

# Perspectives on Social Work

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*Perspectives on Social Work*

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**From The Editors**  
**Agnes Dulin, LMSW**

Who would have ever thought that I would be an editor for a doctoral journal? Certainly not me, I thought I could be a doctoral student but an editor, no way. In addition to my duties as editor, doctoral student, and social worker, I am a mother of six, and grandmother of two. I am learning in my old age that taking chances can be rewarding, stepping out of my comfort zone can be life-changing. So, here I am, trying to fill the shoes of past editors, especially those of Amy Russell, co-editor, who has been an essential contributor to the success of the *Perspective on Social Work* since the spring 2005 issue. As I begin my duties as an editor of the *PSW*, I promise to uphold the integrity and honesty that has been expended in past publications. The editors are very proud to publish this particular journal because of the impressive submissions from students not only from the University of Houston, but also from other prestigious universities such as New York University, University of Michigan, Mississippi State University, Simmons College, Arizona State University, Indiana University, and the University of Denver. I appreciate all of the submissions to the journal and can empathize with the doubts and fears that go along with submitting a manuscript that has become a part of you. Whether or not your manuscripts have been accepted for inclusion in *Perspectives on Social Work*, commend yourself for submitting and being open to rejection by your peers; you took a chance. Anyone can accept praise and acceptance, but it takes a committed researcher to accept criticism and rejection.

I want to thank Amy for her guidance this past year in preparing Jack Griffin-Garcia, Eusebius Small, and me for the auspicious duty of editors of the journal. I would also like to welcome Kara Lopez and Saralyn McIver, first year doctoral students who have generously volunteered to take a chance and learn the editorial process for future publications. As always, thanks to Dr. Maxine Epstein for her continued support and guidance that which enables the journal to thrive. I hope that you enjoy the Spring 2007 issue of the *Perspectives on Social Work* and discover the issues that are important to Social Work doctoral students of today.

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**The CV Builder**

University of Houston, Graduate College of Social Work  
*Perspectives on Social Work* congratulates the following doctoral students on their  
accomplishments for fall 2006

**Amy Russell** presented at the NASW/TX conference October 2006 on “Lobby Training: Skills for Social Workers”. She taught Research Methods in the Fall 2006 semester at GCSW and teaches as an adjunct at UHCL in Research and Statistics. Amy has a publication in press: Vohra-Gupta, S., Russell, A., & Lo, E., “Meditation: The Adoption of Eastern Thought to Western Social Practices”, *Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Social Work*. She also continues to be politically active on NASW/TX's political action committee, TPACE.

**Peter A Kindle** presented "Wage inelasticity and the social work labor market: Implications for BSW programs" at the 24th Annual Conference of the Association of Baccalaureate Social Work Program Directors. His publications included an essay titled "The inherent value of social work"

in *The New Social Worker*. He is also a contributing editor to the third edition of *Controversial Issues in Social Policy* (Allyn & Bacon, 2007) with Howard Karger, James Midgley, and Brene' Brown.

**Leslie Raneri** had article published:

Raneri LG and Wiemann CM, Social ecological predictors of repeat adolescent pregnancy, *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, 2007, 39(1):39–47.

**Shetal Vohra-Gupta** taught course SOCW 7344 titled, Family Violence, at the GCSW in the Fall 2006 semester. She also has a publication in press: Vohra-Gupta, S., Russell, A., & Lo, E. (In press). Acceptance of Eastern meditation to Western social practices . *Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Social Work*.

**Larry Hill** had a manuscript accepted for publication: Love, S., Koob, J., Hill, L. (2006). Meeting the challenge of evidence-based practice: can mental health therapies evaluate their practice? *Brief Treatment and Crisis Intervention*, 7(2).

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### Counterpoint

#### Muscling into the Marketplace: Social Work for the New Millennium

#### A Response to Peter Kindle

**Justine McGovern, MA, MSW**

In his “Answering the Critics: The Inherent Value of Social Work,” Peter Kindle summarizes the history of social work and outlines claims made by critics of the profession (Kindle, 2006). In addition, he leaves the reader with a glimmer of optimism. Indeed, Kindle suggests that despite low standards, ill-defined terrain and mission, and a questionable relationship to social control, social work will carry on because it offers a flicker of hope to impassioned and dedicated social reformers (2006, p.7). However, his conclusion that passion anchors the field and ensures its future also reduces the profession.

Kindle’s restricting focus on passion denies close to one hundred years of professional development. Passion may indeed inform why people commit professionally to service and social justice. However, perhaps a more powerfully convincing argument to justify the existence of an important and durable profession can be made by emphasizing that social work fills a void in care. For example, the profession’s strengths could be described as supporting, advocating for, and developing theory attentive to the needs of vulnerable populations while providing honorable, rigorous and gratifying employment to trained and licensed professionals. Kindle’s article begins the rebuttal. Conclusive affirmation of the field, however, requires a more robust and muscular stance. The stance embraces new frames of reference and new language. Those social workers concerned with the practice and perception of their profession have some heavy lifting to do to bulk up the profession and increase its stature.

Further, Kindle reasserts the false dichotomy between theory and practice, as though practice were theory-free. By both dismissing the importance of theory development in favor of its practical applications, “social work is not a theoretical exercise, but an applied practice” (2006, p.5), and stressing that striving for social reform comprises social work’s key component,

Kindle does not answer the critics. Instead, he provides them with ammunition to write off the profession as intellectually weak and naively idealist.

Nonetheless, Kindle's organizing metaphor of the marketplace opens a door to a new perspective. In this context, borrowing and lending constitute defining characteristics for the profession's survival. A paradigm shift, wherein borrowing from more robust fields, such as economics, linguistics and politics, instead of the softer psychology and sociology, provides a more muscular platform to social workers concerned with increasing social justice in its myriad forms. From this platform, one that not only embraces theory development to inform best practices, but also encourages engagement

-- competition even -- with professions of higher status and greater remuneration, social work will finally be treated with respect not only in academia but also in the marketplace. Importantly, it will more successfully fulfill its mission of serving clients.

“Follow the money”

Kindle makes a strong argument in favor of his point that social work's identity stems from its core values (2006, p.6). Indeed, the social work code of ethics clearly articulates a mission steeped in beliefs, values, and ethics that guide practice (NASW, 1996). Further, since their professionalizing in the 1900s, social workers continue to identify the profession's values as reflecting their own (Abramovitz, 1998, Addams, 1960, and Jacobson, 2001). But, social workers are not the only professionals concerned with social reform. Economists, politicians, scientists, lawyers even, often also profess adhering to similar values, striving for the same ends and believing in the same ideals. Why, then, are these other professionals so often better paid, more respected, and winning Nobel Prizes? (Yes, Jane Addams won the Nobel Peace Prize, and surely every social worker is proud of that. However, her accomplishments occurred almost one hundred years ago, and there has been a dearth of Nobel laureates in the field since then.)

To begin with, social work continues to be women's work. Women vastly outnumber men not only in service providers, but also as service recipients (Karger and Stoesz, 2003). A feminist critique of the profession could make the argument that the traditionally feminine concern with caring for others, collective responsibility, and a holistic approach to problem solving provides the basis for the code of ethics. However, women in social work, as in many other professions, are not traditionally paid as well, do not achieve the same status, and do not receive equivalent benefits as men who tend to ascend to leadership positions more readily (McPhail, 2004). A women's profession is thus, a priori, suffering a disadvantage. It behooves social workers, men and women, to address this disparity face on. Not only can they join activist political groups engaged in furthering gender equality generally, but also they can urge the NASW to advocate for better pay and benefits by increasing the public's awareness of the profession's contributions to society. The teachers' union (UFT) provides a good model of this kind of achievement. But first, social workers must internalize their own value.

If social workers do not think of themselves as worthy competitors for, as Kindle mentions, dwindling human service funding for the services they provide to their clients, much less status and money for themselves, then why should anybody else (Kindle, 2006)? The effort is therefore both personal and professional. The point is not to change social work values, because they do motivate the work and reflect personal beliefs, but rather to present them, and the profession, more convincingly. Economics, capitalizing not only on core values that echo those of social work but also on the persuasive language of political rhetoric, provides a template for a more

commanding field. A basic understanding of economics reveals that the two fields, at their best, share a concern for social issues, including poverty, public health, and equal opportunity.

### Wealth, words, and women

In The Wealth of Nations, first published in 1776, Adam Smith articulated the basis of free-market economics, emphasizing that wealth should not be measured as a product but rather in terms of the flow of goods in the market place (Smith, 1976). His laissez-faire economics has greatly colored the American economic and political landscape. Smith's work is often used to promote a non-interfering, financially conservative, government agenda. But, according to contemporary economic thought, the original articulation of Smith's ideology did not advocate for little government intervention. On the contrary, his keen awareness of growing inequality between the classes, which he perceived as facilitated by capitalism, prompted him to articulate a moral vision as well as an economic theory that articulated commitment to the common good. Contemporary analysis implies that his moral vision laid the foundation for progressive politics (Sowell, 2006) – and social work as it stands today.

