldwork supervisor, between tutor and student, supervisor and tutor, and university fieldwork coordinator. External examiners on social work courses bring a wealth of knowledge from other experiences of social work and social work education and an exchange of ideas regarding the placement position within the course, the viability of sites, placement connected training, and future developments can all be shared.

eBook 1 [35] finishes with a six slide presentation on 'Keys to Practice Teaching' it is a starting point for fieldwork supervisors to consider the principles by which they wish to teach the student. The understanding of the principles, how they can be identified and how they can be taught: Talking, Seeing, Doing, Reflecting - these are paramount keys to establishing the beginning of best ethical practice regardless of country, site or service and go beyond expectations into the realm of absolutes for learning how to be a professional social worker.

5. Multi-disciplinary courses sharing of experiences within the university

The eBook Project on 'Social Work Education: New Approaches. New Thinking' pointed to aspects of trans-disciplinary consultation in order to maximize and fully understand a number of the important elements of placement training. Social work educators, social work students and social workers in the services and community should not think and work in isolation. Social work education has always involved the sharing of ideas with regard to researching and curriculum design as was evident in the studies of Tanemura-Morelli et al., Bronstein, and Finlay et al. [78–80].

In practice, social workers have embraced the integrative models to bring together a number of disciplinary theoretical positions considered in the studies of Oliver and Peck; Cheung, Held et al. [81–83], but in the making of the eBooks it was the inter-disciplinary discussions on 'Language and the area of 'Assessment' and 'Supervision' that were the most productive.

The academic and placement coordinators for both the Speech and Language and Occupational Therapy undergraduate degrees share the same building at NUI Galway. This leads to a relaxed communication atmosphere between the disciplines. Both course professionals were interested in the makeup of the eBooks. In particular the Speech Therapy lecturers were generous with their knowledge around 'language' research but also interested to discuss how this focus on language for therapeutic intervention on placement might be of value to their students during their own speech therapy placements. With regard to the Occupational Therapy staff, they had, in the recent past, some difficulty around assessment and in particular the complexity of some 'fail' grades for students on placement. They were therefore most interested to discuss the making of eBooks 2 and 5 [56, 59] in particular looking at the concept of 'Failing Forward'.

Although both these disciplines have student placements which are of shorter duration (usually 6–10 weeks), some of the fundamental issues such as 'assessment tools that are fit for purpose' and 'supporting the student and supervisor in a failed placement scenario' were of initial relevant collaborative interest.

6. Practice teachers sharing

Practice teaching is predicated on sets of core principles whether these are called 'Key stages', 'Domains' or 'Competencies'. Every practice teacher carries the

responsibility of ensuring that their student has reached the required standards and is 'fit for practice' and 'fit to practice'. In order to present the practice wisdom of fieldwork professionals using podcasts and short videos the eBooks set out to capture and share these experiences [84].

In a most direct and engaging way one of the video podcasts in this eBook shows the practice teacher/fieldwork supervisor talking directly to the social work student in a section taken from their first day together on placement and the expectations around supervision. Both student and practice teacher are inviting the listener to experience 'first hand' how they interact [85]. This podcast is a particularly good teaching tool due to the fact that the practice teacher's mobile phone rings in the middle of the session and in stopping the video here in teaching sessions, there is always the question asked 'What should happen next?'

In the Republic of Ireland practice teachers are not mandated by their agencies to offer placements to students and this goes across both the statutory and voluntary fields of social work. The practice teachers who came along to record their experiences for the eBooks, both on video and aurally, came out of generosity and also reciprocity. In general there is a healthy relationship between practice teachers and the university here in the West of Ireland. This has taken many years on all sides, of building relationships and understanding the ebb and flow of agency adjustments, personnel change, government policies and University requirements.

6.1 eBook (2) social work placement: new approaches. New thinking. Assessment - creative supervision - feedback

The key to good assessment is consistency, transparency and appropriateness.

Basically students are required to use and process knowledge gained in an effective, efficient and accountable way. The evidence and assessment of NUI Galway's students' work on placement is produced within a portfolio and submitted to the University as coursework at the end of placement. Practice teachers for their part submit a signed pro-forma report of their assessment of the student's learning and practice over the course of a placement (PER Performance Evaluation Report).

Accurate assessment is important in particular if there are any procedures needed.

around difficulties, failures or appeals [59] It is also important that those carrying out the assessment are trained and understand their role in the development of the student. Assessment can be seen as a creative tool used by a collective. This collective includes the University, the professional registration body, the practice teacher, the student and the supporting tutor.

In the past the method by which assessment has taken place has had its foundation mainly in a competency-based examination model (CBE). A number of researchers and in particular Eraut [86] have argued that in the areas of judgment and reflection CBE is not particularly fit for purpose because of the complicated value-based nature of casework [87] and the modern approach would appear to be in the appraisal of meta competencies [88, 89]. For assessment at all stages it is important for students not just to understand their development of a particular skill or competency but its application, impact, and outcome in a variety of social work settings. In order to inform the MSW students at NUI Galway how and why they were being assessed the Professor of Social Work, Caroline McGregor recorded a 3 min video to open this eBook 2 [90]. The students could appreciate, having viewed the video, the basis by which they would be assessed on placement and the reason behind the assessment. In the eBook it was decided to include a table of the assessment areas (domains) and the role for the student over Placement 1 and Placement 2. A limited example of this Table (4 domains are given as an example

out of a total of 6) is included in this chapter. Interestingly, these general domains, because they are mandated by the official registration board, are also used by speech therapy, occupational therapy and social care students on placement with application to their own professional work models (see www.coru.ie).

6.2 Assessment criteria across the 2 years of MSW placements

The table and its contents show a limited example of assessment across the two placements from NUI Galway's MSW program. In setting out the table all stakeholders in the placement can see the assessment model and how the areas of assessment can be achieved. The example given is for only four of the areas by which NUI Galway MSW students are assessed out of a total of six domains. The additional assessed areas not mentioned here due to space considerations are 'Professional and Personal Development' and 'Effective Communication'. The six domains are predetermined by CORU (the Irish social work and related therapies professional registration body).

From **Table 2**, it is evident that there is immense scope around which to base the assessment process and the delivery of supervision. The goal is to build up capacity and understanding in the student, increasing their responsibility for the student's own learning with the help and direction of the fieldwork supervisor.

CORU ASSESSMENT DOMAINS (2012)	Application to Student Practice: Short Example:	What it means:	Role for the student. Example: MSW Yr. 1 Placement	Role for the student. Example: MSW Year 2 Placement
PROFESSIONAL AUTONOMY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	PRACTICE WITHIN THE LEGAL AND ETHICAL BOUNDARIES OF THEIR PROFESSION TO THE HIGHEST STANDARD	Best interest of service users, respect, rights, dignity and autonomy contribute to policy and practice, implications of duty of care for service users and professionals, code of conduct, ethics.	Observing and shadowing. Information and relationship building. Setting of learning needs and goals. Supervision contracting. Understanding report writing and any 'screen' technology reporting.	Carrying forward learning from PI. 1 plus greater confidence in self and ability regarding case analysis, interviewing and report writing. More defined learning needs and ability to be more independent in thinking. Cases should grow in complexity.
INTERPERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS	WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH SERVICE USERS AND THEIR RELATIVES/SUPPORTERS, GROUPS AND COMMUNITIES AND OTHER PROFESSIONALS	Capacity building and sustaining relationships both individually and team based, engaging service communities and other professionals.	Recognising all systems supporting or not supporting service users. Being able to make assessments/care plans and being assertive in their delivery and evaluation. Understanding a multi - disciplinary approach. Using the applied agency technology correctly. Recognising possible language or communication difficulties.	Further understanding of the social work professional role and other stakeholders in the service users case. Ethics and reflective practice building within supervision. Groupwork leadership role taken on where possible.
CORU ASSESSMENT DOMAINS (2012)	**Application to Student Practice: Short Example:**	**What it means:**	**Role for the student. Example: MSW Yr. 1 Placement**	**Role for the student. Example: MSW Year 2 Placement**
PROVISION OF QUALITY SERVICES	BE ABLE TO IDENTIFY AND ASSESS SERVICE USERS' NEEDS.USING RESEARCH, REASONING AND PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS TO DETERMINE APPROPRIATE CASE ACTION.	Be up to date in knowledge and procedures around agency and practice policy.	Implimenting knowledge and skills from academic classes to practice based learning. Closely monitoring one's time management skills.	Confidence in professional judgements. Greater ability in discernment of theory to practice knowledge
KNOWLEDGE, UNDERSTANDING AND SKILLS	BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND, EXPLAIN AND APPLY GENERIC SKILLS AND METHODS APPROPRIATE TO DELIVERING A RANGE OF SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTIONS TO MEET DIFFERENT NEEEDS WITHIN A VARIETY OF SETTINGS.	Issues and trends which influence social work practice inquiries, investigations, reports etc. Develop a rights based approach to practice. Understand the role of interpersonal exchanges in identifying, releasing and appropriately managing the expression of emotions, enhanced by an understanding of the importance of self-awareness. Understanding organisational systems and their impact on service user care. Importance of Risk assessment and risk management.	Prioritising and managing work in the safe environs of the placement agency. Demonstration of assessment, planning and intervention is by an evidence informed practice in accordance with legislation, protocols and guidelines.	Building on P. 1 . Also the student begins to understand the need to adjust/adapt their practice as needed to take account of new development in knowledge and skills. Recognising trends in public and social policy.

Table 2.
The role of the social work student in MSW Yr. 1 and 2 in relation to the CORU assessment domains.

(Acknowledgement in the joint drawing up of this table is given to the Fieldwork Coordinator for the BSW/MSW course at University College Cork).

6.3 Supervision on placement: 'the beat of good supervision is within the heart of good placement' (eBook 2. Page 36)

Attendance on placement for NUI Galway MSW students is a block 14 week experience in each of the 2 course years [56]. Students on returning from placement were excited to share their placement supervision experiences and be creative in their delivery. In the podcasts they made, Group 1 decided to reinvent (the television program the X Factor (a program that looks for a 'special quality' in a person that makes them unique) and record their experiences in this mode [91]. When teaching students this podcast is played along with a previous podcast in eBook 1 Page 69 [35] which was made by a group of Year 2 MSW students having completed their placement [92].

Of particular interest in this recording is the student who felt he did not learn enough from the opportunities he was given on placement and upon reflection regrets this behavior. For pre-placement training these podcasts have been invaluable. Current students express great interest in listening to how their peers have negotiated the challenges of supervision on placement. Additionally practice teachers and students can see a model of the components of supervision ([56], pp. 20-29).

The main message within this eBook 2 was to identify that field practice is an emotionally intense experience for students – both in discovering their own emotions and recognizing the emotions of the service users due to difficulties in the areas of poverty, housing, education, culture, disability etc. These feelings of helplessness can at times be overwhelming to all parties. The importance of supervision is to take these experiences and with the help of the practice wisdom of the supervisor uncover the layers of assistance, facilitation and support coupled with solid theory, law and social justice perspectives that can be offered.

6.4 Evaluating the practice placement experience: how do you know it is working?

... or not working as the case may be? The usual procedure with regard to students' evaluation of placement at NUI Galway is to divide into small groups and let the students talk about their placement experiences, possibly under the headings of 'What worked?' 'What didn't work?', or to take a whole class and ask for volunteers to share what they learned on placement or their role in the agency. At NUI Galway the students are asked to draw 'Road Maps' [93]. Moreover the practice teachers during an in-service training session are also asked to draw 'Road Maps' [94] ([56], pp. 32, 33).

The experiences of placement are worth sharing either as a joint creative task with practice teachers and students together or in peer group sessions of practice teachers and students separately. To this end students are also required at NUI Galway to fill out a Practice Teacher Evaluation form where they can give feedback to the practice teacher post placement regarding their experience of his/her practice teaching approach. For their part practice teachers are additionally encouraged to discuss their placement experience with their own work supervisors or line managers. There is a knock-on benefit in this for the agency, as the positive experiences of staff taking students may encourage organizations towards the potential for good quality assurance of service delivery, greater abilities to manage risk and possibly higher retention of more fulfilled staff.

7. Conclusion

The consideration of globalization and indigenization within social work education leads us to one question: What constitutes best practice for social work education and training? The answer to this question is embedded in two words: 'relationship' and 'response'. It is a relationship between the theory and practice, incorporating connections encouraged within social work services and it is the response of social work courses to make their teaching relevant, applied and creative to focus on skills, values and knowledge.

For this chapter the aim was to show in the context of world globalization and indigenization how NUI Galway made a contribution to their MSW social work placement training in being able to design, implement and deliver a set of seven multi-media on-line social work practice eBooks. These would, in theory 'wrap around' the placement from pre to post experience. Research is ongoing but so far anecdotal evidence shows that the project has been successful on a number of levels. In launching any creative project there had to be a plan. The Aims and Objectives for this e-Book project were multi-facilitated:

1. To creatively, by the use of multimedia approaches *engage* MSW students, fieldwork supervisors, tutors and those teaching pre-placement training.

2. To encourage experts to *share* their knowledge and wisdom.

3. To *build* a community of practice teachers (fieldwork supervisors) where they felt invested in the process experience to help practice teachers feel valued and be part of social work training for the future.

4. To *establish* a Postgraduate training course for practice teachers which would offer further continual professional development for those involved and placement opportunities for the NUI Galway MSW students.

For students it has resulted in being more familiar with work practices and greater confidence in their ability to circumnavigate what lies ahead in placement. This is evidenced in the relevance and accessibility of the information in the videos and podcasts as well as the up to date research. For Practice Teachers/Fieldwork Supervisors in their in-service training, it has again raised confidence in their own ability and also to understand what students are being taught pre-placement. The podcasts made by Practice Teachers and subject experts have proven invaluable in discussion and in signposting the way forward. For those teaching pre-placement training the eBooks were an invaluable starting point. The short 6slide presentations at the end of each eBook were used to open up a number of the pre-placement training classes.

Tackling the dearth of social work placements in some countries is well recorded [95–98]. This author would contend that social work students need social work placements. There is recognition in some countries that difficulties around acquiring and sustaining social work placements present serious challenges [96–98]. With the eBooks NUI Galway placement stakeholders told their stories and shared their wisdom.

There has to be a connectedness between place, academic and practice learning/training and it is important to weigh these concepts equally. Theory comes to life in practice and it is through practical experience and evidence gathering that our knowledge and theories flourish. All this with due regard to environment and resources. Giving placement equal status thus recognizing the reciprocal

and co-dependent relationship between theory and practice along with following through on that commitment takes courage. Giving Practice Placement Coordinators a seat at every table and on every committee where social work training and education is discussed is vitally important. There is a copious amount of work required to plan, execute and support placements long before a student enters the work related arena. Understanding the expectations of students and equally the expectations of practice teachers/field supervisors and their agency protocols is vitally important. The principle involved is to lead all parties towards a general understanding of purpose and intent.

Agencies must be honest in what they have to offer social work students on placement. If the work involved is 'community orientated work' then identify it as such, if the work is going to be mainly administration [9] agencies must make this clear in the beginning. The contention would be that if on graduation students are going into social work jobs, especially statutory social work in areas such as child protection, mental health, and probation, then they need social work placements in social work teams, offices and Justice Departments. It is a consideration that the use of 'defined' social work competencies and skills on a 'community work' orientated placement may not be appropriately matched to a statutory job in a child protection and welfare agency.

In his research Hughes [99] suggests that it is important that new models of placement do not compromise the quality of the learning. This is a sensible agreeable view. Possibly it needs to go further in suggesting that models and especially new models of placement should be 'fit for purpose' or 'fit for work'. Are we getting to a point were social work job advertisements might say 'evidence of placement within professional social work agency desirable'? If so by spreading out what constitutes an acceptable social work placement are we diluting social work placement training by throwing it into a catch all/any agency will do arena? Further research is needed and Registration bodies (where they exist) need to set watertight requirements for standards of social work education. Given the demands on professional social workers, core placement training is of utmost importance given the challenges and complexities in the field.

Social work students *need* to know they are wanted on placement and will obtain whatever opportunities are available to learn and showcase their talents. Practice teachers and agencies *need* to be engaged with colleges and universities in a planning process long before the student arrives. Placement agencies *need* a reciprocal arrangement with higher education establishments. Universities *need* to have a 'What can we do for you?' approach to the agencies. Can we offer you Continuing Professional Development in the form of in-service training days? Can we come to your team meeting and talk about the option to be involved in social work student education? Can we offer you reduced admission rate to some of our postgraduate courses? Can we talk with the Management team of the Agency to put our argument forward regarding why it would enhance this agency to be involved in social work education? 'Why not come in and run your development day or team meeting here at the University?'

Obviously, practice placements can be a limited resource; there is always the understanding and empathy towards social work agencies that are too busy, too stressed, in cramped conditions and those where there is no history of taking students. If it is not possible to start at the bottom and work up, then start at the top and work down. At NUI Galway we have tackled the difficulties of acquiring placements through a multitude of approaches. Careful building of relationships over the years and acceptability of situations frequently led to 'If you can't take a student this year, maybe next year. We'll keep in touch. Let us know if there is anything we can do to help'. Expert planning, *inclusive relationships, extended practice teacher

training, student comprehension of expectations and supervision models are crucial to the work of acquiring, supporting and maintaining placements. There is no panacea but it is a great challenge.

All stakeholders in placement are involved in building and assuming professional identities and roles. How they see this experience and how they best decide to explore and navigate the private, professional and ideal self, can be peer shared and act as a catalyst for others throughout the placement training experience.

The boat once steered by the trainee is coming back to shore. There is no guarantee what tomorrow will bring but reciprocity, inclusiveness and creative approaches will help bring us the educated enlightened social workers of tomorrow.

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Chapter 8

Mitigating Health Inequalities of Socially Vulnerable in South Korea: Role for Social Work

Jung Youn Park, Eun Jin Lee, Ji Young Park and Soo Hyun Sung

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to develop a social work education strategy for mitigating health inequalities among the socially vulnerable. The limitations of the healthcare approach to health promotion and health inequality, which we examined through the health belief model describing an individual's health behavior, emphasize the prevention of diseases that have not yet occurred or are likely to occur, healthcare management for them, and the functions and role of the community in the process, based on the individual's spontaneity to practice health behaviors. Therefore, to compensate for these limitations, it is deemed necessary to add healthcare curriculum, such as public health, social epidemiology, and etiology, to the existing curriculum of social work based on an in-depth understanding of social vulnerability and social environment as well as the importance of preventing and managing diseases.

Keywords: social work, healthcare, health belief model, health inequality, socially vulnerable

1. Introduction

The rapid development of capitalism due to industrialization has improved socioeconomic levels around the world as well as increased the nation's interest in the level of people's health. The concept of health inequality that emerged from this process has served as an opportunity to establish and implement healthcare policies based on it, along with increasing global interest in the relationship between health and socioeconomic inequalities since the 1980s.

Although the concept of health inequality varies from scholar to scholar, the concepts of Whitehead [1] and the International Society for Equity in Health (2002) are generally used. According to Whitehead [1], "Inequality in health is a term commonly used in some countries to indicate systematic, avoidable and important differences" [1]. On the other hand, according to the definition by the International Society for Equity in Health, health inequality is "The absence of systematic and potentially remediable differences in one or more aspects of health across populations of population subgroups defined socially, economically, demographically, or geographically" [2]. In other words, health differences or gaps among individuals or groups can be caused by various socioeconomic factors, such as income, occupation, education, gender, and residential areas, in addition to the biological characteristics of individuals.

This view of health gradually spread to European countries in the 1990s, and in 2008, the World Health Organization published "Closing the Gap in a Generation: Health Equity Through Action on the Social Determinants of Health," which emphasized that the issue of health inequality should be addressed as a worldwide issue, and developed a strategic interest in healthcare policies and policies based on the current state of health inequality around the world [3–5]. Through these efforts, some countries have achieved partial reductions in health inequality problems, such as maternal-infant mortality [6], child and family health [7], and non-inflammatory diseases [8]. However, despite various efforts and attempts by the healthcare sectors of the world, the problem of health inequality seems to persist [9–11].

On the other hand, considering that the issue of health inequality is mainly a social problem experienced by the socially vulnerable, understanding social work that targets them is believed to provide insight into alleviating health inequalities. In modern society, social vulnerability generally means a group of individuals or such individuals who are excluded, marginalized, or left behind in a capitalist economic system [12]. Therefore, social work strategies for them are focused on socioeconomic support to address or alleviate their current difficulties by direct and continuous interaction with individuals or groups or various training and support programs for re-entry into a capitalist economy. In other words, in addition to direct and indirect support through various policies, support is needed in other community-based ways through direct and continuous relations with the socially vulnerable.

Therefore, in this study, we would like to consider the role of social work to complement the limitations healthcare approaches in order to mitigate the problem of health inequality among the socially vulnerable.

2. Methodology

In this study, we would like to explore the limitations of the existing healthcare approach to health inequality of socially vulnerable group through a literature review and present the role of social work to complement it. To that end, we will first look at the WHO's view of health and its transformation process. This is because it has a huge impact on health-related policies of individual countries by forming healthcare paradigms.

On the other hand, the key to healthcare policies is to encourage an individual to practice health behaviors to maintain or enhance their current health [13]. In the case of South Korea, various efforts have been made to reduce disparity in the 3rd Health Plan 2011–2020 that includes smoking, high-risk drinking, physical activity, and prevalence of obesity and hypertension as indicators to address health inequality based on income levels [14]. The results showed that the gap between the smoking rate and the high-risk drinking rate has somewhat eased, but the gap has widened for the physical activity rate and obesity rate [14]. Based on this, a healthcare approach alone is difficult to induce individuals to practice their health behaviors. Therefore, we would like to explore the theories involved in order to understand the health behaviors of individuals.

3. A healthcare perspective on health

In 1978, the WHO set all human health goals as the attainment by "all the people of the world by the year 2000 of a level of health that will permit them to lead a socially and economically productive life" [15] and began to discuss in earnest the

need for the Alma-Ata Declaration, which centers on the activation of primary healthcare as well as intersectoral collaboration at various levels of society to address health inequalities [16]. The concept of health promotion, which began to be emphasized during this process, started to be perceived as a new strategy to realize people's social responsibility for a healthy future by arbitrating or mediating between individuals and the environment surrounding them [16].