Sowell makes a strong case in his analysis of Smith's progressive standpoint by focusing on his position vis-à-vis collective responsibility for the common good and social justice (Sowell, 2006). Smith advocated and developed policy for the first public education system in order not only to enhance social opportunity and access for the working classes, but also to ameliorate their morale. He recognized the relationship between social and professional stagnation and feelings of hopelessness and despair in workers. His education policies encompassed a commitment to economic justice as well as wellbeing.

In addition, Smith was a peace activist who advocated for British retreat from the colonies and disengagement. Moreover, he made a moral, not economic, argument against slavery (Sowell, 2006). Finally, Smith penned one of the first public statements calling for social justice: “no society can be flourishing and happy, of which the far greater part of the members are poor and miserable,” (as cited in Sowell, 2006, p.6). Smith, then, can be seen as a model social worker -- advocating for social justice; dedicated to improving the mental state of members of the underclass; committed to peace. And, last but not least: developing theory.

Almost three hundred years later, Smith's theories continue to dominate the world economy as free-market capitalism. However, the definition of economics has changed over time. Contemporary economics incorporates Keynesian theory, that is, focus on the interactions and responsibilities of individuals and governments in regulating the market to satisfy needs and wants despite a scarcity of resources and unequal distribution thereof (Sachs, 2005). At first glance, this looks remarkably like the domain of social work. After all, social workers strive to help individuals navigate their environment, achieve wellbeing, and access resources. But, the language of economics sounds different.

In revisiting core tenets of feminist theory (Gilligan, 1982), Lakoff, the cognitive scientist and linguist, underscores that language provides a key to idea formation, and changing rhetoric can change an outcome (Lakoff, 2002). His argument emphasizes the power of rhetoric in the political arena, with worldwide implications for peace, poverty and health. However, with this relationship in mind, that is that language can affect outcome, the new definition of economics is highly revealing.

Indeed, in the hierarchy of human concerns, needs rank higher than wants. The suggestion that wants can be satisfied, implies that needs have already been met. This intimates that with a certain kind of intervention, such as the reallocation of existing resources, basic

human needs, such as food, shelter and clothing, could indeed be met. In turn, this would open the door to achieving satisfaction at the next level: that of wants – education, healthcare, social freedoms. What a different world this implies. The new definition is thus extremely hopeful: those committed to improving outcome, for example social workers, can actually make a difference because the resources are already available. Economics inspires action, action informed by a global vision of hope based on distributive justice. Why couldn't social work do the same?

There are some social workers working within the muscular model, focusing on the economics of social problems and their solutions, and capitalizing on language. Specifically, Abramovitz comes to mind. Her work on redistribution of benefits, policy and reform, co-opts the domain of economics for her social work agenda (Abramovitz, 1998). By stating that “since its emergence in the late 1800s, social work has helped to mediate between the conflicting needs of individuals and the requirements of the market economy,” (Abramovitz, p.518), she has sculpted an important shift. Not only does she assess individual needs in light of the market economy, but also she suggests that individuals need not be victims of the economy. “Mediating” implies a reciprocal relationship and agency – not victimization. Agency affects change. It can free from oppressive forces -- economic or social injustice, power differentials in relationships, mental and physical illness, or any number of concerns addressed by social workers and exacerbated or engendered by the complexities of the global marketplace.

#### Confidence, Conviction, Commitment

Change, then, is not “inevitable”, as Kindle states (Kindle, 2006), but rather inherent to effective social work, not only in meeting clients' needs in a changing world, but also in perpetuating the profession. One of the things that may need to change, however, is how social workers perceive themselves. If they can effectively internalize a sense of their own worth, then convincing critics, funders, and competing professionals, of their effectiveness and value should not be so difficult. The language of confidence and conviction helps – just ask a politician. Since 1915, social work has been judged and criticized on the same old terms: lack of rigor and cohesion, unclear mission and methodology (Kindle, p.5). And yet, the profession continues on; social workers' commitment is unwavering. Kindle's article issues a call to action. Indeed, social workers can answer the critics once and for all by writing their own future in their actions and with their words. But they need to flex their muscles.

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## **Results of the 2006 Nursing Home Social Work Survey**

### **Elise Beaulieu, MSW, LICSW**

Since 1998, the Massachusetts Chapter of National Association of Social Workers Nursing Home Committee has developed annual surveys about various topics in practice of social work in nursing facilities. The 2006 Nursing Home Social Work Conference Survey addressed the area of social workers' perceptions of cultural, diversity, and ethno-culture in their facilities. In addition, the survey looked at how they see their facilities meeting the needs of diverse residents.

Currently, 80.8 percent of the nation's nursing home residents are White, 13.1 percent are Black, 4.1 percent are Hispanic and 1.5 percent are either Asian or Pacific Islanders. As the population of the region and the country continues to shift and become more diverse, the general population of White elders overall is anticipated to decline. By 2030, demographers predict there will be 5.3 percent Asian or Pacific Islanders and the largest growth area will be in the Hispanic group comprising between 7.8 percent and 11.2 percent of the aged population (Administration on Aging (AoA), 2007; Centers for Medicaid and Medicare (CMS), 2007; Cox, 1996; Day, 2007). The expected shifts in future aged populations and the acculturation of minority groups will increase diversity nursing facility population. It can be anticipated that many nursing homes will be caring for a more diverse population than ever before. These changes will mean that long-term care facility social workers will need to be more knowledgeable about meeting the needs of differing groups of people.

This exploratory study sought to gain greater awareness of how social workers currently perceive their own cultural competence and their facility's response to diversity. There were two primary questions:

- Do nursing home social workers view themselves as culturally competent?
- In what ways do nursing home social workers see their facilities responding to resident, family, and staff diversity?
- In responding to diversity, what areas are currently being provided and what areas are lacking?

### Literature Review

The research and literature has confirmed that Whites utilize nursing homes more than minorities (Kersting, 2001). Traditionally, minority elders and their families have been slower in seeking nursing home care for a number of reasons. Primarily, because of the social and cultural status of the elder, the family often provides needed long term social supports to keep the older family members in the community setting. The private cost of a nursing facility is often beyond modest means of minority elders and their families. The lack of placement may be related to not having either private insurance or Medicaid. The issue of discrimination also contributes to the lack of use of nursing home and hospital discharge planners may presume that



families want to care for the elder at home and fail to offer options. The language differences between institutional caregivers and non-English speaking resident can be intimidating to frail, sick elders and their families. Lastly, the social and cultural differences in perceptions of care contribute to minority elder care being provided by the family in the community. (Kersting, 2001; Wood & Wan, 1993; Yeo, 1993).

When minorities do seek nursing home care, it is more likely the result of conflicts between the caregiver and the elder rather than caregiver exhaustion. In these cases, the nursing home placement is precipitated by a decline in physical and or mental status of the elder but also with tensions and stress between family members (Wood & Wan, 1993). In addition, minority elders are particularly at risk for poor adjustments around nursing home placement because of the shift in physical location of the elder can impact the elder's role within the family structure, overall care expectations (Mold, Fitzpatrick, & Roberts, 2005; Wood & Wan, 1993). Social workers familiar with a group's diversity, history, migration experience, culture and current reality can assist residents within their particular beliefs, values, and expectations when they enter the nursing facility (Kane & Houston Vega, 2004; Kolb, 1999).

Social workers through culturally sensitive assessments can help resident with recognizing and supporting the many spheres of identity that make living in the institutional setting easier (Capitman, Hernandez-Gallegos, & Yee, 1991). For example, the change from the home setting to the nursing home may revive old memories of migration in the cases of immigrant Latinos. Being aware of the unique issues in this group of individuals can help social workers address factors that may impact thoughts and feelings around nursing home placement (Kolb, 1999)

Providing support to residents as they adjust to nursing home settings can be a challenging process. Isolation can happen when the elder is separated from the extended family situation. The continuation of similar community activities for new residents, such as participation in religious ceremonies, having traditionally prepared foods, and maintaining social ties encourages positive outcomes and quality of life for nursing home placement and increase family satisfaction (Mold, Fitzpatrick, & Roberts, 2005; Sasson, 2001)

In 2001, NASW created the *Standards for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice* that include definitions of culture, competence, and cultural competence in the practice of social work. There are ten standards of cultural competence that include: ethics and values, self-awareness, cross-cultural knowledge, cross cultural skills, service delivery, empowerment and advocacy, diverse workforce, professional education, language diversity and cross cultural leadership (2001). Cultural competence is also integrated into *NASW Standards for Social Work Services in Long-Term Care Facilities* (2003) and the *Nursing Home Practice Standards of the NASW Massachusetts Chapter* (1996). These standards provide the foundation for social workers in long term care settings to promote ways to meet the needs of residents and their families.

### Terms and Definitions

**Cultural competence-** For the purposes of the study, cultural competence is operationally defined as the capacity and the ability of the social worker (s) and the setting to meet the service needs of diverse clients (Jackson, 2005).

**Diversity-** For the purposes of this study, diversity is operationally defined as a term inclusive of individuals whose ethnic, racial, cultural, regional, religious, political, and/or socioeconomic

status (s) are different from the dominate culture (Burton, 1991; Capitman, Hurnandez-Gellegos, & Yee, 1991).

## 2006 Survey of Nursing Home Social Workers

### Methodology

This survey's focus was exploring how social workers see their nursing homes addressing the complex needs of individual residents and families who are culturally diverse from the overall population of the nursing facility as well as from the staff. The study questions were derived from the NASW nursing home committee members, NASW Standards for Social Work Services in Long-Term Care Facilities (NASW, 2003), and the *NASW Standards for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice* (NASW, 2001). Questions addressed the demographics of the participants, how facilities viewed "cultural competence" and how the nursing homes accommodated Residents' Rights and translations for non-English speaking residents, roommate selection, religious and dietary preferences. In addition, the survey asked about the staff/resident/family tensions that can arise in settings around ethnic, cultural, or religious preferences.

### Description and Demographics of Participants

Before addressing the results of the study, I will briefly describe the distribution of the survey and the general attributes of the social work participants.

The surveys were provided in each conference packet and collected at the end of the conference day. The research incorporated a self-report, non-identifying questionnaire that included basic information about the social worker and his/her facility and specific questions about how the facility and the social worker address cultural diversity based upon committee members experiences and expertise.

There were 72 respondents who were geographically distributed evenly around the Boston Metropolitan area. Of the group, five participants came from Cape Cod and out of state. The majority (54.2 percent,  $n = 67$ ) of the facilities represented were corporately owned, 20.8 percent ( $n = 15$ ) were private and non-profit, 11.1 percent ( $n = 8$ ) were individually owned and 6.9 percent ( $n = 5$ ) were government facilities. The size of the facilities ranged from 27 to 300 beds, the average being 124 beds.

The weekly number of designated facility social work hours average social worker was employed 40 hours per week. In 38.9 percent ( $n = 28$ ) of the nursing homes the social work role is shared between two social workers, however, 25 percent ( $n = 18$ ) continue to work alone. Social work experience has been generally associated with practice skill. In this study, 45.7 percent ( $n = 65$ ) of social workers indicated they have between 10 and 30 years of experience with an average of 9.42 years.

The educational and licensing demographics of the participating nursing home social workers were different than those surveyed nationally. In the national survey, 62 percent had a bachelor's degree and 35 percent had master's degrees. In addition, only 47 percent were licensed or registered social workers in their respective states (Voulakis, et al 2005). In this study over half (52.8 percent,  $n = 38$ ) of the social workers had MSW degrees and 41.7 percent ( $n = 30$ ) have Bachelor's degrees and 100 percent ( $n = 67$ ) of the participants were licensed in Massachusetts. Salaries in the field of social work gerontology have been reportedly lower than other areas of practice (Givelman & Schervich, 1995; Scharlach, et al, 2000). The salaries of

the majority of survey's nursing home social workers (45.8 percent,  $n = 33$ ) are between \$53,040-60,000 per year and 18 percent ( $n = 13$ ) earn between \$44,720-50,000 annually.

### *Cultural Competence*

Cultural competence is important component of the provision of social work to clients. The recognition of and individual ethno-cultural preferences by social workers' enhances the unique personhood and an individual's dignity, and self-worth. It can help create a vehicle through which social work can recognize individuals' coping strengths and enhance the quality of life for persons' in transition or crisis as well as in long term care approaches.

In the survey the majority of social workers (70.9 percent,  $n = 62$ ) expressed that "cultural competence" was recognized and valued by their facility administration and ownership. Level of education, social workers with bachelor's degrees (73.3 percent,  $n = 22$ ) and master's degrees (70 percent,  $n = 40$ ), did not impact self-reported importance of cultural competence in their facilities. In facilities where these social workers' indicated the importance of cultural competence, there was a positive correlation ( $<.05$ ) to the nursing home offering specialized meals, recognizing the importance of religious holidays for both residents and staff, and staff being sensitive to the language spoken by the resident.

In Table 1, the survey results indicate that according to the social workers', the majority of facilities make efforts to recognize and provide services that are cultural and diversity sensitive.

**Table 1**  
*Positive Responses Accommodating Diversity in Nursing Homes*

| Question  | <u>Agree</u> |      | <u>Disagree</u> |      |
|---|--------------|------|-----------------|------|
|   | <i>n</i>     | %    | <i>n</i>        | %    |
| Is staff available to translate for residents & families in languages other than English? | 59           | 81.9 | 7               | 9.7  |
| Does roommate selection acknowledge diversity?  | 57           | 79.2 | 7               | 9.7  |
| Are Resident Rights provided in a language understood by the resident/family?             | 56           | 77.8 | 9               | 12.5 |
| Are religious preferences recognized in medical treatment plans?                          | 56           | 77.8 | 6               | 8.3  |
| Are myths about race and ethnicity discouraged?   | 48           | 68.7 | 6               | 18.1 |

Note: The four point scale (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree) is collapsed into two categories; rounding accounts for percentages that exceed 100; number of respondents varies by item due to missing data.

### Recognition of Religious Preferences

Access and provision of regular religious services are important to residents and families. Religious observances provided in facilities assist residents in maintaining their spiritual life as well as connections to the larger community. The study participants, (72.2 percent  $n = 65$ )

stated that religious holidays are recognized in the facility for *both* residents and staff. Table 2 indicates the percentage of religious services available in Massachusetts’s facilities:

**Table 2**  
**Types of Religious Services Provided**

| <b>Denomination</b> | <b>n</b> |
|---------------------|----------|
| Catholic            | 62       |
| Protestant          | 52       |
| Jewish              | 39       |
| Greek Orthodox      | 12       |
| Hindu               | 4        |
| Islamic             | 3        |
| <b>Other</b>        | <b>7</b> |

Note: It was possible for participants to respond to more than one category.

### Staff and Resident Challenges

#### Tensions

While many facilities make efforts to provide sensitive, dignified care for all residents/families, tensions remain around meeting resident needs. Almost half of the social work respondents (47.6 percent,  $n =$ ) encounter racial and ethnic tensions between staff members or between staff and residents/families between 1-4 times per month.

#### Diets

When nursing homes offer programs to assist in recognition of resident diversity, they are more likely to offer customary diets. According to the participants of the survey, slightly less than half of facilities (41.6 percent,  $n = 30$ ) do not recognize individual resident diet preferences such as offering culturally familiar food. Access to familiar foods is important to elders of diverse cultures because it directly connects them to familiar, previous patterns of life (Yeo, 1993). Traditional food itself and/or traditionally prepared food is often linked to a home-like atmosphere and having an ethnically appropriate diet can enhance a resident’s quality of life.

#### Minority Representation

Facilities also struggle with the inclusion of community people of color. Only 36.7 percent ( $n = 26$ ) include representative minorities in programs or as speakers in the nursing home. Encouraging minority representation in activities programs, Resident Councils, Family Councils, or facility boards, such as an Ethic’s Committee enhances the opportunities for facility collaboration in caring for residents (Yeo, 1993). Inclusion of community representatives in these venues provides opportunities to reduce myths around diversity and advances advocacy and reduces barriers.

#### Formal In-service Training

It is important for nursing facilities to provide routine, formal specialized training for staff about the groups they are serving (Yeo, 1993). This can be valuable in helping staff work with residents’ communicating their needs, understanding the loss of the elder’s previous family role and behavior (Mold, Fitzpatrick & Roberts, 2005). Although social workers may have informal conversations with staff and residents around diversity issues when they arise, 48.6

percent ( $n = 35$ ) of social workers never provide formal, regular in-services for staff around being culturally competent, and formally resolving cultural differences.

Of this group, 38.6 percent ( $n = 17$ ) social workers who experienced tensions provided cultural in-service education for the staff either once or twice a quarter. Social workers who did not experience racial and ethnic tensions (28.6 percent,  $n = 8$ ) provided regular cultural in-services. Although we cannot generalize from this small sample, it would appear that social workers who experience racial and ethnic tensions in their facilities offset this challenge by offering staff opportunities for training and learning (Yeo, 1993).

### ***Incorporating Responsiveness to Diversity in Nursing Facilities***

Long-term care social workers can advocate for residents with diverse backgrounds by being more knowledgeable about their specific culture and supporting the need for ethnically sensitive care. In addition, facilities can address the need for resident cultural continuity through the recruitment of diverse staff and volunteers, providing culturally relevant diets and activities (including calendars in the resident's language), increase the training of all care giving staff for different values and behaviors (Williams, 2006; Wood & Wan, 1993; Yeo, 1993).