As health promotion was being highlighted as a new approach to healthcare, the traditional approach to healthcare that centered on the treatment of diseases in the past began to change to prevention of diseases [13, 16]. Based on this paradigm shift, the WHO and its members held the first International Conference on Health Promotion in Ottawa, Canada, in November 1986 to establish and publish the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion [17]. In the Ottawa Charter, health promotion is defined as a process that allows people to control and manage their health and health determinants, thereby improving their health. It presents three approach strategies to realize health promotion: "Advocate," "Enable," and "Mediate" as well as the five main areas of activity: "Build healthy public policy," "Create supportive environments," "Strengthen community actions," "Develop personal skills," and "Reorient health services" [17]. The Ottawa charter lays the groundwork for efforts to promote health in all the countries around the world, even today, more than 30 years later [16]. The WHO has since held a world conference on health promotion to reconfirm the basic principles and methodologies of health promotion, and through continuous discussion, it seeks effective and sustainable health promotion approaches to address health issues that are newly encountered with global environments, such as lifestyle and environment changes due to the development of globalization and information and communication technology [16, 18].

Conversely, this shift in the healthcare paradigm, centered on health promotion, also represents a shift from the past paradigm centered on the treatment of acute diseases to a paradigm centered on the prevention and management of chronic diseases [13]. This means that the problems of health inequalities experienced by the socially vulnerable today persist in a paradigm centered on the prevention and management of chronic diseases. So, despite these efforts by the healthcare sector, why does the phenomenon of health inequality persist? To this end, the following section looks at the health belief model, a theoretical framework that describes an individual's health behavior.

4. Health belief model

As national interest in health increased from the 1970s, various models and theories were proposed to predict and explain individual health behaviors. The health belief model describes health behaviors based on individuals' belief in perceived susceptibility, severity, benefits, and barriers to disease [19, 20]. The theory of rational behavior and the theory of planned behavior described health behaviors under the assumption that individuals use relevant information reasonably and systematically before doing anything [21, 22]. The precaution adoption process model explains that individuals go through seven stages of unaware of issue, unengaged by issue, deciding about acting, decided to act, acting, and maintenance until they act to protect their health [23]. On the other hand, the health belief model emphasizes aspects of subjective judgments for individuals to practice health behaviors. However, in contrast, other theories highlight the systematic collection and interpretation of health-related information for subjective judgments of individuals, opinions of others, and the process of decision-making based on it [21–23]. However, considering that the characteristic of the socially vulnerable

group can have a negative impact on the process itself of establishing a basis for subjective judgment, it is considered to be somewhat difficult to explain their health behaviors. Therefore, this study focuses on the health belief model.

The health belief model is a theoretical model developed in the early 1950s by social psychologists from the United States Public Health Service to explain the poorly examined phenomenon of disease prevention or early detection of diseases with no symptoms [19, 20]. Health belief models were subsequently studied by various scholars [20, 24–26], of which Janz and Becker [20] presented the following components of health behavior practice for individuals to prevent and manage diseases.

4.1 Perceived susceptibility

Perceived susceptibility refers to subjective judgments about how much one is exposed to health-threatening factors [20]. For example, the women who think they are less likely to have breast cancer [24, 26].

4.2 Perceived severity

Perceived severity refers to subjective judgments about how dangerous and serious the factors that threaten one's health or the consequences resulting from a disease are [20]. For example, women who believe that mortality increases without breast cancer screening are more likely to perform breast cancer screening [24, 26]. On the other hand, a combination of perceived susceptibility and perceived severity creates perceived threat, which is an influencing factor for predicting health behavior [25].

4.3 Perceived benefit

Perceived benefits refer to subjective judgments on the benefits of the following recommended actions [20]. The more positively a person evaluates the benefits of a health action, the less likely the threat is perceived. For example, a person who thinks that breast cancer screening is more accurate is more likely to go for a checkup than someone who thinks it is less accurate [24, 26].

4.4 Perceived barriers

Perceived barriers mean subjective judgments on the cost, time, and emotions in performing recommended actions [20]. Some people who do not undergo breast cancer screening acknowledge the benefits of the examination but do not act out of fear of the cost and time-consuming examination process [24, 26]. On the other hand, perceived benefits and perceived barriers have a direct effect on health behavior, unlike the two factors discussed earlier [20].

4.5 Cue to action

Cue to action refers to an internal or external stimulus that motivates an individual to perform their own health actions. In this case, internal cues refer to the self-awareness of the symptoms of one's health condition, and external cues refer to the messages sent through the media or by health experts [20]. These behavioral cues increase perceived susceptibility and perceived severity, thus, increasing the intention of action [20].

In addition to the five factors discussed earlier, the health belief model includes perceived threat or demographic/social psychological variables that can affect a

person's health behavior, which provide a direct or indirect incentive to practice health behavior, either individually or by a combination of each factor.

5. Limitations of the healthcare approach to health inequalities among the socially vulnerable

5.1 Paradigm shift from treatment to prevention: emphasis on prevention

As we saw earlier, the approach to health from a healthcare perspective can be seen as an emphasis on the prevention paradigm, namely the formation of conditions that enable control and management of individuals' health and health determinants through the concept of health promotion centered on disease prevention and management. However, based on the view of the health belief model that describes an individual's practice of health behavior, the approach from a healthcare perspective emphasizes prevention of future illnesses and their healthcare management. The limitation of this approach, however, is that while it may increase the likelihood of screening an individual for disease prevention or healthcare, it does not enforce the practice of actual health behaviors. This means that based on perceived health risk factors, the final decision of whether an individual will practice healthy behavior or not is entirely their own [27, 28]. Moreover, given that the problem of health inequality is mainly a social problem experienced by the socially vulnerable, their diverse characteristics [12], such as low socioeconomic status and educational levels, are such that even if they have recognized factors that can negatively affect their health, they are not limited to leading to various tests for disease prevention or implementation of health behaviors for health management.

Therefore, if we look at the phenomenon of health inequality among the socially vulnerable today based on the health belief model, we can think of the healthcare approach that emphasizes the prevention of health inequalities as an approach that reveals its limitations at the point where, despite various efforts and attempts to resolve issues, it leads to health management practices for the prevention of diseases among individuals belonging to socially vulnerable groups. The above is illustrated in **Figure 1**.

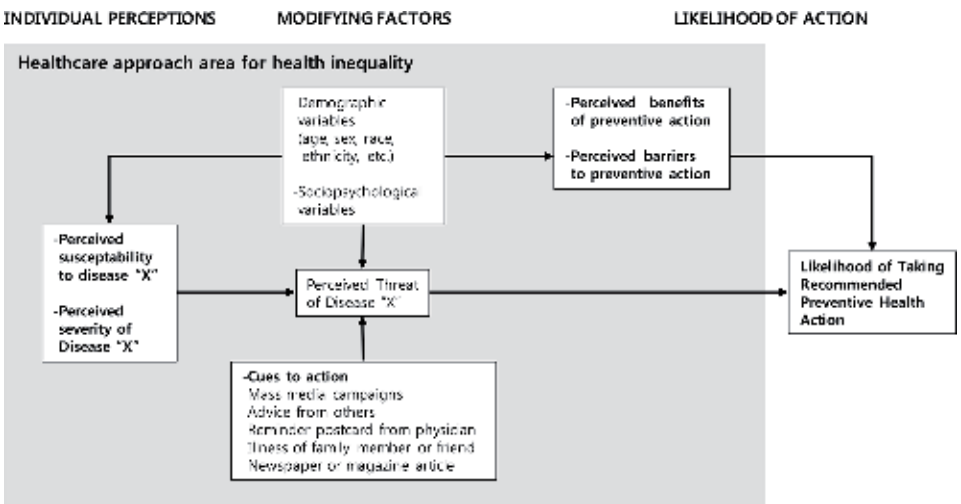

Figure 1.
Basic elements of the health belief model (Janz and Becker [20]). Note: part of the figure has been modified to aid understanding of this study.

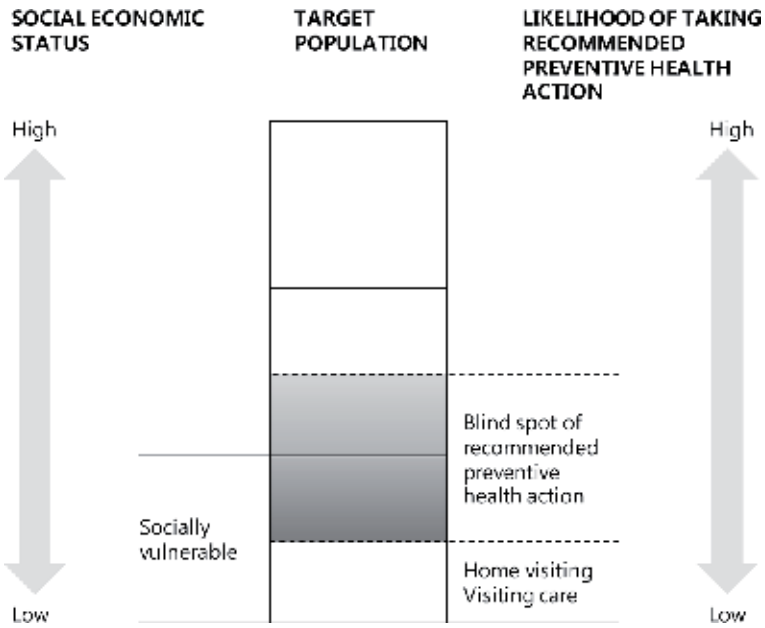

Figure 2.
Blind spot of recommended preventive health action.

Of course, in order to cope with these problems, the government provides various healthcare services for the socially vulnerable, such as medical examinations, visiting care, and home visits, but the related resources are insufficient to cover all aspects of social vulnerability. This is also why communities emphasize on health promotion policies. Thus, the phenomenon of a prevention-oriented healthcare paradigm that emphasizes individual spontaneity for health promotion and a lack of healthcare resources to directly intervene in the practice of individual health behaviors can form a blind spot for the target population (**Figure 2**). Furthermore, such a blind spot regarding healthcare policy can be considered as a major factor for sustaining the phenomenon of health inequality among the socially vulnerable, despite various attempts and efforts to address this issue.

5.2 Lack of understanding of the community: is the community a modern elixir?

The Ottawa Charter, which produced a global consensus on basic strategies and areas of activity for the promotion of health, places specific emphasis on the role of communities in the process of prioritizing, deciding, planning, and carrying out health promotion activities to improve people's health level [17]. Further, the key functions and roles of the community for the promotion of health are to establish a system of related services for improving the health of local residents as well as to encourage active participation by the general public and local residents in local health-related issues and to enhance their ability to address them [16, 17]. On the other hand, the emphasis on communities here is that individuals and families are part of the community [29], that the healthcare paradigm from a past therapeutic perspective has not done much to address the adverse health phenomenon [30], and that health promotion requires collaborative approaches to various areas besides the healthcare sector [31]. Then, what does a community mean? There are many different views of the community, including:

First, to view the community as a unit of political collective action. From this point of view, local communities exist everywhere and proximity to various

activities in daily life is seen as a place where the majority of the members can have political will [32].

Second, to view communities as functional units of production and exchange. The community is an activity space with a concentration of various social functions, including the production and use of social and commercial goods and services, socialization processes, social control mechanisms, opportunities for social participation and civic engagement, and access to mutual assistance [33].

Third, to view the community as a network of relationships or a structure of interaction between individuals. This view highlights two aspects. First, the intimate relationships, the degree to which you let people you know to know you [34, 35]. The other concerns the extent of the relationship, that is, the possibility of being connected to the network of relationships held by others beyond the scope of the community at the administrative district and the possibility of accessing various information, resources, and opportunities beyond the adjacent networks [36–38]. Based on the above, communities and its various possibilities could be considered as an elixir in modern society [39].

On the other hand, the variety of possibilities that communities have means that in order to function as an elixir for the health promotion or address health inequality of local residents, they must be perceived as a concrete object, like a social problem, that can be addressed more specifically. In general, social problems mean that it becomes visible as a social phenomenon [40] or the social condition in which people perceive it as a serious problem and want to improve it [41]. However, as mentioned earlier, the prevention-oriented approach mainly addresses health-related issues that have not yet occurred or are expected to occur in the future, so it can be seen as exposing the limitations of using various resources in the community to enhance the participation and capacity of local residents and to encourage active implementation of individuals' health behaviors. Additionally, such a limit can be considered as another factor that escalates the phenomenon of health inequality, especially among the socially vulnerable.

6. Educational strategies of social work to mitigate health inequalities among the socially vulnerable

Traditionally, social work is primarily targeted at socially vulnerable groups, individuals experiencing exclusion, alienation, or rejection due to lack of productive forces in the capitalist economy. Then, what kind of educational content does the social work that targets them highlight?

The International Association of Schools of Social Work (ISSW) and the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) adopted global standards for education and training of the social work profession through a general meeting held at Adelaide, Australia, in October 2004. The content of the standards to core curricula presented here suggests that students majoring in social work experience four core curriculums [42]:

The first area is the "Domain of the Social Work Profession," which includes the effects of socio-structural inadequacies; discrimination; oppression; social, economic, and political injustices on human functioning and development; knowledge of human behavior and development and of the social environment; critical understanding of the origins and purpose of social work; and the effects of social stability, harmony, interdependence, and collective solidarity on human development [42]. The second area is the "Domain of the Social Work Professional" that includes the development of self-reflective practitioner, the recognition of personal value systems, the recognition of ethical provisions, and sensitivity

based on diversity and their ability to address them [42]. The third area focusses on the "Methods of Social Work Practice," which include assessment, formation of relationships and aid processes, value, ethical principles, application of knowledge and skills, social work research and skills, and field training [42]. The last area is the "Paradigm of the Social Work Profession," which includes human dignity and values, advocacy, empowerment, respect for the rights of service users, tasks and crises along the life cycle, recognition of strengths and potential, respect and recognition of diversity [42].

Considering the above, the general social work education strategy can be thought of as a strategy that focuses on various areas, such as basic development process and socioeconomic support that can affect them through direct and indirect intervention and psychological support for re-entry into the capitalist economy, based on an in-depth understanding of individuals and families or specific groups. One point to be noted here is that the healthcare sector was not included, although social work has specified access to and involvement in various areas that affect their vulnerability as a core curriculum. Based on this, the academic boundaries [43] can be expected to exist, emphasizing healthcare centered on disease prevention and treatment and social work centered on social and psychological support for re-entry into the capitalist economic system. Furthermore, such academic boundaries also mean that healthcare issues, including various social factors, such as health promotion or health inequalities, simply approach health and medical issues in the same way as a team approaches, that does not help much in solving problems [44].

As we saw earlier, the limitations of the healthcare approach to reduce health inequalities have been found in the prevention-oriented policy keynote and lack of understanding of the function and role of the community, which presupposes the willingness of individuals to practice health behaviors. Further, the limitations of this approach to the phenomenon of health inequality can be considered as a factor that continues to this day, despite the various efforts and attempts in the past four decades to resolve it. Therefore, to overcome these limitations, it is deemed necessary to add healthcare-related subjects, such as public health or social epidemiology and etiology to the existing curriculum of social work, which are based on a deep understanding of the social environment and the human nature. Moreover, given that the issue of health inequality is a social problem experienced by the socially vulnerable, the main target of social work, the motivation and monitoring of these people to implement and maintain health behaviors and the possibility of improving the environment of the community and organizing related community resources through social problems can be found in the aforementioned academic and practical features of social work. This, in turn, can be expected to compensate for the limitations of the healthcare approach to reduce the health inequalities that the socially vulnerable experience.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Chapter 9

An Analysis of Salient Aspects of the Research Proposals of Fourth Year Student Social Workers: A Case Study of Class of 2019, University of Limpopo

Pontsho James Mmadi and Sello Levy Sithole

Abstract

Study topic selection and problem formulation are prerequisites in preparing a proposal for conducting research. Writing a research proposal to conduct research (for the first time) is a daunting task for (social work) students. The challenge is enormous despite numerous modules that introduce research to social work students. These problems were noted when student social workers presented their research proposals for the first time: broad and unclear research topics, difficulty in formulating research problems, and conflation of research approaches (qualitative and quantitative). Document analysis method was adopted in order to scrutinize research proposals to identify three key challenges such as topic selection, problem formulation, and research approach at proposal writing stage. A total of 10 fourth year social work students' research proposals were scrutinized. Thematic analysis was used to interpret findings. The study was qualitative in nature and informed by grounded theory as well as socio-cultural theory framework. Recommendations are proffered to mitigate the challenges experienced by social work students.

Keywords: undergraduate social work students, research proposals, University of Limpopo, students, research

1. Introduction and background

Social work in South Africa was introduced in the eighteenth century. Smith [1] reports that the first institution to offer social work in South Africa was the University of Cape Town (UCT) in 1924; and the university only trained white social work students. In 1929, the University of Pretoria (formerly known as Transvaal University College) started training social workers, the University of the Witwatersrand followed in 1937 [1]. These institutions focused exclusively on training white students in compliance with Apartheid education policy. Black social workers received training in 1941 after the establishment of Jan Hofmeyr College, the very first institution to train black social workers in South Africa. The famous graduates of Jan Hofmeyr (School of Social Work) include Winnie Madikizela Mandela, Ellen Kuzwayo, and Joshua Nkomo [1]. Alumni of Jan Hofmeyr School

of Social Work include inter alia Eduardo Chivambo Mondlane (founder member of Mozambique Liberation Front in 1962) and Molapatene Collins Ramusi (social worker, activist lawyer, politician, and author of Soweto my love 1989).

Many other institutions emerged after this, including the *University College of the North* (currently renamed the University of Limpopo) in 1959. At the University of Limpopo (former *University College of the North*) Department of Social Work, social work research module at undergraduate level was introduced in 1996. Prior to that, social workers graduated without having to present a research report or an extended essay.

This chapter reports on research conducted on a four-year undergraduate social work final year module called Research Project (HSKA040) pegged at NQF level 08. The module pursues the following five learning outcomes: (a) identify a research problem and plan the execution of the research project; (b) compile a relevant literature study; (c) appropriately collect data and analyze it; (d) present the research proposal; and (e) report the findings.

This report therefore concentrates on part of the first learning outcome; which involves topic selection, problem formulation, and research approach. In this regard, the researchers report on the outcome of the analysis of students' first draft proposals with special reference to the three constructs, namely topic selection, problem formulation, and research approach as the module's first learning outcome.

2. Statement of the problem

Planning a research project and preparing a proposal has never been a simple process, more especially for undergraduate students. Literature reports a myriad of factors that influence this activity such as blended learning [2]; GDP per capita spending on research [3]; under-preparedness of students [4]; research climate [5, 6] cut and paste [7]; infrastructure [7, 8] as well as climate, role clarity and research service quality [5]. It is not the intention of this work to dwell on these factors, but to report on findings regarding students' written drafts on topic selection, problem formulation, and research approach among others.

Proposal writing for social work undergraduate students is an academic activity that takes place at fourth (final) year level of Bachelor of social work training. Fourth year level is pitched at National Qualification Framework (NQF) level 8 and therefore has to align with the following level descriptors as envisaged in the South African Qualifications Authority [9]:

a. *Scope of knowledge*, in respect of which a learner is able to demonstrate knowledge of and engagement in an area at the forefront of a field, discipline, or practice; an understanding of the theories, research methodologies, methods and techniques relevant to the field, discipline or practice; and an understanding of how to apply such knowledge in a particular context.

b. *Problem solving*, in respect of which a learner is able to demonstrate the ability to use a range of specialized skills to identify, analyze, and address complex or abstract problems drawing systematically on the body of knowledge and methods appropriate to a field, discipline, or practice.

The researchers observed over the years that fourth year social work students at University of Limpopo struggle with writing research proposals to such an extent that their projects would be delayed and often overlap to the following academic year; a year in which they should be graduating, job hunting, or enrolling for

postgraduate studies. Challenges in writing skills could be attributed to the fact that "level descriptors for academic writing are rather vague, and have not been explicitly addressed" [9], a fact that may lead to delayed graduation, failure or eventual dropout for students [6].

The prospect of delay, failure, and eventual dropout caused concern among researchers. Evidently, most of these students are from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds; and spending an extra year on campus due to failing a module adds undesirable financial burdens. Besides, failing a fourth (final) year module also negatively affects the pass and throughput rates of the university, and in worse circumstances may lead to increased drop-out rate [10, 11].

A large body of research describes the following as common hurdles for novice researchers in earlier stages of research (proposal writing): broad and unclear research topics, confusion of research approaches, failure to state problem statement, poor understanding of the subject matter, and inappropriate referencing styles [12, 13]. The latter two issues will be subject of another paper, for now the spotlight will fall on the first three.

Challenges of studying in a second or third language have been reported in literature [4]. Qasem and Zayid [13] also found that undertaking research in a foreign language such as English is a problem for some students. This situation resembles experiences of the researchers in that all students reported in this article are African and English is their third and fourth language, a dimension that further conflates issues at conceptualisation stage. In order to overcome this hurdle, at the University of Limpopo, the Department of Social Work organizes preparatory writing seminars presented by academics from the English Department. This is augmented by students' voluntary and sometimes mandatory use of the Writing Centre whose *raison d'être is* to assist both undergraduate and postgraduate students with language-related issues.

Whereas an earlier study [14] focused on what students said about conducting research for the first time, this study analyzed students' first proposal drafts to identify some of the challenges in starting their research journey.

3. Theoretical framework

This study was guided by the grounded theory. This theory "provides a viable means for scholars and participants to generate a new and emic perspective, and to generate theory that is grounded in the realities of the participants' daily life experiences. A key feature of grounded theory is that it provides for inductive enquiry, a means of generating new theory and new understandings, and requires researchers to identify the research problem from the research participants' perspectives" [15].

On the other hand, researchers could not resist Vygotsky's [16] sociocultural theory to navigate the study. The theory posits that learning is an active process in which learners construct new ideas or concepts based upon their current and past knowledge.

4. Challenges of writing a research proposals for the first time: brief literature review

This section provides a review of pertinent literature regarding challenges and mistakes committed in writing research proposals by students. According to Pardede [17], a student's research proposal is the only document that can "demonstrate that he knows what he is seeking and how to successfully complete his

planned project". The implication is that a research proposal needs to be written skillfully so that a reader, often supervisor, will be able to see how the proposed project will be carried out "scientifically". Nevertheless, based on numerous studies that looked at first hand research proposals, it becomes clear that there are often teething problems [12, 14, 18].

A largescale study of 783 research proposals by Kikula and Quorro [18] found that writing a research proposal among students was not a simple thing in Tanzania. This was shown by students' inability to write clear research topics, presenting the real problem of the intended study, absent and unclear research methodologies. Mat Daud et al., [19] reached a conclusion that writing in a "second/foreign language" lead to anxiety. Qasem and Zayid [14] found that "around 70% of the participants who are writing research or conducting research projects in English, it is one of the predominant challenges for them". This may explain why the previous scholars found that students were unable to write clear research topics in English, or the overall research proposal.