Social workers can further provide assistance and advocacy to both families and residents facing these issues in the following areas and reduce the potential isolation of a minority resident through:

- Encouraging the assignment of Certified Nursing Assistants' (C.N.A.s') who speak the resident's same language;
- Encouraging diverse community volunteers to provide assistance in the facility through activities, special religious ceremonies, or dietary contributions;
- Providing opportunities for minority community representatives to speak about their unique needs as well as shared requests at Resident Councils, Family Nights, serve as facility Board Members, or on Ethics Committees;
- Encouraging opportunities for staff to share their cultural background through staff dinners where participants bring and share food, music, and wear of clothing representing their country of origin;
- Encouraging myths and prejudice about diversity to be addressed openly both informally as well formally through routine in-service training
- And continuing social work education around culture and ethnicity to acquire more skills in this area.

### ***Conclusion***

Social workers have been noted to play an important role in meeting the psychosocial needs of residents in nursing homes (Meyers, 2006). This small pilot study has provided information about diversity in Massachusetts nursing homes from the perspective of the social worker. A number of facilities in this survey made an effort to provide a range of language translation, sensitivity around roommate selection, language-specific residents' rights, medical treatment plans reflective of religiosity, and inhibit myths about race and ethnicity.

The group surveyed was not large and the participants came primarily from facilities in the eastern part of Massachusetts that is not as diverse as other areas of the country. As a result, the survey cannot be used to generalize to the nation's nursing homes. However, the study suggested more research is needed about how nursing home social workers are reflective of diversity in their settings. It is also important to understand more about how social workers

manage and reduce the tensions between nursing home staff/residents/families around race and ethnicity. More information is needed about how social workers can positively impact the incorporation and inclusion of diversity needs in long-term care facilities. The increasing heterogeneity of communities makes these issues important for social workers ensuring the quality, sensitivity care for older people in nursing homes.

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## **Critical Theory and Critical Thinking: The Failure of Social Work Education**

### **David Becerra, MSW**

Critical theory emerged primarily through an interdisciplinary approach to examining society, social structures, and power imbalances in an effort to change existing oppressive social structures. One of the most valued principles in the United States is the belief that there exists an open society where people can critically analyze and question the government and social structures in order to promote social justice and equality within society. There have been many examples of movements, from the abolitionist movement to the civil rights movement and beyond, that have been successful exposing social injustice and creating changes within the social structure of the United States. Unfortunately, despite claims of a society that values an openness of ideas and equality, social change does not come easy. Social structures are rigid, people are often resistant to change, and many feel threatened by ideas that question the status quo. Despite the resistance, change in oppressive structures is necessary.

Social workers can be powerful change agents in society. Social workers interact with the oppressed, vulnerable, and marginalized people of society and it is their role to assist those individuals and communities, and advocate for social change. The social work profession, however, has been embattled for decades over its status, role, and mission within society and has strayed from its original mission of working with groups and communities in favor of using individual psychotherapies to produce individual change (Specht & Courtney, 1994; Wakefield, 1998). Community action research, community development, and other methods that can be helpful in working with groups and communities have not been the focus of many social work schools and social work professionals. As a result, social work schools turn out psychoanalysts who have been educated to work mainly with individuals and therefore have not learned how to analyze larger social problems and work effectively with groups or communities toward social change (Specht & Courtney, 1994; Wakefield, 1998). One method to analyze social structures and their effects on communities and individuals is through the use of critical theory and critical thinking. Unfortunately, the social work profession has not fully embraced critical theory and critical thinking in social work education or practice.

Critical theory and critical thinking are related concepts and necessary components of large social change movements. Critical theory is a view of society that attempts to understand and explain the political, social, and economic injustices of a society in order to empower oppressed populations to alter or eradicate the social structures that are responsible for social oppression (Fay, 1987; Friere, 1990). Critical theory is based on the belief that people's understanding and knowledge of oppression, exploitation, or injustice will provoke people to act and change oppressive or unjust social structures (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998; Fay, 1987; Friere,

1990). Unfortunately, due to the power imbalance inherent in social structures where those in power tend control information, many oppressed and exploited groups develop what has been termed *false consciousness*. False consciousness occurs when oppressed groups do not realize the injustices of the social structures and accept their position within society because they incorrectly believe that the social structures are equal and rational (Fay, 1987; Agger, 1991; Kondrat, 2002). In order for critical theory to be effective, knowledge and information must be given in a manner that can be understood by those who will utilize the information; people must have a personal connection or identity with the information and knowledge presented; and the information must be presented in a way where other people that share similar concerns can access the information and unite with a common goal of changing social structures (Langman, 2005).

Critical thinking on the other hand, involves utilizing critical theory to critically analyze problems, situations, and concepts, and utilizing that information to decide what information is valuable and what information can be disregarded (Thayer-Bacon, 2000). Critical thinking involves analyzing all information about a given problem or issue in order to determine the underlying cause and what course of action to take (Grauerholtz & Bouma-Holtrop, 2003; Thayer-Bacon, 2000). Critical thinking also involves contextualizing the problem by identifying the links between the problem and larger social structures that may have caused the problem (Grauerholtz & Bouma-Holtrop, 2003).

Although social workers have the potential to be more effective change agents by utilizing critical theory and critical thinking, schools of social work that focus primarily on educating social workers to work with individuals, have caused the social work profession to ignore one of its main objectives; promoting social justice and advocating for social change. The primary mission of the social work profession as stated by the NASW Code of Ethics is to "...enhance human well-being, and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to and empowerment of people who are oppressed, and living in poverty" (NASW, 2000, p. 335). To accomplish this mission social workers should "...promote social justice and social change on behalf of clients" (NASW, 2000, p. 335).

Unfortunately, in an effort to become more respected as a "true" profession, social work has embraced psychology and psychiatry at the expense of advocating for social justice and social change (Specht & Courtney, 1994; Cox & Hardwick, 2002). This shift is reflected in social work education programs where the emphasis in many universities is on teaching students how to diagnose clients, the development of treatment plans, and therapy techniques that are quick and effective to accommodate our HMO culture (Cox & Hardwick, 2002). The focus on offering courses to teach students to work with individuals may come at the expense of courses that deal with large systemic or social issues. Students are often taught how to "empower" their clients to navigate through an unjust system, rather than teaching them to think critically about the injustices of society and actively promote social change.

Doctoral students are taught critical theory and critical thinking which are crucial to their development as researchers and will impact their approach to the advancement of knowledge. That knowledge, however, is usually only for the consumption of other academics and researchers, and often does not reach the communities in need. Fay (1987) stated that enlightenment and understanding of social injustices will be the catalyst for social change. It is therefore necessary that critical theory and critical thinking be an integral part of all levels of social work research and education because bachelors and masters level social workers have more direct contact with oppressed and vulnerable populations.



Social workers in the field often do not see research as accurately reflecting the reality of their work or the communities and individuals they encounter (Cox & Hardwick, 2002). Research needs to be more reflective of the work social workers do with individuals and communities as well as incorporating critical theory and critical thinking. Teaching social work students to be critical thinkers will enable them to analyze not only their reality, but the reality of their clients, the communities they live in, and the social structures that continue to oppress them. Even social workers that work primarily with individuals may realize, by using critical theory and critical thinking, that certain beliefs or behaviors of an individual do not need to be pathologized and may be due to larger social issues that need to be examined and addressed. Social workers' knowledge and understanding of critical theory and critical thinking regarding social injustices can be relayed to the individuals and communities they work with. Sharing with them a critical understanding of the unjust structures that affect them will truly empower individuals because they will have the knowledge necessary to connect with the larger community and advocate for a change in oppressive social structures. Only by doing so can the social work profession truly live up to its mission of advocating for social justice and social change.

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## **Ending Welfare and Poverty As We Knew Them: TANF at Ten** **William D. Cabin, JD, MSW**

### *Introduction*

Let us consider Zakiya Kyle, a 26 year-old single mother with two sons and former welfare recipient in South Los Angeles in 1997, the first year after passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA, 1996). PRWORA was lauded by President Bill Clinton to “end welfare as we know it” (Weaver, 2000). The primary means of ending welfare was PROWRA’s Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), a block grant program which premised assistance on work-before-welfare. TANF replaced the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program, the primary national cash income support system for poor families with children originally created by the Social Security Act in 1935 (Trattner, 1999).

In 1997, Ms. Kyle obtained a job at a non-profit drug-abuse prevention program. She described her time on welfare as “hell” which she was glad to leave (Bailey, 1997, p. 2). However, maintaining the job was stressful. She arrived daily at the bus stop at 6 AM with her two boys, fourteen-month-old Ishmael and five-year-old Mustafa. Two buses later, she dropped Mustafa at his school in Inglewood and then took two more buses to deliver Ishmael to his babysitter in Watts. After two more buses, she finally arrives at work. At 9 AM, observing that “In LA County, it’s difficult to live without a car” (Bailey, 1997, p. 2).