One study argues that the reason students struggle with formulating problem statements in their research proposals may be associated with their own deeds, that is, poor reading habits; where extensive literature studies is not a norm at all [20].

When this is the case, the researchers suspect that students would commit plagiarism [21]; an activity that is likely to land students in trouble since using another person's work without acknowledging the rightful author is unethical [22]. Moreover, researchers hold that by plagiarizing the students would not be reflective and reflexive.

5. Objectives of the study

The study pursued the following objectives:

- To analyze fourth year social work students' research proposals' topic selection, problem formulation, and research approach and
- To generate recommendations for addressing emerging challenges.

6. Methodology

6.1 Research approach and design

A qualitative research paradigm was selected to guide the study through a case study design. The approach was selected since the researchers were not interested in quantifying issues, but to merely have an understanding of the issues at hand [23].

6.2 Population

The University of Limpopo has accommodated "40" fourth year social work students for the academic year 2019.

6.3 Sampling

A total of 10 social work students' first hand research proposals were targeted because they were readily available as a sample. To that end, first hand research

proposals that fourth year social work students had submitted to their respective supervisors for the very first time, and supervisors had not marked them yet were sampled. It is important to note the fact that fourth year social work students at University of Limpopo do research in pairs (or more). Therefore, one research proposal analyzed would have been prepared by more than one student.

6.4 Data collection

Data for this study was gleaned from students' proposals.

6.5 Analysis

Content thematic analysis method was used in analyzing data that was collected by the researchers. The following steps were adhered to in analyzing data [24]:

Phase one: Familiarizing oneself with data. The researchers started by collecting data, thereafter immersed themselves within it by frequently reading and searching for themes.

Phase two: Generating initial codes. After the researchers had familiarized themselves with the raw data, they began synthesizing codes for the first time to identify what was interesting about them [25]. The codes were produced from the data and collated.

Phase three: Searching for themes. Given the plenty of codes identified and collated in the aforesaid phase, a close examination was made to create overarching themes. This was achieved through the use of tables and mind-maps.

Phase four: Reviewing themes. Based on the sizeable number of themes that had emerged, the researchers began to review the themes at hand so as to refine them and remain with the most interesting and salient themes.

Phase five: Defining and naming themes. Having reviewed and refined the themes, the researchers named the emergent themes and paraphrased the most interesting and pertinent content of the data extracts. For each theme, the researchers made an analysis and put it in writing.

Phase six: Producing the report. After identifying a set of fully worked-out themes, the researchers made a final analysis and compiled a report to present findings in the form of themes.

7. Description of the sample

It was not possible to verify the demographic attributes of the sample such as age, gender, and marital status of the participants since researchers simply analyzed documents; and the participants were therefore anonymous. One thing though, is certain, that the sample under investigation was fourth year social work students (**Table 1**).

No. of males	No. of females	Qualifications	Number of years teaching
4	4	Bachelor of Social work	0–10 years
		Master of Social work	11–20 years
		Doctor of Philosophy	21–30 years

Table 1.
Staff supervising students' research projects.

8. Key findings

In line with the objective(s) of the study, the following themes emerged from analysis:

1. Broad and unclear research topics

2. Difficulty in formulating statement of the problem

3. Confusion of research approaches

9. Broad and unclear research topics

It is a common understanding among researchers that an area of investigation needs to be clearly demarcated to be able to meet objective(s) of the study [12]. When this is ignored, the researchers argue that such a study would lack direction. Nevertheless, for some social work students, this is not something to worry about, which then makes a topic not researchable, and ultimately delaying their progress in case the problem is not picked up early (by supervisors) (**Table 2**). Extracts of research topics (problem statements as well as research approaches) from social work students' research proposals are presented in the **Table 2**.

An analysis of social work students' first proposal drafts shows that study topics are broad and not that crystal clear. However, such attempts are really laudable because subsequent submissions coupled with supervision (individual and group) will certainly improve these topics. A look at the first topic "*Challenges faced by youth after leaving Foster Care in Limpopo province*" shows that the scope of the study is broad. This is due to the fact that Limpopo is a province with more than one million people. The province is further divided into several districts and towns, townships as well as villages in each district. Thus, it would be more appropriate for the students to indicate specifically where (village/district) the study will take place, namely, study setting, or targeted population (the name of the province could still be mentioned in the title).

Zooming in on topic 2 *"Factors contributing to family break down [sic] in Sibasa,"* it is clear that the same issues raised in the previous title could still be found. In this case, this title brings about questions because it is not indicated in which province or district Sibasa is found, thus leaving the reader to imagine. This attracts criticism of the topic, which is then likely to cause a delay in the progress of the research proposal. This would consequently delay students' completion of studies on record time.

Topic 3, "*The attitudes, perceptions, and cultural factors that affect the use of contraceptives amongst students at the University of Limpopo.*" As the topic presents itself, it is verbose, confusing and therefore unclear as to what really the students wish to investigate. The topic has three interrelated concepts (attitudes, perceptions and cultural factors). Pursuit of all three may not be to the students' advantage in terms of the time available to conduct this study. The student would be advised to pursue one construct, because research at this stage is not expected to be robust; but rather to expose students to the research process.

Similarly, topic 4 "*Challenges and perceptions on students living with disabilities at University of Limpopo Turfloop campus*" is not different from topic 3, because the students talk about "challenges and perceptions". In essence, perception as an abstract term fits in one umbrella word, namely, challenges. In this case a dissection

	Research topics	Statement of the problem	Research approach
1.	*"Challenges faced by youth after leaving Foster Care in Limpopo province"*	*"Foster care dependents are recipients of foster care grant and upon aging out of Foster Care, it means that no more financial support or security. Other factors contributing to lack of finances are unemployment and dropping out of school. These will result in them having to look for means of getting money for survival. Some will resort to crime, some engaging with 'sugar daddies/mamas' or 'Blessers' or even worse prostitution. This will result in them abusing drugs and alcohol."*	*Qualitative approach*
2.	*"Factors contributing to family break down [sic] in Sibasa"*	*"The research problem for this study is that there are factors contributing to family breakdown at Sibasa community of which majority of families are not aware of whereas minority are aware of those factors contributing to family breakdowns but decide to them for grated (sic) by ignoring them."*	*Qualitative approach*
3.	*"The attitudes, perceptions, and cultural factors that affect the use of contraceptives among students at the University of Limpopo"*	*"The researcher's interest was raised through curiosity of how people; especially university students are still falling pregnant despite the availability of contraceptives. Education on contraceptives and safe sex is given yet they still have unplanned pregnancies due to the overwhelming responsibility and pressure that comes with having a child at a young age. The researcher saw a need to conduct a research on the perceptions that these university students have towards the use of contraceptives and taking precautions when engaging in sexual relationships."*	*Qualitative approach*
4.	*"Challenges and perceptions on students living with disabilities at University of Limpopo Turfloop campus"*	*"It will look to the phenomenon about the challenges faced by students having disability and mostly those who are having motor impairment blind, the challenges they face and how are they working to address such challenges they face academic wise social wise and environmentally. And how other student perceive them."*	*qualitative approach*
5.	*"The effects of divorce among spouses, siblings and in-laws"*	*"With respect to academic and social relationship outcomes (including romantic relationships), adolescence were, however found to be more a risk."*	*Qualitative approach*
6.	*"The effects of bullying on learners at mountain view [sic] secondary school: The teachers [sic] perspective"*	*"Bullied students have difficulty in making friends. They have poor relationships with classmates. Bullies have problem behaviors such as smoking and drinking alcohol. Victims of bullying are weak, shy and anxious; their school performance is poor and lead to absenteeism."*	*Qualitative approach*
7.	*"The effects of alcohol consumption on the academic performance of students in the University of Limpopo"*	*"Students engage in alcohol and drug use to help them cope with academic stress, negative emotions and make them look mature."*	*Qualitative approach*
8.	*"The social effect [sic] of gang violence among the community of Seshego zone 2"*	*"Gangs annoy people through increased level of crime, violence and murder. Members of gangs are more likely dropouts from school, struggle with employment and abuse drugs and alcohol. Tax payers forced to contribute to their welfare through community assistance programmes."*	*Qualitative approach*
9.	*"Experiences of child headed [sic] families regard [sic] to Social work services at Mankweng"*	*"Such children or households experience usually high level of psychological distress because they are exposed to more stressful events and more on-going strain in a form of having no income... I will therefore find reasons for it to be investigated in order to understand and know more."*	*Qualitative approach*

	Research topics	Statement of the problem	Research approach
10.	*"Experiences of foster parents in Mapapila Village"*	*"Some foster parents lack support from families. Comparison of the behaviors between their own children and those they are fostering it (sic) creates psychological conflicts and they hardly share their experiences because of the stigma in our societies of that when you correct the behavior of the child that is not yours you do not love them or you are punishing them."*	*Qualitative approach*

Table 2.
Research topic, statement of the problem, and research approach.

of the topic *per se* implies that social work students wish to investigate the "broad challenges" that disabled students encounter on campus, which axiomatically would be linked to certain cultural views or "perceptions". Hence the term "challenges" in case of this study may be representative of myths and perceptions.

As for topic 5 on *"The effects of divorce among spouses, siblings and in-laws."* In terms of family law, "*spouses, siblings and in-laws"* are broadly referred to as extended family. Thus this topic is verbose and may simply be trimmed down to extended family (where everyone in the family tree is catered for). Therefore, from topic 1 to 5 it is evident that the research topics are broad. That notwithstanding, the students could be commended for having developed a "scientific consciousness" about social problems in their own communities. This of course would dovetail with the tenets of sociocultural theory, that students' learning is influenced by their current and past knowledge.

Topic 6: *"The effects of bullying on learners at mountain view [sic] secondary school: The teachers [sic] perspective."* Whereas the topic may sound fair, however, the effects of bullying may be psychological, physical and so forth. This means the students would be advised to be specific. Interestingly, all topics from 5 to 8 seek to study "effects" of a certain phenomenon, not to mention the fact that they are much related/interrelated. For example, *effects of divorce among parents* may be observed to result in bully children in schools; expanding to alcohol abuse by students (children); students forming or joining gangs and so on, which interestingly becomes a vicious circle. Thus, one study (e.g. on effects of divorce among spouses) may factor in all effects sought to be studied by other social work students. One could also mention that the topics are more towards social science and show no bent towards social work. Social work is an applied discipline, and one would not be satisfied with identifying effects of phenomena without intervention.

Lastly, both topics 9 and 10 look at the *experiences* of child-headed families and foster care parents. The two may be viewed as "antonyms", because child-headed families imply that children stay in the house without parents, whereas foster parents play a role of parenting in the case of children without biological parents. Therefore, it is highly likely that one study (child-headed families) will have similarities with the other, not to mention the fact that both studies will be undertaken in the same province. Apart from this, one would learn that this study titled "*Experiences of child headed [sic] families regard [sic] to Social work services at Mankweng"* is ambiguous, therefore unclear. On the face of it, the grammar is incorrect.

10. Difficulty in formulating statement of the problem

The analysis showed that social work students struggle with presentation of a problem statement in their research proposals; a finding that corroborates a study

conducted by Sithole [14] at University of Limpopo. It came out quite clear that the students present solutions in the problem statement instead of presenting the *real problem*, which in essence is the one that warranted the research proposal.

A topic on "*The effects of bullying on learners at mountain view [sic] secondary school: the teachers (sic) perspective*" was proposed. However, the students instead of adhering to the problem statement of the subject, they get sidetracked. Here follows an extract to demonstrate this:

> *"Bullying can be physical, such as when a learner is kicked, pushed or punched. It can also be verbal; for example when a learner or leaners spread malicious gossip about another learner with intention to make them suffer emotionally. Other forms of bullying include emotional bullying, when a learner makes comment of the personal characteristics of other learners such as disability or ethnicity, with the intention of making those learners feel uncomfortable about themselves."*

A close scrutiny of the above extract makes it very clear that the students are now explaining forms of bullying and how such happens, rather than sticking to what the problem is. Another part of the problem statement from the same study title reads as follows:

> *Bullied students have difficulty in making friends. They have poor relationships with classmates. Bullies have problem behaviours such as smoking and drinking alcohol. Victims of bullying are weak, shy and anxious; their school performance is poor and lead to absenteeism.*

One could raise the question, if these are the effects of bullying, what do the students then wish to know? Perhaps, the student would obviate this question by justifying in the statement of problem why it is necessary to conduct this study in Mountain View school. Reasons such as the following could be used as justification: the demographics of previous studies are completely different from what obtains in Mountain View school; previous studies used a different research approach, methods, theoretical framework/conceptual framework.

In another research proposal titled "*Factors contributing to family break down [sic] in Sibasa,*" it was found that students commit the same mistake others had committed in the previous study (on bullying).

> *"It was observed that there are countless numbers of families facing family breakdown in Sibasa community. This study will be conducted in order to produce knowledge to understand the factors contributing to family breakdown at Sibasa community. Previous research has established that family breakdown is caused by various factors such as, domestic violence, death of a family member, socioeconomic, gender inequality, and difference in lifestyle."*

Perhaps the students' statement of the problem could be phrased differently, that:

> *Previous studies acknowledge domestic violence, death of a family member, socioeconomic, gender inequality, and difference in lifestyle as causes of family breakdown, and the student wishes to find out if break down in Sibasa is caused by the same factors or are there other factors that literature did not report on.*

As it could be clearly seen in the extract, the students state the significance of their proposed study under a section where strictly problem statement should be discussed.

11. Research approaches

Interestingly, in all social work research proposals analyzed, it was found that students chose uniform research approaches, namely, qualitative approach. It may not be difficult to fathom why these students choose the same research approaches. The researchers do suspect that such a case could be caused by peer pressure, if not students' supervisors' influences on how to write a research proposal (that will not prolong one's stay on campus as a student). The researchers observed the fact that at times supervisors meet with students before writing "first time proposals" to discuss issues related to proposal writing. Thus, it is likely that supervisors might have an influence on the choice of methodology/approach that these social work students chose.

Moreover, with the background that fourth year social work students usually have a high workload [14], then they are more likely to (be influenced) to choose a research methodology (even a topic) that would not delay completion of their studies. Given the fact that fourth year social work students begin their research projects nearly at the beginning of their second semester, where they have only 6 months (or less) to complete their studies (and every student would wish to complete his/her studies on (record) time) (**Table 3**).

Researchers note that some social work students struggle to differentiate on the application of qualitative and quantitative research. This can be seen in the (above) table that: on number 1 the students mentioned that their approach will be qualitative but their data collection tools/method is quantitative in nature. The researchers mention this because "close-ended and questionnaire" are tools for quantitative research. Again, the students without stating in the approach section that their study will adopt a mixed method research design, they go on to say that "*for the closed-ended questions, the quantitative research method will be used.*" In the second row of the table, number 2, it is clear that a qualitative research approach was selected; however, the students talk about questionnaires and yielding "*...responses that are usually easy to tabulate or score...*"; concepts that are completely quantitative in nature and intending to measure certain occurrences/phenomenon, which is not what qualitative research pursues (namely, understanding phenomenon).

In the last row number 3, the same mistakes that students committed in other research proposals (row 1 and 2) can be found, that questionnaires are going to be used to collect data, whereas the selected research approach is qualitative, therefore interviews, observations, and focus groups seem to be the (only) choice for the students.

Research approach	Data collection method
1. *"The research approach will be the* **qualitative research** *paradigm"*	*"The data will be collected by means of a structured (closed – ended) questionnaire and open ended questions. For the closed – ended questions, the quantitative research method will be used"*
2. "**Qualitative research approach** *will be adopted for the purpose of this study"*	*"Questionnaires will also be used as a data collection method for this study. Questionnaires yield responses that are usually easy to tabulate or score and the resulting data are easy to analyze (Patten, 2017)"*
3. *"As we have stated the study will be* **qualitative** *in a sense that it purpose is to try and present data in a holistically view of a social phenomenon Which in this case is disability (sic)"*	*"Questionnaire is going to be the tool for collecting data, because it gives those people who are shy an opportunity to full express (sic) themselves without being watched... Questioners are easy to answer within a single day (sic) you could reach the whole targeted population"*

Table 3.
Research approach and data collection method.

12. Conclusion

Writing a proposal in preparation for conducting research is often overwhelming for undergraduate students who are confronted with this task for the first time. The challenge is more than the mundane assignment, tests, and quizzes. Unlike what students are expected to do generally at undergraduate level, most students would be expected to translate knowledge into praxis. For those students who did not master the research material well, more especially the basic research concepts, the translation of knowledge gathered in lecture halls to an applied context is daunting.

Students of course react differently to the challenge. Others would stick it out, burn the candle on both ends to ensure that mastery of the content takes place. These students normally present proposals with genuine structural or content weaknesses which would be corrected on subsequent supervision sessions with the lecturers. Inevitable delays notwithstanding, these students would learn and internalize the research concepts and apply them even beyond their undergraduate classes to doctoral level. On the flip side of the coin, one has a group of students who are uncomfortable with challenges and find an easier (shorter) way around preparing the proposal through cut and paste, reproduce and plagiarize the entire proposal from the internet or whatever source, or ask a friend or whoever to do it for them in return for cash or kind. These students produce very "impressive" proposals at first attempt, but check them in your Master's class the following year, they are nowhere to be found.

Consistent with the underpinnings of sociocultural theory, almost all students wish to research on issues that they are confronted with daily. The setback though is that undergraduate students almost invariably write proposals on what was researched before, particularly within the Department of Social Work. Of all the topics presented in this study, surely there is a research report lying somewhere on campus on a similar study. There does not seem to be growth and creativity, notwithstanding the fact that extended essays were introduced more than 15 years ago at fourth year level.

As noted, quite a few topics are misaligned to the research approaches; however, the hiatus between the two is easy to bridge. As far as this aspect is concerned, one could acknowledge growth and development. At introduction of extended essays, helping the students align their study title, problem statement or research question was a challenge.

A more worrying factor, associated with the previous one is the proclivity towards providing solutions where a problem statement is required. Perhaps social work training makes it difficult to stay and confront a problematic situation. In order to resolve this seemingly perennial problem, students would be advised to wear science caps and put down therapist orientation when they conduct research. Such a feat may also be difficult to attain when one considers the fact that the students are deeply immersed in qualitative research.

From all the proposals analyzed, the research approach in each is qualitative. This could be that students find it easier to grasp qualitative methods because of their nature and resonance with most modules in the humanities. Another reason could be that supervisors are more entrenched in qualitative methods and influence students to select same. However, a balanced student must be literate in both qualitative and quantitative research.

Language issues were noted from some proposals. Yet these were not so serious, and could be easily ironed out. For students whose first language is not English, one could safely infer that the proposals read fairly well, and for this feat the seminar hosted by colleagues in the English Department and the Writing Centre are commended.

Coupled with language issues, is inclination to pursue more than one construct, such as perceptions, attitudes, and behavior. For purposes of research at this stage of the students' development, one would advise that one issue/construct/problem be pursued instead of a multiplicity.

Finally, and perhaps more controversial is that the student topics were largely social science based and never transcended into social work discipline. Social work is a practice based profession and goes beyond analysis of problems to intervention. The adage "social work is about social work issues" is more applicable here.

13. Recommendations

Based on what the study found, it is recommended that:

- Students begin their research projects much earlier than their fourth year for more time to come to grips with research.
- Students proposals must be swayed towards social work research.
- Continued hosting of English seminars and referral to the Writing Center is encouraged.
- Students need to be exposed to quantitative research methods.

14. Limitations of the study

The study relied solely on analysis of fourth year social work students' research proposals. As such, students' personal experiences on writing research proposals could not be explored such as reasons for choosing uniform research approaches, topics and so on. Moreover, the study was only carried out at University of Limpopo, Department of Social Work, hence its findings may not generalize social work students from other institutions (but may shed some light). Lastly, there was a shred of literature to consult that focused specifically on the subject investigated.

15. For further research

For future research, the following may be considered:

- An empirical study of fourth year social work students' views and challenges of writing research proposals for the first time at University of Limpopo.

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Conflict of interest

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Chapter 10

Alaska Natives in Recovery and Indigenous Cultural Generativity: Sharing Redemptive Narratives to Improve Quality of Life

Jordan P. Lewis

Abstract

This chapter explores motivating and maintenance factors for sobriety among older AN adult participants (age 50+) from across Alaska. Alaska Native Elders are motivated to abstain from, or to quit drinking alcohol through spirituality, family influence, role socialization and others' role modeling, and a desire to engage in indigenous cultural generative activities with their family and community. A desire to pass on their accumulated wisdom to a younger generation through engagement and sharing of culturally grounded activities and values, or indigenous cultural generativity, is a central unifying motivational and maintenance factor for sobriety. The social work implications of this research indicates that family, role expectations and socialization, desire for community and culture engagement, and spirituality are central features to both Alaska Native Elders' understanding of sobriety, and more broadly, to their successful aging. Social workers can use motivational interviewing techniques to explore Elders cultural motivations to encourage and support relapse prevention and support older Alaska Native adults' desire to quit drinking and attain Eldership in their family and community. Sobriety can put older Alaska Native adults on a pathway to successful aging, in positions to serve as role models for their family and community, where they are provided opportunities to engage in meaningful indigenous cultural generative acts; roles they have learned about across their lifetime.

Keywords: generativity, successful aging, positive aging, strengths-based aging, social work, rural, relapse prevention

1. Introduction

In recent decades, numerous studies have documented problems associated with drinking alcohol among American Indians and Alaska Native peoples, however, little research has focused on developmental factors and whether or not they would contribute to Alaska Native sobriety and relapse prevention [1–6]. Some research has focused on the developmental stages and the appropriate treatment methods for each stage, with a primary focus on young adults and identity formation, and this chapter will build upon this work with a focus on alcohol treatment and recovery for older adults. This chapter will discuss the unique characteristics and experiences

of Alaska Native people, how Alaska Native Elders achieve Eldership in their family and community and fulfill the role expectations in their family and community, and the role of generative acts and behaviors in their recovery narratives. This chapter will conclude with a discussion of motivational interviewing with older adults and how it can be used to help elders completing treatment to find their motivations through indigenous cultural generative acts and behaviors, which will serve as the foundation of a peer-based relapse prevention program for Alaska Natives and other indigenous populations of all ages.