So where are Ms. Kyle and TANF now, ten years after TANF? We do not know about Ms. Kyle (Bailey, 1997). The *Los Angeles Times* reporter who wrote of her in 1997 has not updated her story. However, we know much about TANF. What we know is that indeed, as intended, it changed welfare as we knew it. Caseloads have declined by an estimated 50 percent and expenditures by nearly 50 percent (Office of Family Assistance (OFA), 2004; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2005). We also know TANF changed poverty as we knew it, but without ending or reducing poverty. In fact, ending or reducing poverty was never mentioned in PRWORA or TANF (PRWORA, 2006). Yet data indicates that both poverty and deep poverty have actually increased since TANF (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2006; U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2005). And we know that many of those persons who left welfare as we knew it and who left TANF were people like Ms. Kyle, people with barriers to gaining or maintaining training, employment, or other TANF requirements. The barriers include access to transportation, child care, housing; mental, physical health, and substance problems, and disabilities, among others (Acs & Loprest, 2001; Burt, 2002; Lens, 2002; Loprest & Zedlewski, 2006; Zedlewski & Alderson, 2001).

So what has TANF, now reauthorized through 2011, wrought in ten years? Research evidence does not clearly establish TANF as the single cause for major changes in poverty and welfare in the last ten years (Grogger & Karoly, 2005). Even the caseload and expenditure decrease are attributed in some large part to the economy (Blank, 1997; Grogger & Karoly, 2005). However, TANF is considered a significant factor in many policy areas. Some policymakers and researchers assert TANF has been a success, pointing to the caseload reduction (Haskins, 2006). Others assert TANF merely continues the American welfare tradition which punishes the poor and working poor, particularly single mothers, for alleged personal failures and immoral behavior without addressing structural issues of maldistribution of resources

(Abramovitz, 2006; Blau, 2006; Mink, 2006; Piven & Cloward, 1993, 1998). Other researchers and policymakers assert TANF did not go far enough and that welfare as we knew and now know it, as well as many other government benefit programs, should be abolished (Murray, 1984, 2006).

#### *Analysis of TANF Goal Accomplishment*

Clearly TANF has had mixed results. However, overall the only results on which there is a research consensus that there has been a significant caseload and cost reduction and increase in the amount and depth of overall and child poverty during the first TANF decade (Urban Institute, 2006; Haskins, 2006). Perhaps the best way to evaluate TANF's impact is to review available results for the four program goals. They are:

1. Providing assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives;
2. Ending the dependence of needy families on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage;
3. Preventing and reducing the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establishing annual numerical goals for both purposes; and
4. Encouraging the formation and maintenance of two-parent families. (PRWORA, 1996).

The research evidence indicates limited, if any, accomplishment of these goals.

TANF has provided assistance, but the level of assistance has declined from \$32.4 billion in 1996, the last year of AFDC, to \$17 billion in 2004 (OFA, 2004). One reason for the decline is TANF requiring that states must only demonstrate they are making efforts to spend 75-80% of their last year of spending on AFDC and related services (Committee on Ways and Means, 2004). Another reason is the decline in the welfare caseload nationally by an estimated 50% or more than 2 million persons from 1996-2002. The decline includes a decrease in the percentage of eligible families enrolled from 80% to 48% (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2005). However, the cost reduction does not address the significant increase in Medicaid, food stamps, and State Children's Insurance Program (SCHIP), which some researchers associate with TANF eligibility requirements and the decreased caseload (Committee on Ways & Means, 2004; Popple & Leighninger, 2004). Such additional costs might offset some cost savings of the TANF expenditure reductions.

#### *Goal of Providing Assistance So Children can be cared for At Home*

There is no research addressing whether TANF had any impact on the ability to care for children in their own or relatives' homes. However, child welfare data indicates the rate of out-of-home placements to residential care and foster homes has remained steady during the last decade (Child Welfare League of America, 2006; Mallon & Hess, 2005). The increase in child poverty also may infer that more children have become at risk of either being displaced from their families or having their families live with greater financial hardship and stress. Poverty actually began to decrease in 1993, before TANF. However, poverty has risen from 11.3% in 2000, the lowest since 1974, to 12.6% in 2005 (Committee on Ways and Means, 2004; Parrott & Sherman, 2006). Child poverty also has increased from 16.2% in 2000 to 17.8% in 2004, an increase of 1.4 million children (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2006). Overall, there was an increase in the number of persons in what Parrott & Sherman (2006) term "deep poverty, those with incomes below half of the poverty line" (p. 4). The deep poverty rate was the highest

since 1975, with 43.1 % of persons in poverty being in deep poverty (Center on Budget & Policy Priorities, 2006).

### *Goal of Ending Dependence on Government Benefits*

Evidence indicates that the TANF goal of “ending the dependence of needy families on government benefits” (PRWORA, 1996, p.1) has been achieved by decreasing caseloads and increasing poverty, not by “promoting job preparation, work, and marriage” (PRWORA, 1996, p.1). Significant TANF funding for job preparation and work have not resulted in jobs removing persons from welfare. For example, single mothers were a major target population for TANF policy. However, the percentage of working single mothers nationally in 2005 was 66%, the same as in 1997 (Haskins, 2006). There was an increase from 66% in 1997 to 73% in 2000, but the percentage declined to 66% in 2005. The data also do not segregate TANF recipients, thus establishing no causal linkage to TANF. Furthermore, while working TANF recipients’, including working single mothers, proportion of income from earnings has increased and welfare proportion decreased, the net effect is a virtual one-to-one replacement. As Grogger & Karoly (2005) observe after analyzing multiple experimental and observational studies, “Work requirements alone have relatively weak effects on family income and poverty, but they do raise self-sufficiency by increasing the proportion of income from earnings” (p. 171). They further note that the proportion of working TANF recipients “with very low incomes may not move much at all, and many of those above the poverty line still remain ‘near poor’” (p.171).

Evidence also indicates that TANF job preparation and work requirements have resulted in significant numbers of persons either not applying for TANF; leaving TANF because of either lack of job opportunities or low wages in paid TANF-related jobs; barriers; or TANF sanctions for non-compliance with appointments, training, or job requirements (Brauner & Loprest, 1999; Danzinger, 1996; Loprest, 2001; Loprest & Zedlewski, 2006). Research also indicates significant numbers of persons who leave TANF with jobs do not retain jobs for a significant time, often slipping deeper into poverty (Courtney & Dworsky, 2006; Grogger & Karoly, 2005; Loprest, 2001; Popple & Leighninger, 2004). Additional research indicates that even the most highly-praised work-to-welfare programs do not result in a net income gain to families sufficient enough to improve their financial well-being (Blank, 1997; Bloom & Michalopoulos, 2001; Grogger & Karoly, 2005).

### *Goal of Encouraging Marriage and Family Formation*

The goal of “encouraging the formation and maintenance of two-parent families” (PRWORA, 1996, p.1) was intended to improve child well-being and decrease single-mother dependence on TANF. Despite much support for marriage promotion and family formation by the Bush Administration, there is little, if any, evidence it reduces dependence on government programs, improves child well-being, or reduces poverty (Cabin, 2006). Grogger & Karoly (2005) reviewed numerous studies, including nearly 36 experimental studies, to assess how welfare reform affected behavior, concluding that the TANF policies appear more effective in preserving existing marriages than in encouraging single mothers to marry. The Urban Institute (2006) also indicates that the proportion of children in low-income families living with unmarried cohabiting parents has increased compared to those living with married parents.

### *Goal of Preventing Out-of-Wedlock Pregnancies*

The remaining goal is “preventing and reducing the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establishing annual numerical goals for both purposes” (PRWORA, 1996, p.1). While the government established annual numerical goals, there is little evidence of unwed pregnancy reduction, let alone any studies which establish a causal relationship between TANF and unwed pregnancy levels (Cabin, 2006; Grogger & Karoly, 2005). Nationally, both the number and rate of birth per 1,000 unmarried women increased from 1997-2201, as did the rates for the 20-40plus years old age groups (Committee on Ways and Means, 2004). It might be asserted that teenage unwed pregnancies decreased because the only age-group for which there was a slight decrease was the 15-19 year-old age group. However, there was no data for the 15 years and under age group, thus limiting any assertions about reductions in teenage pregnancy.

### *Conclusion*

In summary, TANF has changed both welfare and poverty as we knew them. It appears TANF’s first decade has achieved limited success in the four legislated goals. There has been a significant reduction in the TANF caseload and costs compared to AFDC. Legislatively the reduction was intended to occur by increased income from marriage, job training, and work. However, research evidence indicates the reduction has little to do with these factors. Instead they appear to be a result of the stringent TANF requirements, inability to accommodate barriers to employment which have dissuaded actual or potential TANF clients from enrollment, and state incentives to reduce the welfare caseload. And poverty has increased! This fact reinforces the implicit danger in policy ignoring poverty and fixating on welfare caseload and cost reduction. It further indicates the failure of the legislation to incorporate poverty reduction and its manifold consequences into the calculus of welfare reform and leaving us wondering what will happen to the Ms. Kyles of America.

The analysis also has implications for social work policy, practice and research regarding the TANF program. On a practice and policy basis, the analysis indicates TANF policy was politically feasible because its goals were designed address to problems of particular power groups: state and federal governments and think-tank experts, politicians, and other powerful groups with particular views of morality. They were not designed to meet the needs of vulnerable low-income and poor populations, except the perceived need of the power groups for low-income and poor persons to change their behavior (Weaver, 2000). Welfare caseload and cost reduction effectively was the goal of TANF and it has been the only goal which has achieved success. However, it was not explicitly stated. It was hidden within the four explicit goals, all of which were focused on changes in moral behavior.

On the one hand, the analysis reinforces Karger & Stoesz’s (2006) emphasis on analyzing both political, economic, and administrative feasibility and the problems that necessitate the policy in historic context. However, the analysis also reinforces Mullaly (2007) and others emphasis on context. Mullaly (2007) asserts that ultimately the selection of implicit and explicit goals, social problem definition, social policy, and determination of feasibility is guided by which groups have sufficient power to enforce their ideology. As such, social welfare policy analysis might well be improved by explicitly articulating the underlying ideologies in analyzing goal, problem, and policy selection and implementation. Similarly, social welfare research might become more valuable by articulating at the outset the existence of particular ideologies which create variables (i.e. policy goals) which are being measured. TANF and other social welfare policy research might become more informative and useful by acknowledging the impact of power and ideology. This might occur by focusing on policy outcomes not only in terms of goal

achievement and impact on specified populations and problems, but as indicators of the effectiveness of particular power bases and ideologies.

Further on a practice and policy level, the analysis reinforces the progressive social work perspective (Ferguson, Lavalette, & Whitmore, 2005; Finn & Jacobson, 2003; Galper, 1975; & Mullaly, 2007). The progressive perspective accepts ideology as the starting point and advocates an ideology premised on humanism; equitable distribution of society's resources regardless of a person's status; and using government intervention through social welfare policy to alter societal structure to create more equality, solidarity, and community (Mullaly, 2007). Social work progressives view active political participation and agency-based advocacy for clients as the only means for social workers to achieve the standards of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW, 1999), Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW, 2005), and similar codes of ethics. The TANF analysis reinforces the success of an alternative ideology in imposing its values on vulnerable populations and making resource distribution even more inequitable. As such, it reinforces the social work progressives' argument for engaging in an active, progressive values-based social work policy and practice in the agency, community, and broader electoral arenas.

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**Creating Useful Knowledge in the Social Sciences through Interdisciplinary Research**  
**Larry E. Hill, LMSW & Darla D. Beaty, LCSW**

Interdisciplinary research (IDR) attempts to advance systematic and rigorous “scholarly endeavors that integrate at least two different perspectives into a blended product” (Achenbaum, 1995). Ideally, it produces better results than conventional approaches. Effectively navigating this process resulted in two-thirds of all major social science advances during the social

movements between 1930's and 1965 (Deutsch, as cited in Achenbaum, 1995). It deviates from the reductionist spectrum of natural and social sciences by introducing a systems-oriented approach. Social Work has led the way in promoting a holistic view of human behavior, but we have not spent enough time talking about interdisciplinary research. This article attempts to articulate some of the process issues which support harmonizing disciplines.

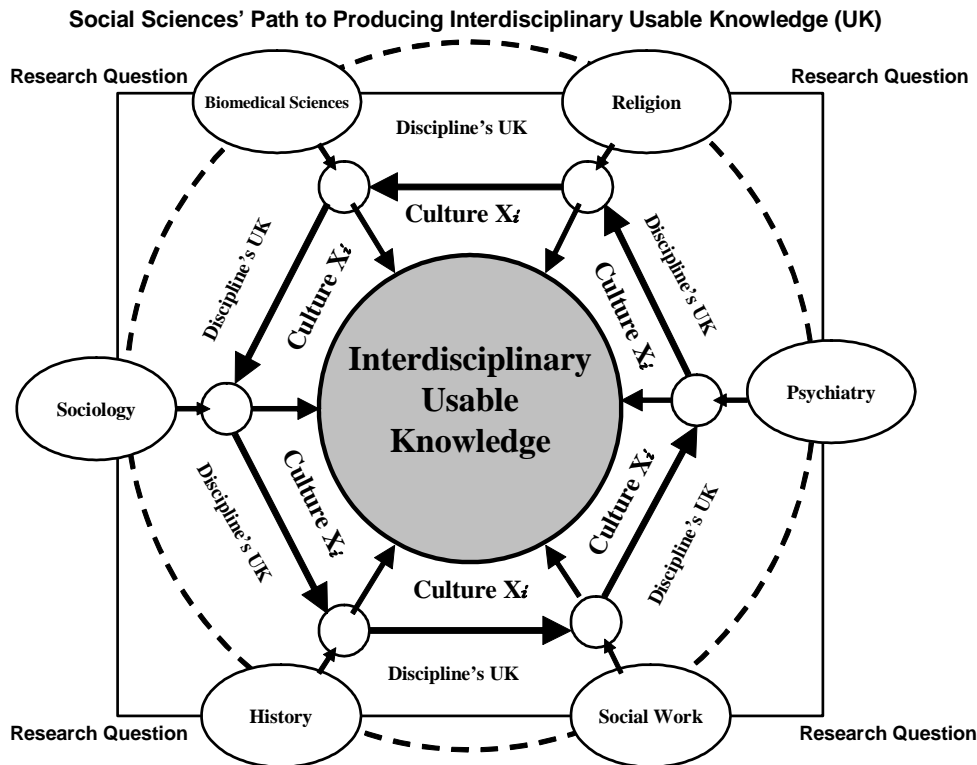
*Definitions*

Understanding the IDR process becomes clearer after an explanation of differences in levels of interaction among intra-disciplinary, cross-disciplinary, and multi-disciplinary research. *Intra-disciplinary* research is discipline-specific. *Cross-disciplinary* research minimally involves two or more disciplines, but does not integrate their products. *Multi-disciplinary* research utilizes two or more disciplines, resulting in partial blending of products. *Interdisciplinary* research involves the purposeful interactions between disciplines to create one new distinctive theory or practice (Achenbaum, 1995).

**Summary of Framework**

*Linear to Circular*

A common debate is the relative placement of academic disciplines. Along the continuum, social sciences (e.g. anthropology, social work, sociology, psychology, etc.) jostle for position with the methodological and analytically rigorous community of natural sciences (e.g. physics, chemistry, mathematics, engineering, etc.). This linear continuum model fails to explain each discipline's potential to uncover the path to useful knowledge. A circular model is better suited to explain the nature of the interdisciplinary process.



(Hill & Beaty, 2007)



It is commonplace that social sciences do not replicate natural science standards and achievements (Fay, 1996; Kuhn, 1962) in terms of reliance on reductionism. That is, the accountability of natural science is in the reliably predictable nature of its objects of study (e.g. Newtonian Laws of Physics; Laws of Thermodynamics). On the other hand, the interpretation of human behavior in social sciences is constantly changing and evolving in terms of culture, intrapersonal experiences, interpersonal cognitions, etc. (1996; 1962). Quantitative in nature, most natural science approaches are excluded from the model we propose.

### *Research Question*

The outermost box of the Framework model is labeled as the research question. IDR is initiated through a research question. That is, research questions can be addressed within the perspective of Psychiatry, Social Work, Psychology, Sociology, Theology, and/or any other social science discipline through intra-disciplinary research. For example, the following research question is applicable to multiple disciplines: What are the mediating factors contributing to illicit drug use among high school students and which interventions decrease that drug use? Each discipline would ask the research question through their unique perspective. What are the dynamics of dysfunction in the family (Social Work)? What are the genetic contributions to addiction (Biomedical)? How do the cultural influences mediate addiction (Sociology)? What internal conflicts contribute to the cause of addiction and what psychotropic medications will alleviate the mental health issues associated with addiction (Psychiatry)? What existential influences contribute to addiction and recovery (Theology)? How have societies historically intervened to decrease drug use within American communities (History)? Each discipline can solve parts of the problem, but only together can they formulate a comprehensive solution.

### *Disciplines*

The oval shape circle represents each academic discipline related to social sciences. The framework is flexible to incorporate disciplines, as appropriate. Each academic discipline is a community of researchers specializing in a particular perspective of social science (Kuhn, 1962). The intra-disciplinary process promotes professional identity and specialization (Nelson & Jackson, 1960). The end result is a discipline-specific frame for understanding the world and how it works (1962). This specialization produces usable knowledge about specific parts of the problem. Only with interdisciplinary cooperation can comprehensive solutions emerge.

### *Connectivity of Disciplines*

The diagram includes a dotted circle connecting all disciplines. This represents the underlying moderate connectivity between all social sciences. Each involves varying levels of unpredictability when seeking to explain human behavior. The contrast between natural and social sciences is found in the presence of absolute and predictable, universal laws. The foundations of social science research do not permit researchers to make absolute deductions from universal law due to the holistic considerations of context, systems and oppression.