1.1 Alaska Native peoples

The State of Alaska is two times the size of Texas and is home to over 700,000 people and 15% of those self-identify as Alaska Native [7], which are divided into five major groupings, including the Aleuts, Northern Eskimos (Inupiat), Southern Eskimos (Yup'ik Eskimo), Interior Indians (Athabascan), and Southeast Coastal Indians (Tlingit/Haida/Tsimshian). These groupings are based on cultural and linguistic similarities of people living in various regions of the state [8]. Each of these cultural groups are distinct, consisting of complex kinship networks, developed subsistence hunting and gathering practices and technologies, and unique languages, belief systems, art, music, storytelling, spirituality, and dance traditions to name a few [9]. Roderick details the commonalities among the Alaska Native cultural groups, including their relationship and connection to the environment. They honor both the land and waters upon which their lives depend, have respect for the fish and animals, and value community over individuality, sharing with others, and respecting and learning survival skills from their Elders [9].

According to the 2010 Census, there are 12,318 Athabascans, 7696 Aleuts, 20,941 Inupiat Eskimos, 9996 Tlingit/Haida/Tsimshian, and 27,329 Yup'ik Eskimos living in the State of Alaska (www.census.gov).

The older adult population is growing rapidly in the United States, with high rates in tribal communities. With this growth of the elders in Alaska Native, reservation, and urban communities comes the need for age appropriate treatment programs. Following Erik Erikson's stages of human development [10], this paper discusses the role of generativity (seventh stage) in the recovery process for AN older adults and how this developmental stage can be integrated into alcohol treatment for Alaska Native and other Alaska Native peoples to enable them to quit drinking and become role models for their families and communities. This chapter attempts to discuss the importance of generativity and redemptive narratives in the role development of "Elders" in tribal communities and argues for the incorporation of this developmental stage into a treatment program to prevent relapse for Alaska Native older adults struggling with alcohol use disorders and improve their quality of life.

Alaska Native community partners have repeatedly advocated for a shift from a problem-based to a strengths-based model of relapse prevention in alcohol treatment. Rather than focusing on problem behaviors and reasons why people drink and cannot recover, this approach highlights individuals and subgroups successful treatment outcomes or who have been protected from active substance use problems [11]. Rather than focusing on failures in alcohol treatment and recovery (e.g., relapse), community partners are highlighting reasons for sobriety and older adults sharing their recovery journey. This shift in focus was spearheaded by tribal leaders and researchers in Alaska in direct response to the Barrow Alcohol Study and the impending damage of this study on the lives of Alaska Natives. Obtaining a better understanding of those who are successful in their recovery contributes to our understanding of the protective factors from alcohol use disorders [3, 4, 12]

and guide the development of alcohol intervention approaches built upon strengths found in the redemptive narratives. This need to pass along experiences and stories to serve as examples of recovery is one form of generativity, which Erik Erikson's seventh stage of human development. In particular, it is important to highlight cultural strengths that exist in native communities; these strengths include values based having a desire to pass on their experiences, wisdom, lessons, and cultural values and beliefs [11], specifically those experiences related to their experiences while drinking, their journey to recovery, and how they use those past experiences to help others on their own journey. We will refer to these as generative acts and behaviors.

2. Definition of AN Elder

A particularly important distinction in the later life role for Alaska Native older adults shared with many other American Indian and indigenous groups is that of Elder. In this paper, the term "Elder" is capitalized to differentiate this. In indigenous communities, community and family members respect their Elders, seek them for their knowledge, skills, and history, and this cultural convention distinguishes those who have practiced subsistence activities (gathering and harvesting traditional foods), engaged in healthy behaviors to maintain physical, mental, and spiritual health, taught others, and served as an integral part of their community as role models and leaders [13]. In this way, the role socialization that occurs across the lifespan that enables a community member to become an Elder in Alaska Native communities is incompatible with problem drinking.

This concept of *elder*, according to Erikson [14], was formulated in our middle years, a time when we had no intention of imagining ourselves as old. Erikson [14] goes on to state, "One could still think in terms of 'elders,' the few wise men and women who quietly lived up to their stage-appropriate assignment and knew how to die with some dignity in cultures where long survival appeared to be a divine gift to and a special obligation for a few" (p. 62). The lifespan of Alaska Native Elders today continues to increase with improvements in health care technology and services, and this longer lifespan may have a direct impact on the recognition and respect of Elders in rural communities [15]. How elders are viewed in society today is vastly different from the past, and our views of the elderly will continue to shift with social and cultural changes. In addition to changes in how society views its elders, family dynamics are shifting.

2.1 Generativity

The psychoanalyst Erik Erikson developed a theory of affective, or emotional, development complementary to the developmental theory of Sigmund Freud, who also studied human development. Erikson identified eight stages of development, and this chapter focuses on the seventh one, adulthood, which includes the concept of generativity, or leading the next generation [14]. During this stage of development, the individual is focused on being a contributing member of society and concerned for the wellbeing of future generations. Lerner [16] explained that during this stage of development an individual successfully plays the role society expects of him (role expectation). More specifically, if they are contributing and producing what is expected, they will experience a sense of generativity. Generativity, broadly defined, refers to not only the creation of children, but also to the production of things and ideas through work. Most of Erikson's work, however, focused on the generation of children. Notably, Erikson does not require that individuals have their own children to achieve, or experience, the benefits of generativity.

The concept of generativity is important in Alaska Native cultures, which they refer to as caring for the future, or seventh, generation. It is important to note that generativity is a personal resource given to others and is not used to eliminate the elders' own stress and life events [17], but instead is used to improve the quality of society, such as its role in redemptive narratives and alcohol recovery. Erikson's understanding of generativity is in direct contrast to how mainstream Americans emphasize our independent achievements to the extent that people become involved in themselves and their successes and neglect the responsibility of caring for others [18].

As stated earlier, generativity, or engaging in generative behaviors and acts, is important in most indigenous cultures, including Alaska Natives, which focuses on caring for the future, or seventh, generation; the youth and future of indigenous communities. For example, we need to remain sober and share our recovery story and serve as role models, not just for our children, but for the seven generations (seventh generation) ahead of us.

Spicer [19] found in his study that American Indian and Alaska Natives understood their role of helping family and community gave them a sense of purpose and replaced drinking with healthier behaviors. Burman [20] found that American Indian and Alaska Native individuals in recovery wished to be role models for others in and out treatment, sharing their experiences drinking and after becoming sober in hopes they will provide an example of life without alcohol, but if they choose to drink, or struggle with alcohol, they know someone they can talk with if they are struggling.

Most older adults, regardless of gender, race, or ethnicity believe generativity is important to achieve a sense of purpose, feeling that one has something valuable to give to society and is able to help others. Keyes and Ryff [17] explained that these feelings support and encourage social engagement of older adults as well as enabling them to contribute to the wellbeing of their family and community, leading to continued engagement in meaningful activities and events, contributing to the Elders' sense of purpose and generative development [5, 21–23]. Spicer's [19] study explored recovery as a cultural process involving restoration of the cultural self, concluding that drinking is incompatible with a proper way of life for American Indian and Alaska Native people, and that through abstaining, people in recovery were able to restore themselves to this proper American Indian and Alaska Native way of life and serve as role models for others, and "live life as it was meant to be" ([24], p. 209). Another aspect of this development is the redemptive narrative; taking past negative experiences, reflecting on them and finding purpose and meaning in those negative experiences, and highlighting the lessons learned and positive outcomes of a negative event, such as receiving a DUI or being jailed for public intoxication to educate others and help them to avoid similar challenges on their own journey or develop their redemptive narrative.

Generativity, in Erikson's terms, encompasses aspects of human development that echoes various indigenous cultural values and beliefs, including teaching the future generations and passing on their skills and knowledge to preserve their legacy. This understanding of generativity is limited in scope and does not possess the cultural values and practices Alaska Native Elders consider important for aging well, including recovery from alcohol. To weave these indigenous cultural values into Erikson's understanding of generativity, my colleague and I defined indigenous cultural generativity as "any act of an older adult where they pass on traditional values, subsistence practices, language, beliefs, and any other activity that preserves and passes on the culture of the family and community" ([25], p. 218). What makes indigenous cultural generativity unique is that Elders engage in generative behaviors and acts to preserve the history, language, and cultural values and beliefs

of an entire, family, community, culture, and way of being for seven generations and not solely to preserve the legacy of one individual Elder. More specifically, Alaska Native Elders are generative, and encourage their family and community to be generative, to ensure their native way of life, indigenous ways of knowing and being, the land and subsistence practices, and their family and community are healthy and seven generations from today possess the skills and knowledge to grow old and become healthy Elders.

A segment of the Alaska Native population struggle with alcohol use disorders across the lifespan, starting when they are younger, and as they grow older, their continued struggle with alcohol prevents them from enjoying their later years, prohibiting them from aging successfully, and filling the role expectations of Elders, including culturally generative acts. These acts include teaching arts and crafts, native language, and subsistence gathering and harvesting, and on a deeper level, the underlying values and worldview of their culture, as well as sharing their positive and negative experiences with alcohol and recovery. Such findings regarding what Alaska Native Elders consider having worked for them can influence future recovery programs in understanding what motivated them to quit problem drinking and what protects their sobriety. This knowledge can guide development of culture-specific alcohol treatment approaches, and more broadly, alcohol prevention strategies using redemptive narratives and generative acts and behaviors.

3. Community engagement and successful aging

The Alaska Native community serves an important role in the Elders' lives. Community engagement provides the Elders with a sense of purpose and a role in the community [26]. The quality of life for elders is directly related to the quality of their social network [27], which is an important aspect of the lives of the Alaska Native Elders. The roles Elders hold in their community also contribute to their sense of generativity; almost every Elder discusses the importance of having opportunities to pass down their knowledge to others. Alaska Native communities and families value their Elders and understand the importance of their wisdom and experience, providing opportunities for them to participate and educate those who were interested [17]. The ability to forge connections with others (i.e., family, community) is a result of hope and optimism, healing, and empowerment [13]. To connect with others is to find roles to play with others, such as serving as a sponsor or role model of others in recovery [25]. These relationships can be strengthened by discussing common experiences, such as drinking or experiencing other mental illnesses. Being provided opportunities to serve as a role model for others with the same diagnosis brings people together and allows them to be empathic listeners.

3.1 Generative concern

The motivation to be generative emanates from inner desires and cultural demand and is reflected in the person's level of generative concern [28]. Generative concern predicted life satisfaction, but generative behavior did not [28]. Elders' generative concern stems from their desire to educate and guide the next generation [10] to ensure they live healthy and productive lives that are meaningful. Alaska Native Elders share concerns of the youth with the introduction of technology (e.g., television, internet, cellphones), and how their identity is split in two worlds (Indigenous and Western) and this leads to lack of engagement and sense of identity and purpose. Generative concern, or concern for the future generations

(seventh generation), stems from a generative commitment, which is enhanced by their generative concern.

Research has consistently demonstrated that self-reported generative concern shares a significant, positive relationship with measures of life satisfaction, self-esteem, happiness, and a sense of coherence [29–32]. In addition to generative behaviors and actions, individuals also develop their redemptive narrative, which they share with others, such as those struggling with alcohol use disorders. Generativity, in the context of alcohol use and misuse, relates to transforming negative events in life into something more positive. Individuals make use of generativity to redeem themselves as part of their generative efforts, as well as pass on these lessons and experiences to others. In the alcohol and prisoner literature, these redemptive narratives also involve ex-substance misusers to act as supporters or mentors to help current users with their substance misuse problems as one means of recompense.

4. Motivational interviewing

Some researchers have applied Erikson's ideas around stages of human development and indicate that alcohol prevention is best implemented during adolescence to help them resolve role confusion and achieve a positive identity [33]. Researchers also note that prevention programming needs to be developmentally appropriate and target behavioral irregularities at specific developmental stages that might be indicative of future substance abuse [33]. Many of the older adults in tribal communities have undergone shifts in identity and battle with addiction and other mental health conditions, preventing them from fulfilling their role of "Elder." A majority of the Elders have a strong desire to teach their grandchildren, as well as others in their community, and addiction has been a barrier. Tapping into this generative desire of Alaska Native Elders, working with them to explore their motivations to quit drinking and the maintenance factors, we can develop motivations for recovery and support these Elders to fulfill this stage of development and enable them to become role models, teachers, leaders, and grandparents; all of these roles are incompatible with alcohol misuse.

Motivational interviewing (MI) is a style of behavior change counseling developed originally to prepare people to change substance use behaviors [34, 35], by facilitating exploration and resolution of ambivalence [36]. Miller [35] conceptualized motivations as a state of readiness for change, rather than a personality trait. MI is a method defined by Rollnick and Miller [37] as a directive, client-centered style of counseling that helps clients to explore and resolve ambivalence about changing their drinking behaviors. As a state, motivation may fluctuate over time or from one situation to another, and can be influenced to change in a particular direction [35, 38]. While using client-centered techniques to build trust and reduce resistance, the provider focuses on increasing readiness for change [39].

Rollnick and Miller [37] distinguish between the MI principles and the "spirit" of MI, which is important, which means being with the clients. Within the spirit of MI, readiness to change is not seen as a client trait, but a "fluctuating product of interpersonal interaction ([37], p. 327), and motivation to change is viewed as something which is evoked in the client, rather than imposed [38]. Using an empathic style, it is the therapist's task to create and amplify any discrepancy between the client's present behavior and important goals, resulting in cognitive dissonance [38, 40, 41]. Listening reflectively and eliciting motivational statements from clients, examining both sides of client's ambivalence and

reducing resistance by monitoring clients' readiness and not pushing for change prematurely is one the primary principles of MI [34].

MI aims to support self-efficacy by seeing the client as a valuable resource for finding solutions to problems. However, while the client is seen as responsible for choosing and carrying out personal change, MI also acknowledges that, at the same time, the client must have a belief in their ability to change [38]. Miller and Rollnick [42], recommend the MI therapist focus on increasing the client's belief in their ability to change, although they do not give suggestions about how this can be achieved apart from acknowledging successful behavior change in the past [38]. MI aims to alter how a client sees, feels about, and means to respond to the problematic behavior. The ambivalence is resolved by focusing on the client's wants, expectations, beliefs, fears, and hopes, with particular emphasis on the inconsistencies between these and the problematic behavior [38].

4.1 Alaska Native older adults and motivational interviewing

Although a substantial body of literature exists affirming the efficacy of motivational interviewing to behavior change, very little research focuses on its use with older adults [43]. Only one study was identified that examined the effect of MI on alcohol consumption among older adults. Gordon et al. [44] examined the effect of brief interventions on hazardous drinking behavior among older adults aged 65 and older. Numerous studies have demonstrated that MI has been used successfully with other populations and it appears the non-authoritarian approach and emphasis on personal choice is likely to be acceptable with Alaska Natives who seek self-determination and self-empowerment [38]. Longshore et al. [45], for example, have included MI in a culturally congruent intervention for African Americans, stating that MI's emphasis on personal choice, and avoidance of advice giving and confrontation as reasons for their view.

Although limited in number, MI studies conducted with older adults highlight the potential of this approach for achieving important behavioral changes in older clients. Given the serious negative effects of problematic drinking on the health and wellbeing of older adults, such evidence should be considered and tested with Alaska Native Elders. These studies suggest that MI techniques are both acceptable to older adults and are capable of producing change in a variety of health behaviors in a relatively brief period of time [43]. One of the significant features of MI is the brief time period within with documented changes have occurred in clients' lives.

Motivational interviewing (MI) [35] is an appropriate treatment method to be used with Alaska Native Elders because of its ability to shift focus from exploring the intrinsic motivating factors to quit drinking and remain sober to the extrinsic motivating factors, including grandchildren, family, and community responsibilities expected of Elders. Using MI with Alaska Native Elders who recently completed treatment, social workers can help them explore their motivations for recovery; what do they miss about being engaged with family and community, what are their cultural motivations to be sober, and what did alcohol take away? People grow up with thoughts and ideas of what their life will be like as an Elder and struggling with alcohol use disorders, being removed from activities and people that contribute to their cultural sense of identity, and alcohol destroys their ability to become an Elder. Elders were raised in strong family and community networks, where everyone supported each other in good and bad times. Building on this strong cultural value of community engagement and support, these sessions can also include partnering with other Elders in long-term recovery as a peer-recovery coach [46], who can share their motivations for recovery and work alongside the social worker

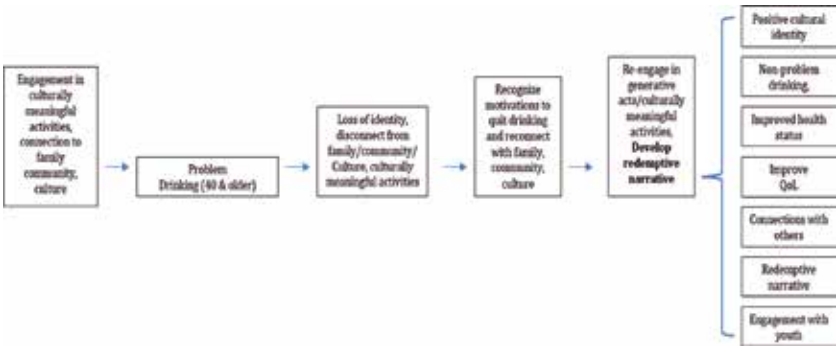

Figure 1.
Indigenous cultural generativity model of recovery.

to develop a list of motivations and reasons for sobriety that will replace their drinking behaviors or temptations to relapse.

Generative behaviors and actions can serve as factors that would contribute to an alcohol treatment program and assist Alaska Native Elders to explore their individual motivations and replace their drinking behaviors with acts of teaching and leading others, passing on their narratives, and helping others on their journey of recovery [25]. Many Alaska Native people share their story of recovery to assist others from having similar experiences. Sharing their stories also empowers them to continue on their own journey of recovery, as well as instill hope and optimism for the storyteller and the listener [47]. Through the telling of their story, they are able to continue to revise their story as they learn more about their own experiences, continually revising their story to emphasize a strengths-based perspective of recovery (**Figure 1**).

5. Conclusion

This chapter proposes that generative acts and redemptive narratives can serve as a potential relapse prevention for Alaska Natives Elders, and other ages, who recently completed alcohol treatment. The increasing awareness of alcohol problems in tribal communities and this shift from negative to positive outlooks on sobriety and quitting drinking highlights the strengths and resiliency factors that exists within Alaska Native and other indigenous communities. The topics discussed in this chapter lay the groundwork for longer-term research objectives, focusing on developing and implementing a supportive alcohol relapse prevention program promoting healthy aging for Alaska Native older adults and builds on the strengths of their cultural values and beliefs, which align with generative acts and behaviors.

Alcohol abstinence rates are higher for Alaska Natives than other racial and ethnic minority groups, pointing to important sources of resilience [48, 49]. There is a need for continued work in the development of alcohol treatment and relapse prevention programs to address the unique context of Alaska Native people and communities, specifically alcohol treatment for racial and ethnic minority older adults. There is also a need for increased attention to strengths-based and community-oriented approaches to substance abuse research [11] and program development. This chapter addresses this need and contributes to the shift to focusing on the strengths and resiliency of those Alaska Native who have quit or abstained from drinking to serve as role models for other Alaska Natives Elders, and other ages, still struggling with alcohol. This chapter provides the reader with a better

understanding of what it means to live a better life and established the pathway to age successfully, live the good life [50], or live "life as it was meant to be lived" ([24], p. 209). Spicer [19] states that we are "forced to revise our understandings not only of what it means to change drinking behavior, but, indeed, of what it means to be restored to wholeness" (p. 238). The findings of this study will also move Alaska Native communities forward by highlighting the successes and stories of the Alaska Native Elders who are aging well and have a lifetime of stories, experiences, and motivations to share with others.

This heightened consciousness and spirit of self-determination and improving one's health and wellbeing is a positive force for our sobriety movements and rebuilding healthy families and communities. Treatment and continuing care needs to focus more directly on strengthening the protective resources that promote abstinence and recovery [5]. For example, information about the status of protective resources that promote remission and recovery can help identify individuals who have a high risk for relapse and target them for more intensive interventions. Being engaged in meaningful and worthwhile activities (family, community, cultural) are important for Elders and programs and services should assist Elders in determining the activities that promote a sense of purpose and worth through Motivational Interviewing and self-assessments.

5.1 Implications for social work education

This chapter is the first attempt to apply Erikson's seventh stage of development to Alaska Native Elders' recovery. This chapter provides the reader with a better understanding of what it means for Alaska Native Elders to quit drinking and establish the pathway to age successfully in order to live the good life [50] and how they achieved and maintained sobriety and wish to help other do the same in their lives. Studies on older adults with alcohol use disorders have found that providing age segregated treatment, avoiding confrontational approaches, and involving family and friends in treatment have been effective in promoting long term recovery and relapse prevention. Treatment and care for Alaska Natives with alcohol use disorders presents several unique challenges. First, the near annihilation, forced assimilation, and lifelong discrimination are influential factors in the higher prevalence of alcohol use disorders among Alaska Native Elders. Unresolved trauma-related symptoms can contribute to the abuse of drugs in an attempt to cope with the effects of trauma among all ages. To shift the focus from alcohol related problems to resiliency factors and reasons for sobriety, this chapter identified protective factors, or reasons, for sobriety and recovery among Alaska Native Elders, which included individual, family, and community factors, all of which may protect individuals from alcohol misuse. One of the key aspects of Alaska Native Elders becoming sober and abstaining for substances, including alcohol and drugs, are their desire to give back to their families and communities (coined the term "generativity" by Erik Erikson) and this knowledge can be used as the foundation and principles of an alcohol treatment program for older adults.

One social work approach that may prove successful in working with older adults struggling with alcohol is motivational interviewing. The idea of generativity is grounded in Elders' being involved in their families and teaching their grandchildren. As social workers it is important to ensure there are avenues in which Elders can be active in sharing their knowledge and experiences with alcohol and recovery with others to enable them to continue experiencing generativity and maintain their sobriety.

Engaging in generative behaviors and acts provides the participants a role and sense of purpose and activities (e.g., subsistence activities, hunting, fishing, arts

and crafts) that replace drinking behaviors. Reconnecting with family and community, participating in culturally-grounded meaningful activities are motivations for quitting drinking and maintaining sobriety [17]. Maintaining sobriety is also motivated by their desire to care for family and community members, be role models for others who are struggling, and pass on their wisdom and experiences to the younger generations. Social workers can employ motivational interviewing techniques when working with the Elder to explore their own cultural motivations (e.g., spend time with grandchildren, teach native language, skills, practices) that are characteristic of those who have achieved "Eldership" or become an "Elder" in their respective community and family. This approach encourages the elder to explore how recovery has a positive impact on others in their family and community and enables them to fill a role of Elder that they have thought about in life and had a goal in life, but alcohol may have taken that opportunity from them because of behaviors and actions as a result of alcohol use. Having an understanding of motivations and practices that are common for Alaska Native Elders will help social workers have examples to use to encourage Elders to explore their own cultural motivations that will assist with relapse prevention.

Further work is needed regarding this initial discussion, which can potentially guide treatment approaches focused more directly on strengthening protective resources promoting Alaska Native recovery [5], but also with other indigenous populations. The current results suggest being engaged in meaningful and worthwhile activities with family, community, and culture are important for Alaska Native Elders and can serve as protective factors against alcohol use disorders and relapse and our treatment programs should be encouraged to integrate more strengths and motivations for recovery for each person.

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Chapter 11

Social Work with Single and Non-Resident Fathers: How Inclusive Is Our Practice and Where Do We Go from Here?

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Abstract

This chapter is focused upon social work with single and non-resident fathers. There is a dearth of social work research that explores the experiences of single or non-resident fathers' with social work, so this chapter starts to explore how we can work more sensitively and collaboratively with both groups. Both single and non-resident fatherhood raise challenges for socially constructed gendered norms, hegemonic masculinity and how children and families social work is practiced. Concepts of borderwork and the emotional regime are applied to develop understanding of these fathers' experiences with social work and how practice can change. The chapter is located within wider discourses about the feminised role of caring and increasingly bureaucratic and authoritarian social work systems. Key practice features of assessment and engagement are discussed and suggestions for developing and improving practice are tentatively made.

Keywords: single fathers, non-resident fathers, social work practice, borderwork, assessment, engagement

1. Introduction

This chapter will focus upon social work practice with single and non-resident fathers. Its primary aim is to explore how practice can be more inclusive, supportive and collaborative, positioning single and non-resident fathers in social work assessments and processes as potential protectors and resources for their children. We are both undertaking research with these respective service user groups and elements of our research will be incorporated within the chapter. We have chosen to focus upon both groups within a single chapter because in our discussions, we have identified numerous themes that appear mutually relevant. This introductory section will provide a brief overview of key ideas.

This chapter is located within wider discourses that propose societal assumptions about the feminised role of caring and lone parenthood exclude fathers and place responsibility for children primarily on mothers. Also within wider debates about the current nature of children and families, social work in the UK and indeed abroad, where practice is typically framed within an increasingly unequal society and increasingly bureaucratic and authoritarian systems.

Despite an epochal change in the discourse in wider society, where fathers are now being more actively and emotionally involved in the care and nurture of their children [1–3], research studies have found that this is not necessarily reflected in social work practice. It has been suggested that a gendered discourse exists within social work [4–6] which places the care of children as the sole responsibility of mothers. This can not only lead to the oppression of mothers through the scrutiny of social workers [7] and blame being placed on their shoulders for family difficulties, neglect and abuse [8, 9], but also fathers becoming 'secondary clients' [10] or invisible where:

> *"This invisibility exists whether or not the fathers are deemed as risks or as assets to their families." ([11], p. 25)*

It can be argued that social work literature predominantly constructs fathers as a problem, through over emphasis upon their negative characteristics and behaviours [12, 13], creating stereotypes of fathers as uncommitted and unwilling to change [4, 7, 9, 12, 14–23, 100]. This poses challenges for the profession, as single and non-resident fathers can act as important figures for children and their well-being, and need to be assessed as resources as well as potential risks comprehensively and fairly. Few parents fall simply into a good or bad category.

The authors conducted systematic literature reviews into social work with single and non-resident fathers to explore what the literature says about their experiences with social work. These employed established methods of formulating questions, inclusion and exclusion criteria and a search strategy, followed by quality appraisal and data analysis [24, 25]. Quality appraisal was used to ascertain the credibility, relevance and trustworthiness of the included studies and thematic analysis was the chosen method for data analysis. The analyses focused on rich depictions of the data sets, as these are under-researched areas, with limited available research [26]. Interviews were also conducted with non-resident fathers to gain their views directly.

It is clear that there exists a dearth of social work research that explores the experiences of single or non-resident fathers with social work. This reflects the international research on fathers and social work involvement in general [16], where studies have failed to explicitly look from the perspective of the father [23, 27, 100] or actually recruited them as study participants [28]. Instead studies have tended to use the mother as the source of information [29] or considered parents together rather than distinguishing between them [100]. When fathers have been included as an individual entity, the numbers involved have usually been small [19].

Single fathers are under-researched in social work, which aligns with their relative invisibility in practice and welfare debates. The current limited scope of research into social work practice with single fathers suggests that social workers do not genuinely or comprehensively understand their needs and do not effectively engage with them. The research that has been undertaken has not effectively considered the array of social influences on single fathers' capacities to parent or effectively explored how, mutually influencing micro-level identities and interactions need to be linked with macro-level conditions and inequalities to analyse and understand the experiences of single fathers.

Within this chapter, key theoretical concepts of non-hegemonic masculinities, borderwork [30–32] and Quick and Scott's [33] ideas on emotional regimes within social work will be explained and used to examine social work with single and non-resident fathers. A variety of theoretical frameworks have been used to examine fatherhood, notably feminist theory, sociobiological theory and

psychodynamic perspectives [4, 7]. Most social work research into fathers adopts a feminist framework (e.g. [13, 29, 34]). However, a feminist framework can be considered to develop only partial understanding of practice with single and non-resident fathers, with its central focus on the omnipotence and domination of men in our society. As a result, it is likely that this theory struggles to fully explain the experiences of single and non-resident fathers, given the likelihood that, in many contexts, they can be considered to hold non-hegemonic masculinities within our societies [35, 36].

Both single and non-resident fatherhood raise challenges for socially constructed gendered norms, hegemonic masculinity and how children and families social work is practiced. It can be understood that both endeavours influence men's senses of moral and social identity and engender significant social and emotional meanings for them [37], as well as others.

So, let us now briefly think about working definitions of single and non-resident fathers and their prevalence in UK society.

2. Definitions and statistics

Single fatherhood is not a straightforward term and has not been clearly defined within the literature. Any definition can be used in different ways by different individuals, dependent on the context in which it is being used. Duncan and Edwards [38] define lone parent families as those 'where a parent lives with his/her dependent children, without a spouse/partner, either on their own or in multi-unit households' (p. 3). The official UK government definition of a lone parent, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) [39], is 'a parent with a dependent child living in a household with no other people (whether related to that dependent child or not)' (p. 5).

Building upon these definitions, for the purposes of the author's research and this chapter, single fathers will be understood as: 'Fathers acting as the primary caregivers for their child(ren) through sole or joint care arrangements with no wife or partner living with them'. This definition is open to debate and, indeed, improvement.

According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), of the 2.9 million lone parent families in the UK in 2016, 1.9 million had dependent children, with 10% of those with dependent children headed by single fathers. This equates to 190,000 families headed by single fathers in the UK [39].

Similar to single fatherhood, non-resident fatherhood is a difficult term to define in the literature. As stated, it is estimated that of the total number of lone parents with the primary care for their children in the UK, 90% are mothers [40, 41]. This suggests that a large number of fathers live apart from, and do not have primary care responsibilities for, their children.

Studies have found that the experiences of becoming, and living as, a non-resident father can be ambiguous, complex and multifaceted [42–46] Therefore, with single fatherhood, it is challenging to find a term that encapsulates the profusion of these father-child relationships. Within the research literature, terms such as non-custodial, non-habitual, non-residential or "live-away fathers" ([42], p. 13) are often used. Within the UK, a standard legal definition can be found under legislation pertaining to financial maintenance for the child:

> *A parent who does not have his or her child living with them. A parent is a non-resident parent (or absent parent) under the statutory child maintenance services, if both of the following apply:*

- *The parent is not living in the same household as the child.*
- *The child has his home with a person who is, in relation to him, a person with care.*

(Section 3(2), Child Support Act 1991.)

Non-resident fathers experience nonstandard paternal biographies [47]. These can vary greatly and include them having never lived with their child, not knowing of the child's existence, living with the child, being married or cohabiting. Efforts have been made in the UK in the last 20 years to create equal post-separation/divorce parenting through gender neutral legislation and policy. However, for the majority of parents and children going through separation and divorce the gendered model of parenting is adopted, with a resident mother and a non-resident father [48, 49]. Fathers are habitually elected as non-resident by default due to both parents adhering to the assumption that this is what will happen [49, 50]. Accordingly, following separation or divorce, both parents can be recalcitrant to change:

> *"...gendered patterns of caring become fault-lines for the reorganization of parental roles and responsibilities following separation or divorce". ([37], p. 421)*

This chapter will now move on to discuss the influential social and political contexts for single and non-resident fathers.

3. The wider contexts for single and non-resident fatherhood

Single and non-resident fathering do not take place in vacuums, rather within the wider contexts of parenthood, government policies and societal attitudes. If we consider child care within the wider notion of care, whether paid care or care for relatives, care has been a "woman-specific concept" ([51], p. 17) for a long time, with women perpetually performing the majority of this care work. There are a number of different perspectives that seek to explain this phenomenon. For example, it is argued that it has been socially constructed in both the private and public sphere of society as archetypically feminine, whereas others support the essentialist conception of women's natural disposition towards care work and caring [52].

A number of authors identify that the child welfare system in Britain mirrors the wider dominant societal discourses on parenting that are primarily predicated on traditional family and gendered parenting roles [18, 53–55]. Within these, childcare is constructed as "women's work" ([56], p. 64) and mothers are subsequently viewed as more able and natural caregivers [57, 58]. Fathers are then positioned in a supporting role, as the secondary parent [59], and often the breadwinner for the family [13, 30, 60].

Having stated this, there is evidence that societal norms are progressing towards greater appreciation of father engagement [11]. With studies identifying fathers populating a more positive range of roles in wider society [17], such as involved [3], reflexive [61, 62], deliberate [63], intimate [1] and caring [64]. Having said this, it has been argued that the behaviours of fathers are out of step with the emerging representations and discourses of increased involvement of fathers in the care of their children. This has been termed 'lagged adaptation' [3].

Single fathers are of course single parents and the perception that single parents 'always take and don't give back to the state' is so routinely suggested that it can be considered normative [65]. Based on this thinking, all single parents can be understood to be marginalised and stigmatised to varying degrees. Doucet [30–32] has eloquently articulated some of the links between shame, stigma and the imposition of social and community norms on masculinity and parenting, which will be discussed in more detail below. Smith [36], in his research into househusbands, argued powerfully that 'To summarise, the men in this study encountered the gendered order in all its force at the level of experience...the gender order affected them in a way that challenged the legitimacy of their transgressive form of life' (p. 156). In other words, they were excluded and stigmatised based on their statuses as househusbands and as different or other.

When considering wider contexts, it is also important to consider how inclusive social work research is for single and non-resident fathers. Shapiro and Krysik [66] found that within social work journals, only 7.26% of family-related articles considered fathers. Social work research has tended to use the terms parents and families as proxies for mothers [9, 22, 67], mirroring very similar issues in policy and practice.

Single fathers remain largely invisible within the social work research literature. For his systematic literature review, Haworth [68] found only seven relevant studies that discussed social work with single fathers, some of them only vary briefly. Of these seven studies, only three were concentrated on social work. None of the studies were UK based, but from countries with different cultural, legal and political contexts [69]. This includes Sweden, Australia, Canada, USA and Israel. The findings of the papers identified within Haworth's systematic literature review suggest similar marginalisation and invisibility of single fathers in social work practice.

On the theme of social work practice, it is important to consider the wider debates about the nature and direction of children and families social work. In the UK, a variety of scholars have argued that practice is framed within an increasingly unequal society and increasingly bureaucratic and authoritarian systems [70–72]. Furthermore, child protection systems and practice have become increasingly punitive, intensely focussed upon risk to the exclusion of support and wider sociopolitical forces [73–76].

The current debates questioning whether practice is supportive and protective, or punitive and repressive, clearly provide an important context for practice with single and non-resident fathers. They bring into sharp focus whether practitioners challenge or amplify socially and institutionally generated harms and disadvantage, and challenge or amplify exclusion and stigma for single and non-resident fathers.

Prior to examining this in greater detail, we need to outline the legal contexts for single and non-resident fatherhood and our key theoretical frameworks.

4. The legal context

Having discussed the legal contexts, it is time to explore key theoretical frameworks for developing understanding of social work with single and non-resident fathers.

5. Key theoretical frameworks

As discussed above, the authors view a feminist framework as only providing a partial understanding of social work with single and non-resident fathers.

So the subsequent question has to be which theoretical frameworks can be useful to aid our understating?

Conceptions of masculinity are key to understanding social work with all fathers. Discourses in society and within services of the welfare state, including social work, promote specific masculinities and femininities [60]. Social work can be understood to frequently engage in a risk narrative around masculinity, with men often viewed as a risk to children, partners and the wider community [18]. Furthermore, binary ideas of fathers as 'deserving' or 'undeserving', 'good' or 'bad' can invade practice [77].

So how do these narratives fit with the focus of this chapter? Well, both single and non-resident fathers can be understood to possess non-hegemonic masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity serves to legitimise men's dominance in society through subordination of women and other men. It enforces the idea that to be a 'real man', we must show traits such as authority, aggressiveness, strength, and competitiveness. Non-hegemonic masculinities on the other hand can be viewed in society as subordinate to their hegemonic counterpart [35, 78]. Hegemonic masculinities can be understood to be constructed through shaming and controlling these non-hegemonic masculinities [79].

Through such discourses, single and non-resident fathers can be viewed as deviant and outsiders as men and as carers for their children. This may then be amplified by further intersectionality of disadvantage through race, sexuality or class, for example. Fathers as primary carers subvert hegemonic masculinity and can then be victims of socially constructed gender ideologies that challenge their legitimacy and posit motherhood as preeminent [36]. However, it is not this simple or binary. Masculinity, like femininity, can be understood as fluid, revealing opportunities for being redefined in line with societal changes, individual experiences [80] and less stigmatising narratives. This leaves opportunities for all social workers, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Such opportunities for positive engagement and change can be perhaps be better understood through the concepts of borderwork and border crossing. Thorne [81] conceived the idea of borderwork. This vital concept has been briefly discussed in relation to social work by Featherstone [13], but more significantly explored and developed within the field of sociology by Doucet in Canada, notably in her excellent book 'Do Men Mother?' Doucet [30–32] has written about men as primary caregivers and explored the socially constructed gendered norms of parenting and masculinity. She describes borderwork as 'spaces and times where intense gender differences are intensely perceived and experienced' ([32], p. 42). Meanwhile, she conceives border crossing as times where gender boundaries and barriers are deactivated and the gender divide can be successfully crossed.

Single and non-resident fathers cross gender borders and enter female-dominated spaces when accessing a variety of statutory and non-statutory services. This includes health visiting services, children's centres and social work support. Furthermore, they enter female-dominated spaces when accessing the school playground or engaging in discussions about employment and caring responsibilities.

Borderwork and border crossing offer possibilities for exploring and better understanding the experiences of single and non-resident fathers when they interact with social work. For these fathers, engaging with social work and female-dominated spaces and services can involve moving between equality and difference, and between stereotypically masculine and female roles. As will be seen below, single fathers can find social work to be excluding and stigmatising. In social work, we therefore need to appreciate how we can support successful border crossing. This requires, amongst other things, social acceptance and challenging stereotypical suspicions of men as primary caregivers [31].

A significant challenge that appears to exist within social work practice with fathers, and indeed parents in general, involves a disconnect between how social workers perceive and understand the emotional reactions of parents during involvement with social workers. Baum and Negbi [82], in their study in Israel, interviewed 15 fathers whose children had been removed into care. They found that the fathers experienced intense feelings of grief and loss. However, they suggest that as result of the social workers not engaging with the fathers, or lacking the skills in working with them, in practice these feelings were underestimated or dismissed. Similarly Hojer [83] in her Swedish study of parents who had children in foster care, found that despite experiencing strong feelings of loss, grief and guilt, these were not always recognised by social workers.

Paradoxically, the study found that when parents did demonstrate an emotional reaction, such as an emotional outburst and/or emotionally loaded language, they were often seen as undesired or inadequate reactions to a situation, and subsequently "interpreted as additional evidence of 'bad parenting' in the assessment process" ([83], p. 121) Similarly Smithers [84] observed that social workers held stereotypical or limited expectations of fathers exercising emotional depth, as he suggests:

> *"If the emotional depth and complexity of the men is met with a blind eye and a deaf ear then it is little wonder that the one of frustration, which can be interpreted as aggression, thus fitting a stereotypical view of a problematic male client...." ([84], p. 22)*

In New Zealand, Quick and Scott [33] explored the experiences of parents and social workers where children had been removed into care as a result of parental mental health or addiction. Their study found that not only did the parents (including fathers) experience grief and loss, but also intense stigma of being involved with social workers. As a result, many of the parents expressed hostile emotions and resistance towards child-protection services, and this was viewed negatively by the social workers as non-cooperative and lacking self-control. Quick and Scott suggest that child protection services create an emotional regime where they can dictate and manage what they perceive as acceptable emotional responses. They recommend that social workers should not view such responses as negative, but instead see resistance, at least in some cases, as a sign of emotional resilience and strength.

Prior to discussing themes of social work engagement and assessment, we must acknowledge that there is a clear absence of systematic information about social work practice with single and non-resident fathers that leaves a significant gap in our knowledge base. As there has been negligible empirical research into this area, practitioners have little research evidence to inform their practice, leading to few examples of lessons being applied in practice. In some ways, it appears a negative cycle has therefore been established, where research is not informing practice and practice is not informing research.

6. Social work engagement

Research has consistently found that barriers exist to social workers engaging and working with fathers in meaningful ways. [5, 6, 13], despite the exclusion of fathers potentially increasing the risks of abuse [85, 86] and research indicating that the involvement of fathers can be considered beneficial for children and their development in a variety of ways [78, 87].

With specific regard to non-resident fathers, there is the need for social workers to engage with the non-resident parent as soon as concerns are raised about the care afforded to the children, in order to ascertain levels of contact and type(s) of relationships with the children and ex-partner. Non-resident fathers can be used as a resource and source of protection for their children in such cases, and if necessary as an alternative permanent placement for the children should the children need to be removed into care. With the advent and growth of technology in our globalised world, virtual parenting and contact need to be considered. Virtual contact can provide increased contact opportunities and minimise distance when parents relocate, but can limit valuable face-to-face time and raise issues around supervision of contact [88].

It has been found in the UK that non-resident fathers often only hear second hand or belatedly that the local authority were involved with their children [29]. For example, the catalyst for the seminal study by the Family Rights Group into father's engagement with social services was prompted by:

> *"...the increasing numbers of calls its advice service was receiving from non-resident fathers and paternal relatives. Some of these callers had only heard late in the day that their child had been taken in to care."*

It is understood and accepted by the authors that a number of non-resident fathers are a risk to their children through their violence and abuse, and both authors have experienced working with these fathers through their own social work practice. However, it can be argued that risks should be assessed in the present and not based purely on priori risk and behaviour. It is at this stage that the father can fairly and effectively be deemed as either unsuitable or as a support and resource for his children.

A study in Australia by Zazoni et al. [100] found that in contrast to the negative stereotypes, the fathers were typically committed and involved parents, who went to great lengths to work on previous behaviour and cease abusing substances. They stated that:

> *"This study highlights the importance of child welfare workers engaging with and accurately assessing fathers without preconceived assumptions, as it is possible that some fathers are viable placement options for at-risk children." ([100], p. 1)*

The adoption of preconceived assumptions by social workers in their involvement with fathers was also found in the seminal study of Ferguson and Hogan [18]. They interviewed professionals, mothers, children and 20 fathers who were involved with social services. The fathers were seen in the study as vulnerable, due in part to their status of living outside the family home, with varying levels of contact with their children. One of the main findings of the study was how powerful the role of dangerous, or 'toxic' (p. 51) masculinities, were in practice, influencing engagement and professional judgements of men as fathers. The toxicity of the masculinities were based upon questionable past or present behaviours and physical appearance;

> *"Some men were excluded from being worked with and seen as possible caring fathers simply on the basis of their appearance and perceived lifestyles, such as men who had tattoos, bulked up physiques, skinheads and who did hard physical prone work such as bouncing or 'security'". ([18], p. 8)*

Several studies have found that fathers struggle to prove that they are 'good enough' to be entrusted by social workers to care for children [18, 20–23, 28, 100]. A study by Dominelli et al. [17] found that the 'good dad, bad dad' binary ([89], p. 21) dominated and framed social work practice.

> *"Stories uncovered by this study reveal that although the 'good dad - 'bad dad' binary frames fathers' relationships with social workers, these are difficult and complicated because social workers do not completely trust fathers to care for children". (p. 364)*

Practice consequently focusses mostly on mothers, with the burden of care, responsibility and blame for family difficulties placed firmly on their shoulders [8, 18, 29, 90]. This poses a problematic and unfavourable context for social work engagement with single and non-resident fathers.

Haworth's [68] systematic literature review identified two predominant themes on social work with single fathers. Firstly, social workers' misunderstanding and stereotyping single fathers; secondly social workers are not effectively engaging with or effectively supporting single fathers. The literature portrays that social workers struggle to genuinely or comprehensively understand the needs of single fathers, rather tending to stereotype along heteronormative and gendered lines. For instance, Kullberg [91] in his study found that support offered to single fathers and mothers tended to follow traditional gender lines, with social workers suggesting support for single fathers to return to work whereas focussing on support for social support networks for single mothers.

Social work engagement is dependent upon a variety of micro and macro social contexts and these practice issues align with community and societal attitudes and assumptions about caring being a female endeavour, as well as an inability to recognise single fathers as a unique group with unique experiences. Engagement issues raise questions about social work's role as an apparatus of states that continue to be predicated on archaic gendered norms as well as raising difficult questions about our profession's continuing captivation with psychological theories, which place women as primary carers and focus on mothers, much less so fathers, in primary caring roles.

Social work is practised at the interface between the public and the private and thus contributes to gender identity discourses [53]. Therefore, as Scourfield [4, 7] suggests, gendered identities are constructed in practice and within practice encounters. Single fatherhood raises challenges for such socially constructed gendered identities. It is therefore important that we are mindful that societal assumptions about the feminised role of caring and lone parenthood can still dominate social work [13, 60], excluding single and non-resident fathers in the process. These processes and narratives can stigmatise such fathers in the context of their 'non-masculine' relationships with their children and as part of a welfare state still predicated on traditional family norms. Certainly, Haworth's [68] paper identified that the research literature portrays that single fathers experience challenging systems and practices when engaging with social work and can experience social work as alienating and unattentive to their holistic needs.

Social work is a female-majority profession [60, 92–94] and the gendered identities of practitioners influence engagement with fathers [4, 7]. Single and non-resident fathers can be positioned as lone males within predominantly female professional networks, feeling misjudged and marginalised within these contexts. However, issues with engagement should not turn into a blame game and the words of Brandon et al. [8] ring true in this sense. They state that:

"...the longstanding issue of 'father engagement' is better understood as an interactive two-directional process, rather than a 'problem' with either men or social workers" (p. 3).