### *Discipline's Usable Knowledge*

The products of intra-disciplinary research are results that reflect the discipline's special views. Each discipline's product is interpreted through its own ideology. Therefore, researchers from two different communities describe the same objects in two different ways, even though they look from the same point in the same direction (Anton, 2003). The end result is that each

discipline claims that their interpretation of the same observation is the truth. Which interpretation is the most accurate? The level of accuracy depends on the level of methodological rigor applied to the research problem.

### *Major Barriers*

The small solid circle in the Framework diagram represents the major barriers of conducting IDR. Researchers have consistently documented the transactional barriers that impede the research process (e.g. Billups, 1987; Birnbaum, 1981). These include: high-levels of interdisciplinary interaction, inability to maintain productive communication, setting research goals, and developing a common language (Rogers, Gaynor & Singletary 2005). The latter transactional barriers bind the former together. When researchers do not make the effort to learn or develop a common language from which to communicate they will inevitably run into numerous problems as they navigate the process.

The second major barrier is the risk that IDR may fail. Recognition by one's peers is critical for most researchers. Conducting IDR requires researchers to venture outside their discipline. Research and publication is crucial to most professions, and conducting IDR is time consuming and risky. Researchers seeking tenure must consider the pitfalls of publishing IDR. Some university departments do not consider items published outside journals representing their discipline in tenure decisions or merit bonuses. Also, many researchers face the difficulty of deciding the positioning of authorship. First authorship brings recognition and prestige to the university, each researcher, and their community. First authorship also increases the weight of consideration for tenure decisions and merit bonuses.

The third major barrier is the interaction between experts. Birnbaum (1981) found that utilizing IDR during the concluding stages or throughout the research rather than in the beginning stages greatly impede the process. That is, publishing articles, books, and technical reports decreases when these experts spend most of their time interpreting the results. Bringing two or more experts to the table to create a blended idea creates problems of partnership (Billups, 1987). However, this process must be successfully navigated to produce an IDR product that is far better than a product of any one discipline.

### *Cultural Framework*

The next component in the Framework diagram is culture. Culture  $X_i$  represents various subcultures and their combinations. These include training and institutional affiliation within disciplines in addition to the discipline specific cultures. Each researcher and their research problems are subject to cultural bias during the interpretation of results. Regardless of their discipline, each researcher is subject to their own visualizations, feelings, and emotions associated with specific words, statements or objects presented during the IDR process (Lakoff, 2004). Therefore, the researcher's culture and their experiences within it determine the cultural frame. For example, prior to a roundtable meeting of social science researchers, each were heavily influenced by the dynamic of various subcultures. Therefore, when interdisciplinary researchers interact, it is imperative to consider that their interpretations of the results are subject to unavoidable cultural frames. So whether the researchers are listening or speaking, the communication is subject to cultural influence. During this interactive process, they must appeal to the other researchers' cultural values in order to continue effective communication (2004).

### *Interdisciplinary Usable Knowledge*

The next component of the Framework diagram is interdisciplinary usable knowledge. This represents the blended answer between two or more disciplines. The level of accuracy and reliability with interdisciplinary usable knowledge is enhanced by the level of methodological rigor. Systematic scientific inquiry needs to be consistently revisited, refined, and validated to ensure a quality product that remains usable.

### *Usable Knowledge*

The last component in the Framework diagram is usable knowledge. This component represents the end objective of all research. When interdisciplinary questions are revisited, refined, and validated, the reformulated knowledge may reveal itself. There is an old adage which is often stated by a mediator between two arguing parties. The mediator says, "It does not matter who is right...it matters what is right!" However, "If it does not matter who is right, but rather what is right, then *who* has the final verdict in determining *what* is right? Since there is a wealth of knowledge to be discovered about human behavior, how could researchers possibly discover an absolute truth? Therefore, taking a multi-cultural, system-oriented approach we address knowledge as relative. The knowledge will remain relative to the discipline, culture, and interdisciplinary work.

### *Application of the Model*

An appropriate application of the IDR framework is an IDR associated with the treatment of people who have experienced a cerebral vascular accident (stroke). The Center for Interdisciplinary Research in Rehabilitation in Montreal Canada is one of many IDR institutes familiar with the IDR process. They may pose a research question such as: How can the effects of a stroke be minimized? Considering that strokes can be fatal or significantly decrease the quality of life of victims, this is an important question. This IDR process would include the following disciplines and their expertise: physical, speech, and occupational therapy, medical, nutrition, religion, and social work. Every discipline approaches the research problem through on intra-disciplinary effort and makes conclusions about the research problem based on the discipline's framework.

When the experts come to the roundtable to discuss the research problem and their interpretation of the results they may experience many barriers. For example, what is the most significant stroke effect to be addressed? Social workers may determine depression resulting from speech impediments or being partially paralyzed as a main intervention point. Theology experts may consider the impact of existential concerns to the patient's overall well-being. Physical therapists may create interventions to help clients regain physical independence.

These interactions are subject to barriers and cultural bias which may impede the construction of the blended idea. Historical perspectives have highlighted physicians as the ultimate authority on the causes and solutions to strokes. However, researchers navigating the IDR process can work together toward the blended solutions before taking the intervention to clients. The benefits of this IDR process for this research problem have led to great advances resulting in superior theories and interventions which impact people experiencing strokes. These advances include blended interventions that increase a patient gait speed (Lamontagne, 2004), blended behavioral interventions that decrease incontinence (Dumoulin, 2005), and blended psychopharmacological interventions reducing stroke related depression (Antai-Otong, 2004).

It is imperative that each professional working with a person struggling to regain their ability to adapt and interact with the world do so with a common working language and

complementary approach. This could not be accomplished individually or working in parallel fashion, but only in an interactive search for usable knowledge about this devastating disease and possible solutions.

### *Conclusion*

The purpose of this paper is to establish a conceptual framework for understanding, discussing, and navigating the IDR process. Social science doctoral level students and seasoned social science researchers should use this framework to increase the quality and quantity of IDR. Intra-disciplinary, cross-disciplinary, and multi-disciplinary research processes are necessary, but inter-disciplinary offers great promise in the quest to produce social science advances.

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### **Self-in-Relation Theory: A Model for Helping Melinda W. Pilkinton, MSW, LCSW, ACSW**

Self-in-relation theory was first proposed by women researchers at Wellesley College's Stone Center in 1991 (Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, & Surrey, 1991). Self-in-relation theory evolved as a collaborative effort based on research regarding women's psychological development (Jordan, et al., 1991). Previous researchers had begun to define women's dysfunctional reactions to societal pressures such as expectations that one "be a good wife" and fulfill expected gender roles according to gender specific norms (Jack, 1987; Stiver & Miller,

1988; Strauss, 1988). These researchers posited that women experience conflict based on the friction between norms and expected gender role functioning vs. their personal needs. This friction, as posited by the researchers, led to depression and other dysfunctional responses (Stiver & Miller, 1988).

Gilligan (1982) was one of the early feminist writers who addressed women's development. She noted the apparent need of women to care for and include others in their realm of functioning. Women seek responsibility for others; caring for others is a duty, albeit a pleasant one for many women. Often connectivity to others is viewed from a largely male perspective: that women are dependent individuals and do not adjust comfortably in situations where they must be alone.

In light of women's need to connect, the question regarding whether women reach self-actualization begs a different paradigm from that based on men's development. Surrey (1991) proposed innovative terminology for describing women's developmental advancement. She noted that women's development is limited by the accepted term "separation-individuation" and proposed the new term: "relationship-differentiation" (Surrey, 1991, pp. 36-37). "Separation-individuation" has long described the expected achievement of adults to become independent; however, according to self-in-relation theory, this term is not adequately descriptive for the developmental path that women experience. Surrey noted that because women are socialized to care for others from an early age (usually by their mothers) the concept of "mutual reciprocity" emerged (Surrey, 1991, p. 37). "Mutual reciprocity" is the link between a girl and her mother through their emotional sensitivity for one another, first experienced as the mother caring for the child and later as the child and mother bonded to one another in a complex and dynamic process (Surrey, 1991, p. 37). Arguably, a similar process evolves in the relationship between a parent of either gender and his or her child; however the intent of the researcher's premise is that for girls, the caring behaviors (or 'mothering' as it were) are an ongoing process that is deeply ingrained in female children (Surrey, 1991, p. 37).

For such an ingrained process, the tasks for women at each stage of development become the challenge for balancing their own needs with those of others. For young women in adolescence, they must decide how much freedom from others they want. Do they accept the norms in their families and conform to expectations and values held dear in the family circle or do they branch out into the world and challenge themselves in different ways? For women who are entering the early adult transition, they are faced with surrounding themselves with new people, either in the form of co-workers, friendships, or love interests. This is an especially challenging segment of development. The manner in which women have been cared for and what expectations have been placed on them in their families of origin will influence who they choose (or who they allow to choose them) as companions, coworkers, or lovers. Considerable dysfunction can be experienced at this stage. In the social work practice arena, common presenting problems involve young women who have been neglected or abused in any form (emotionally, sexually, and/or physically). These women may have difficulty negotiating the young adult stage of development with the concomitant task of forming healthy relationships.