It is here that we should return to ideas of borderwork and border crossing. Doucet [31] describes that borderwork can engender conflict and intense feelings, while involving gender boundaries that can be strong and rigid. Single and non-resident fathers engage in crossing such boundaries through interactions with our social work profession, when the stakes can be very high. It is critical that we are aware that these fathers, experiencing stigma and perceived moral judgements, may find it extremely difficult to successfully engage in both border crossing and with us as social workers. They may portray protest masculinities where they present as a threat or risk or disengage [4, 7] and further alienate themselves from support from which they may benefit.

Or they may try to conform to socially acceptable identities and present as especially sensitive to rejection when interacting with our profession. Such rejection will clearly be exacerbated by any fixed or immovable gender borders being erected by practitioners. Ferguson and Hogan [18] define fathers as those involved with child protection as 'vulnerable fathers' (p. 3), with such vulnerability incorporating issues from relationship problems to poverty and social exclusion. This vulnerability may then be amplified or diminished by further intersectionality of advantage/disadvantage through race or sexuality for example. Each single father and their family will therefore likely have different experiences of society, culture and social work engagement.

Borderwork involves confusion, identity management and feeling othered. Border crossing requires value-based social work high on acceptance, empathy and unconditional positive regard. It is for us as social workers to show sensitivity to these dynamics, as well as to the complexity of single and non-resident fathers' identities, and adjust how we support engagement accordingly.

Having explored the issues and challenges in social work engaging with single and non-resident fathers, it is important to note that within the research literature, there are a few examples of more inclusive practice that can potentially be built upon and certainly need to be recognised and appreciated. These include professionals discussing single fathers taking responsibility for the care of their children and challenging negative stereotypical views held by foster carers towards single fathers. Such practice examples convey some hope and demonstrate that empathetic and sensitive practice is achievable. Within these examples, practitioners demonstrated acknowledgement and acceptance of single fathers' distinctive needs and looked to genuinely engage and support.

Before proceeding to highlight our ideas for father-inclusive practice, inclusive of collaborative and supportive ways of working that promote self-aware and expressive masculinities, we need to discuss social work assessments.

7. Social work assessment

Assessment is central to children and families social work. As Brown and Turney [95] state 'Good assessment is key to effective intervention and better outcomes for children. Without it, practice is likely to lack focus and a clear sense of purpose; at worst, poor assessment may result in a vulnerable child's needs being overlooked or misunderstood, with serious consequences for their well-being' (p. 4). However, it must be recognised that too much emphasis on assessment as the all and end all, or simply a series of bureaucratic processes, is not conducive to child or family-centred practice [96].

Kullberg [91, 97] conducted two studies in Sweden that analysed responses from a random sample of 880 Swedish social workers to a gender-comparative vignette presenting a single father and single mother facing very similar problems. These found that social workers assessed the single father as having more serious problems and yet less deserving of support. Further, social workers were more likely to assess the single father as more responsible for his own situation and less likely to conclude that he had taken sufficient steps to address the presenting issues. Despite the single father and single mother facing almost identical issues, the social workers recommended less support measures for him and assessed the single mother as in greater need of support. Kullberg [91] asserts that his findings suggest that single fathers were viewed as less deserving of help from the welfare state than single mothers.

These types of findings suggest that the attitudes and narratives of social workers towards single fathers can be based on common gender stereotypes and that they intentionally or unintentionally can alienate single fathers from suitable social work support. Within his studies, the social workers, according to Kullberg [91], 'assessed the two sexes according to different standards' (p. 381), and such findings convey that social workers can struggle to understand single fathers' strengths and needs. However, our practice and assessments do not need to mirror such issues and practice shortcomings.

It is vital to ask searching questions within social work and our assessments. For single and non-resident fathers, we need to ask if there are specific parenting styles evident and whether we in social work recognise and acknowledge these parenting styles in assessments and indeed interventions. Again, returning to ideas of borderwork and border crossing, whether we are assessing single fathers through maternal lenses and female-centred practices [32], reinforcing the othering and potential rejection that constitute aspects of borderwork.

Doucet [31] suggests that fathers acting as primary carers tend to show different types of nurture, for example through more playfulness. Further, that they engage in more physical activities with their children, with more inherent risks. It needs to be considered whether in our currently risk averse professional context assessments capture these styles of care. Certainly, from the literature reviewed, social workers' assessments and views tended to reflect gendered and heteronormative assumptions about men and caring. If assessments do not, the question needs to be asked as to how single fathers' narratives can be heard and social work can develop more inclusive ways of understanding how they care and nurture and avoid judging against maternal standards.

This resonates with Brandon et al.'s [8] recommendation that a differentiated approach should be adopted in policy and practice to better understand motherhood and fatherhood and design services accordingly. Our assessments need to explore the mutually influencing micro-level identities and interactions with macro-level conditions and inequalities to analyse and understand the experiences of single and non-resident fathers. Based on the literature reviewed, there is clear concern that their choices and chances are limited through borders and barriers being constructed within social work and beyond that shape their needs and how services respond to these.

However, we have choices as autonomous social workers, so we need to reflect upon how we can work collaboratively with single and non-resident fathers.

8. How can practice become more inclusive and supportive?

Although this chapter has to an extent explored the barriers and challenges to social workers engaging with fathers, perhaps a good starting point is to reframe the

issue to one of mutual responsibility. It must be stated clearly that some men do not see themselves in the role of carer and/or avoid interacting with social workers [27]. Therefore, as Brandon et al. [8] suggest:

> *"...the longstanding issue of 'father engagement' is better understood as an interactive, two-directional process, rather than a 'problem' with either men or social workers." (p. 120)*

Father-inclusive practice for single and non-resident fathers should be multi-faceted and focussed on practical support, genuine collaboration and the promotion of more expressive and self-aware masculinities [13, 18]. Furthermore, to provide flexibility around working times and locations and support fathers within wider family contexts [29]. It is only then that the conditions for successful border crossing can be supported, where single and non-resident fathers can, as Doucet [31] articulates, 'challenge the oppositional structure of traditional gender arrangements around parenting' (p. 201).

Such changes need to be systemic, requiring structural, cultural and individual changes, including challenging widespread gender stereotypes and assumptions. Support needs to encourage social acceptance, while accepting and respecting difference. For single fathers, this should incorporate recognition as a unique group with unique paternal identities. Ethics of solidarity and minimising otherness, through the medium of relationships, should play significant roles in practice. Such practice requires organisations that encourage critical reflection, inclusive practice and specific training about engaging fathers [18].

For changes in practice to be sustained and developed further, there arguably needs to be an increased presence of single and non-resident fathers in social work qualifying programmes and training to raise awareness of their strengths, needs and experiences. Research by Malm et al. [98] found that practitioners who received specific training in working with fathers were more likely to identify and engage with fathers in practice. Specific knowledge about working with single and non-resident fathers could be valuable for all involved.

Inclusive and gender-sensitive social work with single and non-resident fathers should appreciate the roles of borderwork and stigma in life chances and engagement with services, while being alert to gender theorising [4, 7]. But at the same time, recognising patriarchal privilege while engaging with the gender complexities and challenges to masculinity posed by such fatherhood forms. Support to these fathers can then start to act as a bridge to more comfortable and stress-free engagement with female-dominated professional networks of support, parenting communities and community/societal networks.

These are simply initial ideas. There remain many unanswered questions about how to empower practitioners and single and non-resident fathers to work in collaborative and compassionate ways to promote social change.

9. Conclusion

This chapter has argued that there is a clear absence of systematic knowledge about social work practice with single and non-resident fathers to draw any clear conclusions about their experiences with children and families social work, the nature and quality of practice or whether practice is inclusive and supportive. We have suggested that that there is little knowledge about support and services offered to single and non-resident fathers and that we currently cannot learn much about social work practice with single fathers from the limited range of published research.

However, the limited current literature portrays that practice tends to exclude both groups of fathers. The themes identified in this chapter include that social workers can struggle to understand and identify the needs of these fathers and struggle to effectively engage with them. Concepts of borderwork and emotional regimes have been utilised to explore these issues in greater depth. Marginalisation and exclusion from children and families social work can be reasonably understood to produce injustice, missed opportunities and lack of support for single and non-resident fathers.

The themes identified in this chapter reaffirm the influence of socially constructed gendered norms and welfare discourses on fathers' experiences and social work practice itself. As with us all, the identities of single and non-resident fathers are constructed and reconstructed in social, moral and cultural contexts and interactions [99].

This chapter has started to reveal the myriad complex issues around single and non-resident fatherhood and their relationships with social work. It is clear that social work needs a fuller evidence base to understand how best to engage with and support single and non-resident fathers. From such as base, models of practice and organisational cultures can be promoted that engage these fathers while ensuring the best interests of children remain paramount. Such changes need to embrace fathers' own perspectives. As Zanoni et al. [100] state, practice with fathers is only likely to improve if their perspectives are paid attention to.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Chapter 12

Thematic Analysis in Social Work: A Case Study

Oscar Labra, Carol Castro, Robin Wright and Isis Chamblas

Abstract

The article aims to provide a step-by-step description of how thematic analysis was applied in a study examining why men choose to undertake social work as an area of study. Participants in the study came from the University of Concepción in Chile and the University of Quebec in Abitibi-Témiscamingue in Canada. The six phases of the thematic analysis are described in detail to provide students and novice social work researchers with a guide to this method of analysis. Thematic analysis offers a flexible, yet rigorous approach to subjective experience that is highly applicable to research in social work as a means of promoting social justice and combating inequalities.

Keywords: thematic analysis, social work, qualitative research

1. Introduction

There exist few detailed guidelines for thematic analysis, which represents a gap in the scientific literature. This article aims to partially remedy this scarcity by examining thematic analysis methods, drawing on the authors' experiences as social work researchers, particularly as pertains to a case study. The present study is a six-step guide addressed specifically to students and novice researchers.

Thematic analysis has gained increasing currency in various branches of social work research, such as qualitative analysis [1–3], aboriginal research [4], resilience studies [5], the practice of social work in healthcare [6–8], and minors [9, 10]. Nevertheless, little has been written on the specific adaptations and modulations that thematic analysis requires for use in social work research if it is to reflect the field's specific preoccupations. It is important to note from the outset that thematic analysis in qualitative research is an empirical inductive approach to collect data.

The particular importance of qualitative research methods, such as thematic analysis, for social work is that these approaches can also serve to promote social justice and combat inequalities. Qualitative methods allow researchers to transmit people's ideas, perceptions, and opinions by analyzing and disseminating participant discourses. This "speech act" is based on the values that guide social work, namely, respect for personal and collective rights, as well as a recognition of the need to perceive and understand human beings as constituents of an interdependent system that carries the potential for change. In employing qualitative research methods, social work researchers have a responsibility to promote social change and contribute to resolve social problems by analyzing and disseminating collected testimonies, which also serve as a basis from which to formulate future research and intervention paths. No other research methods have the same capacity to give voice to the disenfranchised in order to foster social change.

In order to contextualize the discussion of thematic analysis, the following section will first explore the broader framework of qualitative research. Why is qualitative research well suited to social work? After examining potential answers to this question, the discussion will then proceed to its core subject: thematic analysis and its usefulness in social work research, demonstrated by specific examples from fieldwork. This constitutes the primary aim of the present article.

2. Qualitative research and its relevance for social work

Qualitative methods are an established component of research models in various branches of inquiry, including social work, and have been used by social work researchers studying a range of dimensions, such as the family [11–14], women [15–17], children [18–21], and mental health services [18, 22–24]. Thus, qualitative research methods have served to develop various domains of social work intervention (**Table 1**).

Over the past three decades, many authors have proposed varying definitions of qualitative research. **Table 2** shows the major components of those definitions, providing clues as to the fundamental elements of the "DNA" of qualitative research and their relevance for social work.

Characteristics	Relevance for social work
1. Naturalist, interpretative view of reality	Insofar as qualitative research cannot be said to produce generalizable results of the same order of quantitative methods, it does, however, conform to the principle of generalizability: social work researchers use data to infer conclusions without extrapolating universal principles.
2. Objective proximity to the subjective reality under study	The epistemological approach and data collection methods of qualitative research bring social work researchers into contact with the sphere of individuals' emotions and representations; this is the sphere in which the professional practice of social work happens.
3. Holistic approach to the reality under study	Qualitative research takes into consideration the lived aspects of individuals' social, political, historical, and cultural lives; subjects are not studied in isolation from their reality.
4. Empirical inductive reasoning	Using qualitative research, social work researchers do not operate based on predefined categories of analysis: it is the application of qualitative research methods to collect data that produce hypotheses.
5. Flexibility in employing various research techniques	Qualitative research involves techniques taught in social work programs, including participant observation, varied interview methods, source analysis, and literature review.
6. Importance of actors and their experiences	Qualitative methods allow researchers to "give voice to the voiceless," a fundamental value in social work, in view of the principle that understanding a phenomenon requires acknowledging individuals' viewpoints, discourses, and histories. Social work deals with human individuals, not objects of study.
7. The social work researcher as "measuring instrument"	Social work researchers must adopt a rigorous approach to limit the impact of their subjectivity on their interpretation of data; they must filter data, without distorting its significations.

Source: Deslauriers [25]; Guba [26]; Hatch [27]; Hernández Sampieri et al. [28]; Marshall and Rossman [29]; Morse and Richards [30].

Table 1.
Characteristics of qualitative research.

Criteria
1. Questions are designed to discover, explore, and understand a little-studied phenomenon, as well as the meanings of its experience in the lives of individuals.
2. Little information is available on the variables of a phenomenon, and they are impossible to measure.
3. The subject requires a comprehensive and detailed approach.
4. The goal is to restore people's agency or mitigate the power relations that may arise between researchers and study participants [31].
5. Existing theoretical frameworks are fragmentary or inadequate to frame the phenomenon in its complexity.
6. Quantitative analysis cannot account for the effects of variables (race gender, etc.) on the human interactions under study [31].
7. The study aims to describe or examine the perspective of the actors experiencing a phenomenon.

Table 2.
Qualitative research criteria.

3. Applications of qualitative research

The elaboration of a research protocol or project requires asking whether qualitative research is relevant to the study's methods and goals. The choice to adopt a qualitative approach is generally based on at least one of the criteria presented in **Table 3**.

These seven elements represent contexts in which qualitative research is apposite. In order to demonstrate the application of these elements in fieldwork, **Table 3** presents examples of questions used by the authors in previous qualitative studies.

Qualitative research includes a range of analytical methods applicable in various contexts. Those that appear to be adopted most often include phenomenographic analysis, phenomenological analysis, grounded theory (GT), case studies [32], narrative analysis [31], content analysis [33–35], participatory action research [36–38], aboriginal research [39–41], discourse analysis [42–45], and systematic analysis [46, 47].

Level	Core question	Question types
Explore, name, discover, or understand	What is? What are?	What affection do adult adopted children show toward their birth parents? What are the secondary effects of triple combination therapy on people over the age of 60 living with HIV/AIDS? What are the characteristics of professional burnout among health care workers in rural contexts?
Experience	What are the meanings, representations, and perceptions?	What does it mean for parents to have a child infected by HIV? What are the social representations of HIV/AIDS expressed by men who have sexual relations with other men? What are high school students' perceptions of online bullying?

Table 3.
Research questions typology.

4. Defining thematic analysis

The definition of thematic analysis adopted in the present paper is that of a method that allows researchers to identify and organize relevant themes and sub-themes, which can then be used as units of analysis [48, 49] in subsequent detailed re-readings of a data set [50], through which researchers increasingly familiarize themselves with the data and explore the meanings associated with the concepts emerging from participant testimonies [51, 52]. The central operation of thematic analysis, therefore, is thematization [53]. It is important to specify that "data set" refers to all materials compiled within the scope of a given study: transcripts of interviews conducted with participants, written testimonies, verbal communications, study objectives, and research questions, as well as all other relevant materials, which can include newspaper articles, annual research reports, and social work intervention reports, among others.

Repeated readings of a data set are necessary for the identification of the most salient significations in the collected materials. It is through these processes that researchers can reveal the affective, cognitive, and symbolic dimensions of the assembled data.

Social work research should seek to address issues of social justice and inequality or, at the very least, should not contribute to deficit constructions of marginalized populations by failing to acknowledge issues of discrimination and oppression.

5. The phases of thematic analysis

Thematic analysis involves six phases (see **Figure 1**). For the purposes of the present discussion, these phases will be described using examples from the authors' experiences during a previous study, in which one of the main research themes was the reasons why certain men choose professions socially viewed as feminine [54]. The study involved 26 male participants enrolled in social work university programs: 13 in Chile and 13 in the Canadian province of Québec. The research question was exploratory, since no previous studies had addressed the issue directly; the thematic analysis, therefore, required a high degree of interpretation to fully grasp the significations emerging from participant testimonies. Specifically, the research question sought to discover the motivations, obstacles, and positive reference points, which characterized men's interest in social work, a profession socially viewed as feminine. The following extensive discussion will refer to examples from the aforementioned study in order to examine in detail the methodological progression of the six phases of thematic analysis.

It is essential to note that the six phases presented in **Figure 2** overlap and interact: the phases are not exclusively successive, since there is a measure of recursion involved, in what is nevertheless a generally linear process. These characteristics indicate that thematic analysis is a flexible yet rigorous method of data analysis (see **Figure 1**). Three distinct approaches may be applied to thematic analysis: deductive (when themes are defined at the outset, prior to analyses), inductive (when themes emerge in the course of analysis), or, frequently, a deductive-inductive combination.

5.1 Phase 1: Familiarization with collected data

The first phase begins with the task of transcribing audio recordings of individual or group interviews carried out in the course of the study. The next step involves proceeding through initial readings of the transcripts in order to find the most salient significations in the participants' testimonies. The material must be read thoroughly, attentively and analytically, particularly in order to identify those

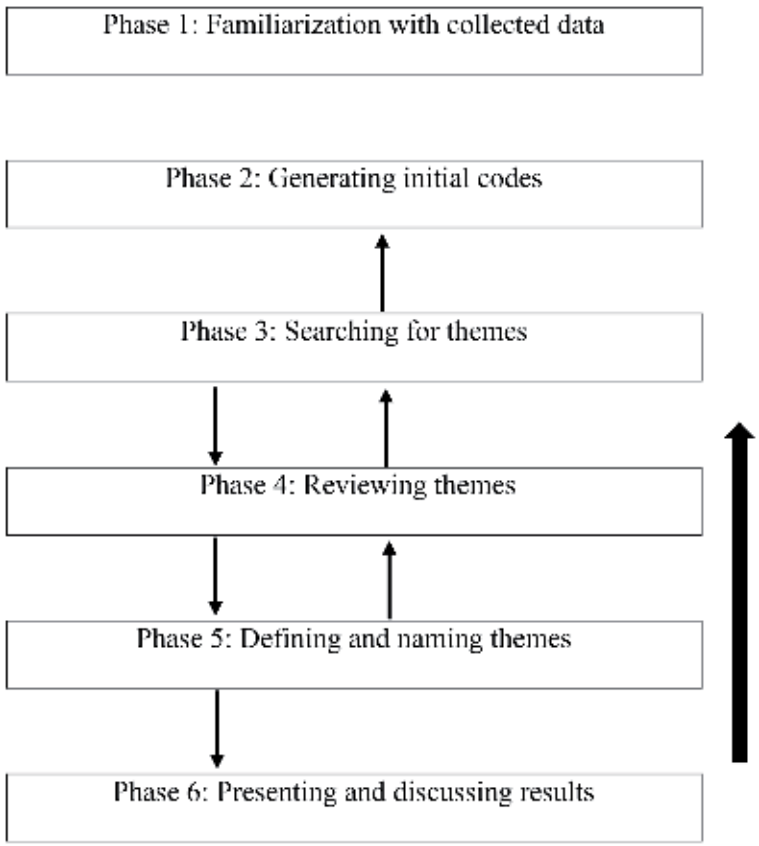

Figure 1.
Thematic analysis: Six interactive phases.

elements that may at first seem banal, yet frequently crucial to understanding the significations of a participants' discourse.

Several techniques can help researchers to structure their first readings of the material. For example, an initial coding chart allows for the clear identification of excerpts that appear immediately relevant. As well, researchers familiar with thematic analysis frequently make annotations in the margins of transcripts or highlight in color certain excerpts that appear to be particularly significant.

The following excerpt and the comments cited below illustrate one researcher's initial observations following a first reading of material collected in the course of a study:

Q: Which factors influenced your career choice?

A: I have a childhood friend who is a SW [social worker] and I went to talk with him. He told me about the main orientations of the profession, and I took the decision to enter this line of work. So it was the advice of a friend that helped me to make my decision to undertake social work, which I had not really thought about when I was in high school. It came from these conversations with this friend about the program, and I feel that I do not regret this decision. (Chilean participant No. 8, page 54)

Figure 2.
Presentation of results.

The meanings identified in the testimony of Participant No. 8 were that: **a)** the participant had a close relationship with a social worker who influenced his career choice; **b)** the participant wanted to learn about the profession before deciding to undertake it; **c)** the profession's orientations attracted the participant; **d)** the participant had not chosen a career path upon completing his secondary education; and **e)** the participant was satisfied with his choice of studies.

The example demonstrates that even a short interview excerpt can be a rich source of information, in this case indicating the various factors that characterized and influenced the participant's choice to study toward a career in social work.

It is worth noting that qualitative data software, such as Nvivo®, presents additional coding capabilities and is in widespread use. For the purposes of the present study, however, the researchers opted to employ a manual coding technique.

In summary, the first phase of thematic analysis involves several steps and techniques:

- Listening to and transcribing participant interviews.
- Before undertaking readings of the material, it is helpful to construct an initial coding chart on which researchers can record their first impressions of the readings; this coding chart may identify the participant's pseudonym, the specific excerpt in question, the transcript page number, and the signification or observation noted.
- It is useful, as well, to keep the study objectives physically visible or close at hand for quick reference; this is especially recommended if the researcher carrying out the thematic analysis did not personally carry out the interviews or did not participate in the elaboration of the research project.
- Initial readings of the material should be carried out repetitively, without at first overly focusing on particular details, in order to develop a familiarity with the raw data collected from participants. Examples of questions to keep in my mind during these first readings include:
    - *What is this person trying to say?*
    - *Why are they talking about that in this particular way?*
    - *How should I interpret what I am reading?*
- In order to maintain familiarity with the raw data, repeated readings must be carried out in close succession, which contributes to a fuller understanding of participant testimonies and their significations. Researchers must keep in mind that they are scrutinizing the data for any and all information that relates to the research question and study objectives.
- During these surface readings of the data set, researchers should use the initial coding chart to note any emerging elements that seem unfamiliar, interesting, or specifically related to the study question and objectives.
- It is possible that following a few initial readings, researchers will be able to identify certain elements of data as themes (normally, this operation is not carried out until Phase 3). It is advisable in these instances to proceed cautiously,

noting all pertinent elements on the coding chart and continuing to progress through the readings while noting elements that appear related to the theme, but refraining from premature definition.

Within a constructivist perspective, in the first phase of thematic analysis, the researcher adopts a subjectivist epistemological approach the reality under study. In the course of this process, researcher and respondent become a mutually constructed unit. The results, therefore, are the products of interactions between their realities ([26] in [55]:p. 17). In this process of production, social work researchers must maintain consciously reflexive, in order to minimize the potential effects of their prejudices or opinions, which could otherwise deform or falsify interpretation.

It is always preferable that the researcher carrying out the readings be the same person that carried out interviews with participants; this will place the researcher in a better epistemological position to ensure continuity throughout the thematic analysis process. If someone else is tasked with carrying out the readings, it is imperative that they become highly familiar with all aspects of the research project before beginning their analyses.

5.2 Phase 2: Generating initial codes

In this second phase, the researcher will use information identified as relevant in Phase 1 to generate initial codes. At the outset, researchers begin grouping elements of data according to similarities or perceived patterns: these are initial codes (see **Tables 4** and **5**). This ordering of the data is necessary to develop a comprehensive perspective on the participants' latent or semantic discourse. An experienced researcher will likely proceed more quickly through this process; indeed, some researchers frequently combine the first two phases of thematic analysis.

To begin, a code is a type of raw data extracted from interviews and field notes. These include words or phrases that are representative of groups or patterns of data (see **Table 4**). Miles and Huberman [56] identify three types of codes. The first is descriptive codes, which require very little interpretation. The second is interpretive codes, which represent data that require a certain depth of interpretation in order to be fully understood. The third type is inferential codes, relating to data that are explicative and indicate causal relationships.

Within the classification elaborated by Miles and Huberman [56], therefore, the examples presented in this article largely correspond to the descriptive type. When

Research objective No. 1	**Codes (Level 1)**	**Excerpts of testimonies**
Describe the motivations of men who choose to pursue studies in a profession socially viewed as feminine.	Vocation. I wanted to work with people and to help. Participation in volunteering. Social change as a personal value.	Q: What factors influenced your choice of profession? A: [...] **I took up social work as a vocation**, because I wanted to work with people. **I was interested in working with people**, face to face! To be there! Where there is a need for people who are ready to talk, to help others and to resolve social problems (Participant 1). Q: What factors influenced your choice of profession? A: When I was in my 3rd or 4th year of secondary school, it was a time of mobilization among students and I developed a concern for social problems. From then, **I started doing volunteering work** and I became interested in the whole **ideal of social change**. That is what motivated me to choose this profession (Participant 12).

Table 4.
Coding chart: Chile students.

Research objective No. 1	Codes (Level 1 – initial)	Interview excerpts
Describe the motivations of men who choose to pursue studies in a profession socially viewed as feminine.	Profession that enables personal and social development. Difficult experiences in personal past. Social work corresponded with my personal goals.	Q: What factors influenced your choice of profession? A: It is **a profession that allows me to work on myself [...] to be a better communicator** and also to become the best person that I can be [...] to be a model who can inspire others (Participant 7). Q: What factors influenced your choice of profession? A: Having been through difficult experiences in my life turned me toward this work [...] social work corresponded with what I wanted from my university studies after my wild youth (Participant 11).

Table 5.
Coding chart: Quebec students.

identifying descriptive codes, researchers have two options: using words or phrases drawn directly from participant testimonies (Level 1) or, where more appropriate, making reference to concepts drawn from relevant theory. The body of accumulated conceptual knowledge allows social work researchers to contextualize problems under study and more fully understand participants' subjective reality. Social work researchers must remain conscious, however, of how their hypotheses influence their formulations of research questions, objectives, and resulting methodological choices that necessarily precede their analyses.

In order to systematically classify the information, codes and interview excerpts should be grouped in relation to clearly identify study objectives, as shown in **Tables 4** and **5**. Particularly for researchers unfamiliar with thematic analysis, this method is effective in developing a better grasp of the classification processes involved in classifying generated data within the scope of defined study objectives.

Codes are always a combination of the descriptive and interpretive. This is evident in the preliminary codes cited in **Tables 4** and **5**.

It is important to note that this method does not require codes to be generated for every line of transcript in the data set. Depending on interview type, a data set typically contains between 7000 and 9000 words, or close to 700 lines. A code can represent two, three, or more lines of transcript. It is always advisable to begin by working with the specific words used by participants (Level 1) and only after repeated readings to begin establishing links with concepts drawn from theory (Level 2), as in **Table 6**, for example.

Phase 2 concludes once all the elements of the data set have been coded. It is important to note that there is no minimum or maximum number of codes to be generated from a data set: the number is determined by each researcher's judgment in assessing what is or is not pertinent, a skill that develops over time, in the course of work with transcripts.

5.3 Phase 3: Searching for themes

In qualitative research, a theme (sometimes also termed "category") [31] is an element of data or sequence of words that can serve as a synoptic and accurate representation of the signification that interviewed participants attribute to an object, phenomenon, or situation. A theme, therefore, is composed of coded data grouped together according to similarities or patterns.

The search for themes is open ended, and the number and variety of results will depend on how systematically and thoroughly the first two phases were carried out. The process involves identification, differentiation, recombination, and grouping:

Objective	Primary theme (level 2)	Subthemes	Codes (level 1 – adjusted)
Describe the motivations of men who choose to pursue studies in a profession socially viewed as feminine.	**Influence of life trajectory.**	Education experiences. Personal experiences. Professional trajectory.	• Educational performance • Intellectual and personal development • Prior illness/negative experiences • Orientation by a social worker • Desire to help others • Prior work experiences • Parental influence

Table 6.
Thematic matrix.

Primary theme	Subtheme	Codes
Influence of life trajectories.	Educational motivations. Personal motivations. Professional motivations.	• Good educational performance • Intellectual development • Prior illness/negative experiences • Orientation by a social worker • Desire to help others • Parental influence • Prior experience as a social work technician

Table 7.
Final thematic matrix.

certain themes will emerge distinctly from the data, others will be the product of either identifying more than one theme in what at first appeared to be one integral category, while others will emerge from the fusion of two or more themes that initially appeared distinct; themes that are divergent, yet related, may also be grouped into broader categories. With certain data sets, yet another level of classification will map the hierarchical relationships between themes. For Crabtree and Miller [57], the process of linking themes leads to the discovery of yet other themes and patterns in the data, that is, it generates overarching themes and allows for the identification of broad connections. This process of grouping distinct elements identified within a data set into themes constitutes the core task of thematic analysis.

In the example of the study discussed in the present article, data collected from interviews with Chilean and Québec students[1] were coded according to the study's primary objective. As **Table 7** demonstrates, a primary theme was identified in reference to theory (influence of life trajectory), while three subthemes emerged from the coded data.

Table 6 demonstrates how a primary theme connects three subthemes generated from seven distinct codes. In this example, the motivations to pursue social work of Chilean and Québec students participating in the study were all grouped in the primary theme "Influence of life trajectory."

[1] This study was built on the analysis of interviews with twenty-six (n = 26) students: 13 are respondents enrolled in a social work program at the University of Québec in Abitibi-Témiscamingue (UQAT) in Canada and the thirteen others enrolled in a social work program at a university of Concepción. The first participants were recruited by way of e-mail messages sent to male students enrolled at the University of Concepción and of University of Quebec in Abitibi-Témiscamingue on in undergraduate social work studies for the winter semesters of 2014 and 2015. The rest were recruited using the "snowball".

As mentioned above, there are no guidelines dictating minimum or maximum numbers of themes or subthemes to identify in a given study, independent of particular factors, such as number of participants. It is of utmost importance that themes and subthemes be delineated precisely in order to represent accurately and comprehensively the complexity of data collected from study participants. Themes therefore will vary qualitatively, substantively, and quantitatively from one study to another. In the example cited, a single-primary theme proved sufficiently broad to represent the significations derived from the data, enabling the authors to answer the research question and achieve the study objective.

A method useful in Phase 3 is to elaborate a coding sheet on which to classify elements of data that could not be precisely categorized in Phase 2 or that do not appear directly linked with the research question or study objectives. These data can prove highly relevant later, as additional themes are identified.

The process of identifying themes in Phase 3 of the thematic analysis can be divided into five stages:

- reading through the coding generated during Phase 2 (see **Table 5**), from right to left, in order to verify the accuracy of the identified elements of data;
- assessing the correlation of codes with interview excerpts, as well as their relevance in relation to study objectives;
- grouping the coded information in reference to concepts or sequences of words according to similarities or patterns: this is the identification of themes;
- reviewing the identified themes in order to further categorize subthemes, overarching themes, or groups of themes, as the case may be; and
- reading the material in order to identify hierarchical relationships between the themes.

Throughout this process, it is essential to keep in mind the stated study objectives, as well as to question continually whether the codes, themes, and subthemes are relevant to the research question and study objectives or whether they fall beyond the delineated scope of the study. It is important to point out that the themes and subthemes in which codes are grouped can represent concepts drawn from theory or original categories elaborated by the researcher. The epistemological challenge for researchers is to remain analytical in relation to the data that emerge from this phase of coding and to analyze them with reference to theory.

Phase 3 culminates in the elaboration of a thematic matrix that demonstrates connections between themes, subthemes, and codes (see **Table 7**). The matrix offers a clear overview of the ordered complexity of the relationships identified within the data set. It is useful, as well, to include within the matrix a column listing the study objectives or research question, providing an easily accessible reference with which to verify the relevance of data to the stated research goals.

5.4 Phase 4: Reviewing the themes

A comprehensive description of a given phenomenon requires a systematic review of the themes identified in Phase 3. Although, for the purposes of discussion, Phase 4 is identified as distinct from and subsequent to Phase 3, in practice researchers familiar with thematic analysis will frequently carry out the two phases simultaneously.

The reviewing process carried out in Phase 4 asks a series of questions about the various elements of data identified up to that point, including:

- Is this a theme, subtheme, or code?
- Does the theme accurately represent the data with which it is linked (codes and interview excerpts)?
- Is the theme too abstract or difficult to understand or, conversely, is it so specific that it cannot be linked more broadly with data?
- Is there a clearly identifiable logic to the hierarchical relationships between themes, subthemes, and codes (i.e., clear distinction between broader categories and more specific elements, as in **Table 7**?
- Which data do the theme include and which do these exclude?
- Is the theme a good representation of the subthemes? Are the subthemes a good representation of the codes?
- Does the thematic matrix contain the information necessary to answer the research question and the study objectives?

These questions allow the researcher to assess the validity of the matrix and the coherence of its components. As in the preceding steps, validating the relevance of each element and the links between them is essential to ensuring the authenticity of results. It is important, however, to nuance the notion of validity. In qualitative research, a result is only considered valid if it is reproducible, that is, if it is not an individual occurrence of a given observation. Validity, moreover, may be internal or external. Internal validity refers to the degree to which valid conclusions can be drawn from a study, based on an assessment of all research parameters. External validity is the degree to which internally valid results may be extrapolated beyond specific study samples and settings, that is, to people and contexts other than those considered in the study.

A range of factors may have an incidence on a study's internal validity, including participants' personal histories, maturation and pretest habituation, participant selection, experimental mortality, and instrument bias. External validity is subject to other factors, such as interaction between historical factors and interventions, the effect of reactivity (that is, participants' awareness of taking part in a study resulting changes in behavior), and researcher bias.

Researchers must also take into account other dimensions of validity relevant to social work research, for example, reflexive practice in collaboration with other researchers [58], data triangulation [59, 60], and iterative research that allows participants to react to interpretations of previous results.

A detailed, comprehensive review of the thematic matrix frequently results in adjustments, including changes to the designations and relative positions of codes and themes, as well as the outright deletion of certain themes and subthemes that are not relevant to the research question (see **Table 7**). As a result of this review process, it is often necessary to rename themes that prove unclear, inaccurate, or disconnected from the identified codes. In such cases, themes are said to have evolved. As with each step of each phase, it is through the practice of these operations that researchers unfamiliar with thematic analysis will develop a better grasp of its techniques.

A comparison between **Tables 6** and 7 illustrates this process. In this case, the subthemes initially identified as referring to experiences were adjusted in **Table 7** to

represent motivations. A second important change consisted in adjusting the code designated in **Table 6** as "educational performance," in order to further specify "**good** educational performance" in **Table 7**. A final change made to the thematic matrix concerned the position of the "**parental influence**" code, which had been placed in the "professional trajectory" subtheme in **Table 7** but, subsequent to review, was placed within the "personal motivations" subtheme in **Table 7**. In this example, the other data in the matrix remained unchanged following the Phase 4 review (see **Table 7**).

A valuable method of ensuring that the themes, subthemes, and codes are clearly delineated and appropriately positioned is to submit the thematic matrix to additional review by one or two researchers uninvolved in the study who are familiar with thematic analysis methods. If the reliability analysis process is successful, that is, if the independent reviewers concur that the themes reliably represent the codes derived from the data set to which they are linked within the matrix, the thematic analysis can proceed to Phase 5.

5.5 Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

Phase 5 consists of two major stages. First, the themes and subthemes undergo a definitive revision. Thus, the thematic matrix must once again be analyzed thoroughly in order to assess the validity of hierarchical relationships and verify whether the designations given at both levels are an accurate reflection of the significations represented by the codes. It is essential that names given to the themes be revised repeatedly, until no ambiguities remain as to their accuracy. The second stage of Phase 5 is interpretive and consists in the conceptual definition of the themes and subthemes that will be subject to analysis in Phase 6.

For example, in determining the subthemes presented in **Table 7**, the authors referred to the following definitions of educational, personal, and professional motivations:

- Educational motivations: an individual's [student's] capacity to construct short- and long-term objectives [in their educational trajectory], notwithstanding difficulties. It is through motivation that needs are transformed into objectives and projects [61, 62].

- Personal motivations: the choice, energy, and direction of behavior [63].

- Professional motivations: the set of dynamic factors that determine an individual's [student's] interest in succeeding [in the chosen profession] [64].

In defining themes, it is advisable to refer exclusively to specialized reference works conventionally accepted in relevant fields of study, such as dictionaries or encyclopedias of social work, education, or sociology, depending on the focus of a given study.

It is important to mention that the boundary between Phases 4 and 5 may be difficult to pinpoint, since both involve a revision of the themes. The distinction lies in that the final revision and conclusive assessment of themes in Phase 5 is the culmination of the repeated reviews of designations, categories, and relationships performed in Phase 4. In Phase 5, therefore, the researcher's principal task is to define and name the themes, in reference to all the operations performed in the previous phases, ensuring that they faithfully represent the significations emerging from the data set.

5.6 Phase 6: Presenting and discussing results

Whether to be included in a book, article, or other form of publication, the crux of the material supporting the results presented and discussed is to be found in notes taken by researchers during interviews with participants and the thematic matrix developed in Phase 3 and revised in Phase 4. For the purposes of the present discussion, it is worthwhile to address the two main components of Phase 6, presentation and discussion, as distinct from one another.

In the presentation of results, researchers must produce a clear and coherent description that makes reference the data outlined in the thematic matrix. The presentation should be accompanied by explanations and clarifications sufficient for readers unfamiliar with the specific area of study to understand the results without room for erroneous interpretation. It is highly advisable to quote interview excerpts that are particularly illustrative of the assertions and conclusions described.

A clear presentation of data outlined in the thematic matrix should reflect the order of the hierarchical relationships between the themes and subthemes. In the study of Chilean and Québec students enrolled in social work programs described in the present article, the primary theme of "**influence of life trajectories**" integrated all subthemes and associated codes. The presentation of results, therefore, began with a description of the primary theme and then proceeded through a descriptive and coherent account, supported by illustrative interview excerpts, that outlined all relevant elements of data, beginning with the most broadly inclusive (primary theme) and proceeding toward the most specific (codes).

This is clearly evident in the following excerpt of the presentation of results in the study involving male social work students in Chile and Québec, which provides valuable examples of thematic analysis methods.

6. Results

This section will first present the motivations that prompt Chilean and Québec male students' choices to undertake social work. [...] On the personal level, the two primary motivations that emerge from the testimonies of Chilean students are the desire to help others and the appeal of social work as a vocation, followed in the order of importance by the influence of family or social circle members who had studied social work.

The following excerpt from the testimony of one student (1) illustrates the motivation to help others and undertake social work as a vocation: "I went into social work [...] to be able to help people. I believe that this is the factor that made me enrol" (René). The testimonies of Québec students, however, suggest that their strong motivations are attributable to good relationships with family, specifically parents [who had worked in the health system], and negative personal experiences in the past, among others. The testimony of one participant typifies this primary motivation of most Québec students participating in the present study: "The fact of having two parents who work in the health system. Since I was little, I have been going to hospitals and I have seen how it all works" (Simon) [54].

It is important that the presentation of results remains descriptive, as in the example cited above. The logical question to ask at this point is: when does the presentation of results end? The answer, too, is logical: when the relevant elements of the final subtheme have been presented. In the study cited above, therefore, the presentation concludes with a description of the professional motivations subtheme (see **Table 7**). Once the results have been comprehensively presented, they must subsequently be discussed.

In the discussion, researchers must address the presented results within an analytical perspective. As in the example cited below, the discussion makes reference to the broader literature relevant to the phenomenon under study:

> *The present study offers comparative and complementary views on the various dimensions associated with the motivations of men who engage in social work. Participants' answers to the question "What made you choose social work studies?", suggest that their motivations are varie, "multifactorial" [65] and linked with life trajectories. At the level of the sub-category of "educational motivations," it appears that Chilean men seek cognitive and technical skills with which to achieve their goal of social change. The results suggest that these men aspire to the values of social work (EASSW, 2015 [3]) and a more humanist and just society in which social work occupies a position of importance among social science professions. These motivations originate in two factors. One is the participants' social engagement prior to enrolling in university studies. The other is their personal orientation towards humanist values. In the case of participants from Québec, their main motivations lie in good results obtained during pre-university social science studies, which inspired them to undertake social work at university. Our results corroborate a number of previous studies [54, 66, 67].*

The above excerpt illustrates how the discussion builds on the description of results in order to produce an analytical discourse that compares and contrasts the results and conclusions of the study with those of other studies and authors.

There are three main guidelines to keep in mind when presenting and discussing the results of a thematic analysis:

- The discussion should follow the same order of themes as in the presentation of results.

- It should underscore and further develop those themes that most closely correlate with the stated study objectives; it is not always possible to address all the obtained results within the discussion; therefore, a capacity to synthesize is particularly useful at this last stage of the thematic analysis.

- The discussion must be framed analytically; the goal is to go beyond the descriptive, in order to demonstrate why the results are meaningful within the context of previous research.

7. Conclusion

As a qualitative research method that offers a simultaneously flexible and rigorous approach to data, thematic analysis allows social work students and novice social work researchers to approach the discourses, opinions, and visions of respondents both analytically. These qualities make it particularly applicable to social work research. Thematic analysis also represents the intellectual and ethic challenge, for experienced and novice researchers alike, of attempting to reveal and interpret themes and subthemes in the participants' discourse. The ethical challenge for researchers is to avoid substituting personal objectives for research objectives, since this may impact the interpretation of data collected from participants and, consequently, skew study results.

The other challenge facing social work researchers employing thematic analysis is to keep their subjectivity in check. When describing and categorizing testimonies

of human experiences, perspectives, and emotions, whether expressed in words or communicated inadvertently by respondents through behavior during interviews, researchers must remain especially vigilant so that their author's own personal histories and professional experiences do not contaminate their interpretation of the data, altering the significance of participant testimonies. Indeed, this reflects one of the fundamental principles of social work practice and research methodologies that knowledge and techniques must always be applied methodically and objectively.

From the example that is present in this work and following the six stages of the thematic analysis, the researcher can draw inspiration to use this method of analysis and to apply other research designs. Finally, the qualitative research in Trabajo Social students from the two participating universities allowed us to use thematic analysis to better understand the motivations, difficulties, and anchors that make students from two different realities interest in social work.

Limitations

The thematic analysis approach discussed in the present paper must be interpreted with prudence. The article cited above provides a case example of how thematic analysis was applied in one study examining why men choose to undertake social work as an area of study. An additional limitation is the difficulty for researchers to ignore previous, tacit knowledge, which may have influenced the analysis of results [68]. Furthermore, the construction of certain themes and subthemes cited in Labra [54] may have been influenced by social desirability, that is, formulated so as to correspond with researchers' expectations, given that Nvivo® software was not used to manage qualitative data. Nevertheless, the research design of the case example presented above, in which the interview guide was elaborated in reference to both the specific problem under study and a directly relevant conceptual framework, constitutes a significant element underpinning the validity of the thematic analysis approach.

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Chapter 13

It is Important to Build on Their Knowledge Teachers' Approaches to Newly Arrived Immigrant Pupils'

Ann-Christin Torpsten

Abstract

This study aims to contribute to the school social work practices in a Swedish context. By capturing the life worlds of newly arrived students and problematizing teachers' approaches to these pupils underlying competences and continued knowledge development and learning, I suggest how social work and education professionals can navigate these life worlds and empower young immigrant pupils in Swedish school. Theoretical basis consists of translanguaging, principles and ideas about education valuing underlying competencies and seeing them as means for further learning in all areas. Through an ecological approach to learning and teaching, I examine teachers' told experiences of teaching in the secondary school program of language introduction in a Swedish context. The analysis shows that the interviewed teachers systematically try to make use of the pupils' prior knowledge and experiences of instruction. The pupils work in language groups in order to complete assignments.

Keywords: translanguaging, language instruction, education, learning, underlying knowledge

1. Foreign background and newly arrived

Approximately 25% of students in Swedish school system have foreign background. Some of them are born in Sweden and others have arrived during their school years. In the Swedish school organization, pupils are counted as newly arrived if they have arrived to Sweden at the start of school, during school in preschool, compulsory school, secondary school or special school or special schools, if they do not have Swedish as their native language, and if they do not command the Swedish language at all or insufficiently [1, 2].

In order to be admitted to a national program in the public secondary school, national requirements for eligibility must be fulfilled, meaning passing grades in many compulsory school subjects. An additional qualification requirement can be named age criterion, which involves commencing the public secondary school before the age of 20. Thereafter, students are referred to adult education or vocational training.

2. Aim – teachers approaches when teaching newly arrived

In light of the eligibility requirements and age criterion, the content and the organization of the education for newly arrived immigrant pupils are crucial for their further studies. This study aims to problematize teachers' approaches to newly arrived immigrant pupils underlying competences and continued knowledge development and learning in all school subjects in relation to translanguaging [3–7] strategies. Through an ecological [8] approach to learning, teaching, and interaction with the environment and by looking at school as a pedagogical practice, I examine teachers' told experiences of teaching newly arrived young people.

2.1 Requirements, program of language introduction, and preparation class

School and education are fundamental to all children and young people; schooling is crucial for the future. Newly arrived pupils and their teachers are challenged in different ways. The limited time in passing grades is one of these challenges, and research [9] shows that immigrant pupils have difficulty in becoming eligible in time. Pupils' use of different languages at home and in school, as well as pupils' need for support in order to understand instructional content, are other challenges highlighted by Cummins [5].

For the youths who do not have the qualifications required for admission to the national program in the Swedish public secondary school, there is a program called language introduction [10]. Within the program, pupils are placed in classes according to an assessment of school history and previous knowledge [2].

2.2 Parallel school life, interrupted past, and postponed future

Both Bunar [9] and Nilsson Folke [11, 12] who have studied immigrant pupils and their offered education, show a parallel school form where pupils' previous knowledge is not taken into account; assessments are not used when the instruction for immigrants is organized and implemented. According to these researchers, placement in an introduction program means both advantages and disadvantages for the immigrant pupils. An advantage is that assessment can be done in a secure environment. Other advantages are the gradual, fundamental introduction to the school language by second-language teachers and the guidance in one's native language. Disadvantages are segregation and exclusion from the other school and other pupils.

When reasoning about preparation, introduction and transitions Nilsson Folke [11, 12] uses the concepts of *parallel school-life, interrupted past*, and *postponed future*. The concept of a *parallel school-life* means that pupils remain in a preparation class for a long time and that the preparation class becomes a waiting room with a separating practice that remains even after the pupils move to ordinary classes. *Interrupted past* means inadequate assessment, difficulties in taking into account the pupils' earlier subject and language skills, and the lack of study guidance in their native languages. The instruction does not utilize or build upon previous education and underlying knowledge. In regard to the pupils' preferences, expectations, and future, Nilsson Folke [12] uses a further concept, which is *postponed future*. The immigrant pupils want to attend regular classes and when they go from the compulsory school preparation class to the secondary school, they have expectations of studying the national program. However, there is the problem that they often lack the qualifications, despite the time spent in the preparation classes, and then the solution of this problem is the language introduction program at secondary school level.

3. Translanguaging, knowledge, and meaning

Language, learning, and knowledge develop in a social context and if we look at language and knowledge as parts of the same linguistic fabric, of the same language mass, we may think that some knowledge forms patterns with a language and other knowledge forms patterns with another or other languages. Thus, knowledge and language form weaves of language, knowledge, and understanding that develop and grow in collaboration. The knowledge-and-language fabric grows and develops when the individual uses his or her underlying competencies and his or her knowledge-language in different settings. According to the principles of social practice and social justice, all languages and all knowledge are equally valuable and important for continued learning [4–7].

The English concept Translanguaging developed from the Welsh term Trawsieithu describes a teacher strategy of planned and systematic use of two languages for teaching and learning inside the same lesson in bilingual education. Translanguaging is a process where students and teachers engage in discursive practices that include all students' language practices in order to develop new and maintain old language practices. This process communicates knowledge and gives voice to new socio-political realities by questioning linguistic inequality [13].

Cummins [5], Cummins and Schecter [14] and Williams [15] states that knowledge and skills in both language and other school subjects develop and deepen when the pupils are given the opportunity to use their knowledge-related languages in different learning situations. Translanguaging in instruction deals with reciprocity, respect, and appreciation of multi-lingual pupils' underlying knowledge and skills. By using their linguistic competence, pupils can utilize and develop further their knowledge and understanding in different areas, they can gain, in-depth understanding in the different school subjects [4–7, 16].

3.1 Cognitive development, recognition, challenges, and subject learning

In order to promote pupils' language development and learning in the instructional setting, Cummins [3, 5] emphasizes interaction, respect, and comprehensible subject content as well as broad and varied instruction and subject content to relate to the pupils' underlying knowledge and ways of learning. Teacher strategies for successful instruction that involves instruction that supports understanding and language production, strengthens the knowledge-language in all subjects, and provides opportunities for pupils to use their multi-lingual repertoires are highlighted. Using the language or languages, one best master in different contexts is valuable for their learning in classrooms where several languages are spoken and in instructional contexts where teachers do not master the pupils' different languages, writes Cummins [5] further. The importance of pupils recognizing the manner of teaching and learning, recognizing the instructional subjects is pointed out by Sarstrand Marekovic [17]. And in addition, teachers must recognize and respect the pupils' knowledge, ways of learning, and how they are taught.

4. An ecological strategy and approach to learning

School and instruction can be understood as a social and pedagogical practice aimed at facilitating pupils' learning. Several factors and strategies must come together in order for pupils to achieve success in their learning and succeed in their education. Kramsch [8, 18] speaks about ecological strategy with regard to school, pupils' learning, and approaches to learning. This strategy is based on human

interaction between innate traits and the environments that people live in. According to the ecological strategy, development and learning take place in harmony with the environment. For students, an ecological and sustainable learning strategy is when he or she can use underlying skills. Translanguaging [4–7, 15] that is, using one's whole linguistic competence to express and develop knowledge and learning within all areas of interplay and human interaction appears as an ecological and sustainable strategy for teachers, pupils, and learning in different school and education contexts.

5. Approach, data, methodology, and analysis

This study aims to problematize teachers' approaches to newly arrived immigrant pupils underlying competences and continued knowledge development in relation to translanguaging [3–7] strategies. Through an ecological [8] approach to learning, teaching and interaction with the environment and by looking at school as a pedagogical practice teachers' told experiences of teaching are interpreted. Looking at school and teaching as pedagogical practice, I examine teachers' told experiences of teaching newly arrived young people.

Data are generated in one group interview [19, 20] with teachers within the individual program of language introduction directed especially to newly arrived people at one public secondary school. All teachers in this teacher team participated in a 2 hour long interview that was documented electronic and transcribed. Ethical considerations are made and I followed good research practice [21] by informing about the purpose of the study, the voluntary participation in the interview and that results will be reported confidentially.

The interviewed teachers are all qualified subject teachers and have several years of experience instructing their subjects in both the individual program and the national program in the public secondary school. In the interview I asked the teachers to tell me about their instruction in their subjects English, Swedish as a second language, Social Studies, and Mathematics. The interview questions dealt with their approaches to newly arrived immigrant pupils' underlying knowledge, competences, and continued knowledge development and how the immigrant pupils' underlying linguistic and cognitive competencies can be taken advantage of in the different subject instructions. The questions also dealt with knowledge or skills of importance for the pupils' continued education and after their schooling. Other questions concerned native language instruction, study guidance, opportunities, and limitations.

The recorded and transcribed interviews have been interpreted [22] based on what was told and the interpretation is aided by the previous sections in this text. I read the transcriptions' several times in order to clarify themes and to see the connections. In this reading, I focused on what the teachers told, and in the following presentation, the interviewed teachers' voices are illustrated by their own words with quotations [19]. Subsequently, the abbreviation IMS is used to refer to the program of language introduction at this public secondary school.

5.1 IMS – the educational context under study

In this study, teachers talk about IMS-classes organized using registration interviews and assessments based on when the pupil arrived at the current school, age, previous schooling, subject knowledge, and language skills. The pupils different school histories vary from no or little schooling to started secondary education, and they speak different languages and speak Swedish at a very basic level.

Within IMS, the pupils are offered instruction in the various compulsory school subjects or secondary school subjects at the respective elementary, middle, lower or

upper secondary level. Some are taught three to seven compulsory school subjects, while others study one subject. Still others study simultaneously compulsory school courses and national program subject courses, such as Religion, Social Studies, Technology, and Art. Swedish as a second language/Swedish is nevertheless the basis of all the subject instruction in parallel with the other subject matter.

6. Result and analysis

In the following section, I thematically present what the IMS-teachers' told about their teaching and approach to the immigrant pupils' and education. Based on concepts from previous sections, the presentation is divided into sections named Underlying knowledge and present education, Language skills and learning Swedish as a Second Language, Building knowledge and time for qualification, and Parallel system and limited choice possibilities.

6.1 Underlying knowledge and present education

The pupils in IMS have different school histories, separate school experiences from various educational contexts, and they have been in Sweden for different lengths of time. The teachers say that the pupils' views on school and learning vary, and that their ways of learning, their subject knowledge, and experiences of instructional methods are different. Because of this, the teachers plan and design their instruction of different subjects differently depending on the pupils' previous school context. One teacher tells in the following quotation about how different education backgrounds, school experiences, and education cultures influence the IMS-education.

> *Yes, and then it may not only be the Swedish culture but also the school culture [...] education culture [...] and previous schooling may not help in certain cases [...] but there is still a big difference whether you have a school background or not.*

Cummins [3–5]; García [6], Garcia and Kleyn [7], García and Leiva [16] and Williams [15] writes about underlying knowledge in terms of equally valuable. In the interview, we talk about this and the teachers emphasizes how teaching in IMS can bring out and take advantage of the pupils' underlying knowledge in the different school subjects. In the following quotation, one teacher describes instruction that respects and draws upon pupils' underlying subject knowledge in order to build new knowledge for both pupils and teachers.

> *I think it is important to build on their knowledge, and I think that you get everyone involved when you have group discussions with them [...] I want to emphasize this because this is when they can show their own methods [...] not [...] so you may not figure out [...] or [...] you may not do this [...] but [...] you think like this and that is good [...] or I hear how you think and I understand how you think.*

We continued to talk about the pupils' different ways of completing school assignments and how the pupils can use and demonstrate their underlying knowledge as building blocks in the present educational context and common knowledge-building. From what the teachers say and in accordance with Sarstrand Marekovic [17] and Cummins [5], it becomes clear that the interviewed teachers show respect for the pupils' underlying knowledge, skills, and ways of learning. The following quotation from the interview shows reciprocity and how the IMS-pupils' different subject matter knowledge is utilized and becomes a resource in the instruction.

I think it is thanks to Social Studies in the sense that we can discuss democracy and dictatorship, and there is someone who comes from Syria or Eritrea or wherever they come from [...] there is a lot of first-hand information [...] when the pupil feels it is OK [...] they can talk about the tax system [...] how it looks and the public sector and everything [...] absolutely as much as possible.

From what the teachers say, it appears that also languages other than Swedish are used so that all pupils acquire and develop knowledge in and about all subjects. For example, in order to understand the instructional content in the different subject classes, the teachers ask the pupils to translate texts between their different languages. The teachers encourage the IMS-pupils in the subject classes to use their linguistic and subject competencies [4–7, 15, 16] when letting them explain the instructional content for one another in their knowledge-language and in Swedish.

I have done it so that they work and answer the questions in Swedish then and later have them translated [...] but then I do not know how the translation is [... ...] then if they re-work it one more time in their native language [...] but I think that is a way to go [...] for these pupils to consolidate their knowledge in another way and think [...] I think this is a way to work with them.

Despite the IMS-teachers do not always understand what the pupils say or write to each other, they say this is a successful strategy for teaching and the pupils' learning.

6.2 Language skills and learning Swedish as a second language

An explicit purpose of the secondary school introduction program is for the pupils to achieve passing compulsory school grades in the school subject of Swedish and in other subjects in order to be eligible for secondary school. The following quotation is an example of an ecological approach [8, 18] to learning and it shows how one of the teachers discusses the pupils' multi-lingual processing of subject matter in relation to learning both Swedish and the actual subject. Language and subject knowledge grow together.

So Swedish is in all our subjects [...] so pupils who do not reach the goals in Social Studies, for example, may see it as good practice in Swedish in the meantime [...] and then it should be good training in Swedish.

The teachers believe that with this multilingual and multi knowledge approach, the pupils re-work their knowledge in more than one way, and they develop their thinking, knowledge, and their languages. Above all, the pupils practice the school language of Swedish in different contexts and interaction with the environment [8, 18]. In their subject teaching teachers often organizes language groups and the quotation below shows that IMS-pupils group themselves by language in different instructional situations. By teaching this way, pupils who master both Swedish and the subject matter help other pupils who have not mastered the school language or the content as well.

They often sit next to each other to get help from each other [...] if they are at different levels then one can explain to the other how to and so on [...] they usually say [...] I explained to him what it was you said [...] because they must answer in Swedish to me because that is the only language I understand well [...] but when they look for a word and ask their friend, then the friend does not usually say

> *the word in Swedish but in their native language [...] then he or she learns it in Swedish from a friend.*

The teachers' state that the pupils support each other's thinking and learning through using their underlying skills in languages [5, 17] in the different school subjects and in interaction in different contexts [8, 18]. In such a way, all the pupils develop their language competence and their subject competence, the teacher says.

6.3 Building knowledge and time for qualification

The IMS-pupils have less time to become qualified for the Swedish public secondary school compared to their friends who have completed all or a large part of their education in Sweden. The teachers say that the pupils should experience the manner of instructing and of studying, plus the content in the education within IMS, as important and relevant. According to what the teachers say pupils choices of subjects become extra significant, and the content in the different subject classes cannot be isolated and extraneous when both pupils and teachers have to hurry. This hurry or lack of time is illustrated by the following quotation.

> *Because many are in a hurry when they come and we are also in a hurry [...] there is a lot to do in a short time [...] so there are some [...] you say 'loose building blocks' that we throw at them [...] that they do not really know how to put together [... ...] because for pupils who have attended 9 years in the Swedish school, the pieces fall into place quite naturally.*

It appears that both teachers and pupils experience a shortage of time. In this short time context, the teachers speak about challenges, stimulating assignments and about collisions when referring to the limited time to prepare the IMS-pupils for upcoming studies and for life after school. The following quotation shows an example of a challenge in terms of an experience of offered learning as important for both their continued studies and their life after school in order to avoid what Nilsson Folke [12] conceptualize postponed future.

> *Then it is even more important that the approach is integrated so the pupil feels that what I do here now is important for real then [...] what I learn has value. [...] but when they want to go at turbo-speed here to get a grade to become qualified and move on [...] that crashes there I think. [...] it becomes even more important that you can use what you learn in school in society.*

The teachers say that different parts of the IMS-education, content, the pupils' previous knowledge, current know-how, and future study and career plans must fit together. The pupils must be able to experience that what they learn leads to valuable knowledge, say the teachers.

6.4 Parallel system and limited choice possibilities

One of the requirements for being admitted to the public secondary school national program is that the pupil is under 20 years of age. The teachers state that this age requirement is part of a parallel system [9, 12] that leaves the IMS-pupils with limited choice possibilities. Following quotation from the teacher interview illustrates that time controls IMS-pupils' subject choices and study direction, as well as the teachers' instructional content.

> *They really have to hurry [...] much depends on their own hurry in determining whether they are prepared for further study or for a vocational program [... ...] I want to give them everything [...] just like for my own youngsters [...] I feel [...] sorry that because of their own hurry they dismiss certain opportunities [...] it is not because we choose not to, but because they are in a hurry to see an actual vocational training or a job sometime in the future.*

The teachers feel that the system inhibits by making some choices possible while others are impossible based on the pupil's age. One of the teachers says that this hurry then leads to pupils choosing to study certain subjects and disregarding other subjects.

> *I mean [...] depending on how many subjects they can take [...] what they have taken here and so on [...] what they have time for and so on.*

Thus, the age criterion is a factor rushing the IMS-pupils to become qualified for the public secondary school. The teachers say that the IMS-pupils wish the IMS studies would lead to further study at the public secondary school. The quotation above shows that through their choices which also mean what they do not choose, the pupils want to become qualified in the subjects required for admission to the national program in the public secondary school before the age barrier sets a stop to this opportunity and their studies ends up in postponed future [12].

7. Translanguaging, knowledge, and learning

This section discuss the teachers' approach to the immigrant pupils' underlying competences and continued knowledge development, as well as their experience of teaching in the secondary school individual program of language introduction by linking to research and the questions about how teachers can take advantage of, acknowledge, and develop further the immigrant pupils' underlying linguistic and cognitive skills in different subject classes.

The group interviews clearly reveal that the teachers in their instruction systematically try to take advantage of the pupils' previous knowledge and learning in the different school subjects. The goal is for the IMS-pupils to be integrated into regular education with other pupils. The importance of the pupils' various experiences of teaching and learning in different contexts in different school subjects is visible, as well as the importance of learning for the future, after IMS. The interview reveals that in the pupils often work in language groups to complete assignments and that residential staff provides instrumental help with schoolwork.

7.1 Equivalent education based on competence

The offered instruction corresponds to the demands of a multi-cultural society for equivalent education: the pupils are offered the right to equivalent education based on their competence, and their knowledge is respected [9, 23, 24].

When the teachers talk about the IMS-pupils' varying school histories, we can see how in their instruction, the teachers respect and take advantage of what the pupils already know. The teachers talk about all underlying knowledge as important for continued learning. The pupils support each other and doing so their knowledge and understanding develop when handling different subject matter in more than one way and in more than one language.

García's [6] work about educational principles such as social justice and social practice is about emphasizing the pupils' different competencies as equivalent and important to build upon in instruction. When teachers appreciate and see pupils' diverse and underlying knowledge as resources and when the instruction is systematically based on pupils' different skills, then the schooling can be said to be grounded in García's [6] principles of social justice and social practice. All languages and all knowledge are equally valuable and important for continued learning [4–7]. Cummins [5] and Sarstrand Marekovic [17] highlight educational strategies that teachers can use. The strategies involve supporting comprehension, assisting language production in all subjects, taking advantage of pupils' multi-lingualism, and strengthening the knowledge-language.

The teachers discuss all these aspects in the interview. They say that they support and value the pupils' understanding and continued knowledge development in different subjects. The IMS-pupils are given the opportunity to use their underlying knowledge, for example, in Social Studies, when the class discusses economic systems or in Mathematics when pupils show how different mathematics calculations can be carried out, set up, and explained. The pupils' different ways of solving mathematics problems, previous knowledge about socio-economics or helping each other understand in different languages, form the basis for instruction and discussion in the classroom.

According to Cummins [5] the language or languages the immigrant pupils speak best, their knowledge-language(s), fulfill an important function and strengthen their ability to learn. This is valid also in the multi-lingual classroom where the teachers do not have a command of all the classroom languages [5]. The interviewed teachers tell about not being able to speak all the languages spoken by their pupils. This in turn means that they do not always understand what the pupils say, how they translate or explain something for each other, for example, in Mathematics. The teachers still believe what is most important is for pupils to twist and turn their learning and knowledge. In such a way, they process their knowledge in several ways.

7.2 Underlying knowledge – uninterrupted past and started future

Swedish/Swedish as a second language appears as a significant component and important content in all IMS instruction, perhaps the most important. Increased collaboration over the subject and level boundaries and integrating subjects, for example, Mathematics and English, is emphasized as important for the pupils' education. Both IMS-pupils and their teachers seek increased opportunities for the pupils to study more subjects at the compulsory school level and in the secondary school national program.

Pupils' learning and cognitive development, the importance of teachers' and pupils' expectations, attitudes, engagement, and interaction, are discussed by Cummins and Schecter [14], Sarstrand Marekovic [17]. Fundamental for new learning is that pupils can use their underlying knowledge and learning, that their knowledge is respected and that high demands are set. Another important aspect in this context is the teacher's ability in the instruction to refer to all the pupils' knowledge and ways of teaching and learning [25]. Sarstrand Marekovic [17] points out positive and negative experiences from earlier schooling and recognition as fundamental with regard to pupils' success in school.

Collaboration over subject boundaries is examples of how within IMS, teachers take advantage of pupils' knowledge and interests, and they refer to pupils' underlying competencies in different school subjects. This way the IMS-pupils' background

knowledge is respected and utilized in instruction. The teachers say that the IMS-pupils can be offered to participate in the subjects, English or Social Studies, for example, in the national program. Some pupils may attend individual lessons in subjects without being admitted, while other pupils may be admitted and attend the national course.

Nonetheless, a shortage of places in the classroom may limit or set a stop to such collaboration.

7.3 Utilized past – native language and study counselor

Pupils' web or net of languages, thought, and knowledge develops in interaction with the environment [8, 18] and dependence on others when pupils take advantage of their underlying resources in different learning contexts. Cummins and Schecter [14], Cummins [3–5], García [6], [7], and Williams [15] discuss this in terms of continued and deepened learning.

The aforementioned means that pupils develop their expertise in language as well as in other areas when they use their language, knowledge, and learning, their skills in different contexts. To be able to use underlying skills in school instruction without distinguishing them, to be supported by study guidance in a language that one understands so as to understand the instruction given in another language, can be discussed in terms of translanguaging ([4–7]: [15]). Translanguaging appears in this context as an ecological teaching and learning strategy [8, 18], a strategy that makes learning possible. Ecological strategy may be the teachers describing pupils who do not keep their language aside, but rather let their language and knowledge interact.

7.4 Urgency and challenge to become eligible – postponed future

Changed requirements and circumstances within IMS have brought increased collaboration between the teachers in IMS and in the national subject courses. Changed requirements and circumstances within IMS have also brought an increased number of subjects and levels of instruction being offered to the pupils.

The challenge that both teachers and IMS-pupils face, to be qualified for the public secondary school, is discussed by researchers such as Bunar [9] and Cummins [5]. Immigrant pupils' difficulties in obtaining eligibility depend on how the instruction is organized, whether the content is comprehensible for the pupils and on the amount of time [5, 9]. The pupils, who arrive late during their compulsory school years, have just a few years to achieve passing grades for the compulsory school subjects. Teachers' need in-service training in order to meet these pupils in the best way and the pupils need support in both language and knowledge areas in order to understand the content in the given instruction.

These topics come up in the interviews with IMS-teachers who teach in an organization under constant change. The number of pupils varies; the pupils' school histories differ. The common goal of the instruction within IMS, however, is for the pupils to be qualified for the national program in the public secondary school before they turn 20 years old.

> *They really have to hurry [...] much depends on their own hurry in determining whether they are prepared for further study or for a vocational program [... ...] because of their own hurry they dismiss certain opportunities [...] it is not because we choose not to, but because they are in a hurry to see an actual vocational training or a job sometime in the future.*

The above quotation visualizes how the age criterion appears for both pupils and teachers as interrupting the past and postponing the future [12], as a system brake that makes it impossible for them in terms of hurrying and study pace, and in terms of orientation and goals and content in the studies.

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