Similarly in the "Age 25 Shift" (Levinson, 1996), women must make choices that will map the course for their futures. Levinson (1996, p. 98) noted that women make changes both consciously and unconsciously. Levinson's idea meshes with teachings of the Stone Center in that women may be more prudent in their efforts to attempt new challenges than men (Stiver, p. 229). The wariness involved in attempting endeavors that seem risky stems from socialization that urges women to "be careful" and avoid risk. While women want (and possibly need) to

make changes in their lives at the “Age 25 Shift” (Levinson, 1996), they may be reluctant to do so. Practice implications include such issues as women seeking therapy to gain empowerment to make choices, whether those involve divorce, new employment, starting a family, etc. Other presenting problems in therapy may consist of issues related to anxiety, depression, substance use, and eating disorders. Stiver & Miller (1988, p. 7) suggested that women’s depression exists because they have not had connections that exist “within a context of empathic and validating relationships”. Their idea supports the aforementioned concept that women who were abused would have potential “neediness issues,” particularly if their early relationships were less than adequate.

Another issue that casts a negative light on women is the concept of codependency. One of the most empowering aspects for women regarding self-in-relation theory is that the idea of codependency is exposed for the largely sexist message that it conveys. While codependent behavior is, by definition, caretaking; women are not necessarily abandoning their own needs in order to care for others. Only in the more pathological relationships does this mode of behavior occur (Favorini, 1995). For example, one interpretation of the caretaking behaviors of women with dysfunctional relationships may be that women are attempting to provide continuity in the family structure. They may be assuming the responsibility of an addicted spouse, in an effort to help the spouse overcome negative compulsions.

The idea that women can be caretakers in a healthy way is the hallmark of self-in-relation theory. The role of helping professionals when counseling women should be to help female clients understand the features and importance of healthy relationships and to help them make salient choices about their relationships. These women do not have to forsake those who are important to them; they need to learn how to strengthen the relationships in their lives that have been problematic. However, there will be situations where a woman should not be encouraged to pursue “saving” a relationship, especially if there is physical danger involved. One researcher posits that women who remain in abusive situations often see themselves as behaving in a “self-preserving” manner (Strauss, 1988, p. 137). Women may feel more threatened by the loss of the relationship with which they are familiar than by the actual violence in the home (Strauss, 1988, p. 137). However, in non-violent cases, many women want to know why relationships are not healthy and want to be able “to fix them.” Social workers realize that in many situations, escaping the family or other loved ones will not erase the problems that have existed for the woman; in fact, more psychological problems are often created.

In a similar context, men also need others. The socialization process for men is different than for women in most cases (Strauss, 1988). Most men do seek and attempt to sustain relationships throughout their lifespan. The reality for helping professionals then becomes focused on helping men learn to nurture their relationships in possibly different ways than they have done before. Because men (especially those from previous generations) have learned to provide, be strong, hold feelings within, etc., they often need assistance in developing healthy communication skills and learning to set appropriate boundaries with others. These two skills serve to decrease the onset of negative emotions and to help male clients deal with problematic situations as they occur, rather than “stuffing the feelings”.

Throughout the span of adult life, women need to feel connected to others. Women need various people at various stages in their development; in essence, the stage remains constant but the actors change. Women who understand that connectivity is not only desired, but also ‘normal’ and healthy will be able to navigate the transitional stages throughout life in a less disruptive manner. For women who reach mid-life and beyond and face the potential crises of

“the empty-nest” or possibly an ill or deceased spouse, knowing that they require other viable relationships can be life-preserving. For women who have not expanded their horizons to include individuals who are meaningful to them and have only operated as “servants” to those they love, this can prove to be a time of extreme hardship. Strong advocacy is recommended for women’s friendships, as these relationships provide mutual support (Bank, 2000; Wood 1996). Self-in-relation theory serves to explain the complex needs of women and the role of relationships in their development and functioning.

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## Bookworm’s Corner

### Book Review

**Hooks, B. (1994). *Teaching to Transgress - Education as The Practice of Freedom*. NY: Routledge. Reviewed by Carolyn S Gentle-Genitty, MSW, ABD**

Gastil (2004) writes that by engaging learners in the classroom, in daily political conversations, there is the potential for understanding and critical assessment in daily life. The challenge, no doubt, is how to engage the learners to the point that they value critical

assessment? Self and worldly criticism is what truly transcends the four walls of academia, to learning that enables learners to be ready and equip to participate as active citizens in the real world. This real world becomes reality in and outside the classroom, particularly for social work educators, as the classroom is the microcosm of the world (Giroux, 2004). It is the playground of policy, political dialogue of justice and injustice, and the place for societal review, fault-finding, and engaged dialogue. As such, there must be as much emphasis in what is taught as well as how the material is imparted and conceptualized within the classroom.

Social work educators must be aware of their role and the role of the learner (Campbell, Masters, & Goolsby, 2004) in engendering a culture of understanding and critical assessment that does not harm or negate the experiences of the clients they serve. Undoubtedly, this is the ultimate quest of most educators however; the classroom is not often structured to mimic this real world. It becomes a sterile four wall room where learners are educated on dominant culture concepts, values, and practices. Learners are rarely taught how to think and evaluate for themselves but to regurgitate only what have been taught to them. An assumption for this is that educators too are cognizant of their positions within the dominant culture and fear losing that status. Not teaching students to think for themselves shackles the educator. They then teach in fear of losing control and power in the classroom and not from a liberatory stance of freedom. This stance of freedom is what hooks bring to the classroom. She warns that the current methods do not free us but enslave us to living lives that are not of our choosing but lives of fear. Thus there is need for change. There is a need for educators to teach learners to think and to revolutionize the classroom from one of pure teaching to one that values learning (Gastil, 2004); a learning that results from freeing the educator to enabling them to teach-to liberate. Yet, it is obvious that when one teaches, it is rare that the thought of forging a revolution in thinking is the aim. This review looks at the process of the classroom revolution through the eyes of bell hook's 1994 book *Teaching to Transgress - Education as the Practice of Freedom*

### *Overview of the book*

A post positivist teaching philosophy with constructivist underpinning is often oxymoronic. It is a philosophy that believes there is some fundamental information that educators must impart, maybe not as truths but in search for some truths, to students. If Adams' (2004) assertions are correct, that students resort to knowledge gained from foundation courses in practice to guide them, then we must be willing to *Teach to transgress* (hooks, 1994). We must be willing, as educators, to go beyond the ordinary in what feels comfortable to teach. The book "Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom" speaks to this oxymoronic nature of teaching. (See author's journey in Appendix I) The book is a teaching tool, a poem, a call for change, a call for a paradigmical shift and a chilling call for educators to stage a revolution in transforming the classroom and themselves. It speaks to all readers but never the same message. The message is different from where you stand in the dialogue and the position you hold in the present society. The book is a 216 page paperback. It has fourteen chapters of which three are discussed herein - Engaged pedagogy, A revolution of values, and Embracing change.

### *Chapter Reviews - Key points of application*

*Engaged pedagogy.* In this chapter hooks discusses teaching and what the process of teaching ought to be for social work educators. Teaching for hooks' is a process of freeing oneself. A freeing mechanism, that allows the social work educator to be empowered, feels



empowered, and thus empowers their students beyond regurgitation. Such processes move the study of teaching from educating a classroom of passive learners to one rich with engaged active learners. The learners then long for the acquisition of knowledge and openly question their lives and their interactions within society. They seek their educators as one source of their learning and education. With the same token, the educator views the learners as a team of potential knowledge bearers who bring to light diverse realities, understandings, and discussions about apparent real-life misfits and inconsistencies. The classroom then becomes one that transcends a disjointed pedagogy – to a call for something more. A call for a revolution as such, from disjointed to an engaged pedagogy because the time is ripe and there is a sense of immediacy.

Quite a tall order some may say because it moves the educator from a place of comfort to one of discomfort. It pits the educator against the system, against the Holy Grail or ivory towers of education. It suggests that the methods of educating from years gone are no longer effective. Hooks has a point. An underlying assumption is that the pain the educator endures in this transformation - from staging a one-person war without support from departments, colleagues, or even students - is the step to self-actualization, to freedom, to the engaged pedagogy. It calls into question the maintenance of current personal, societal, and political values and questions whether we let go of the power educators hold in the classroom and embrace shared knowledge and power. It is a shared power where both students and educators are key actors in the learning. This creates a values upheaval for the social work educator often resulting in living separate public and private lives – living one life that values freedom and one that freedom stifles it in the name of education.

*A revolution of values.* This chapter was riveting. It questioned educators and the lay person's value of freedom which is in direct contradiction to the dual lives they live. In one life they value and enjoy freedom but in another they shackle themselves and others; they institutionalize daily patterns, in their public lives enforcing the dominant culture. The education system is part of this public life that deviates from the private life that values freedom. If one is unaware of the intricacies of this reality in education hooks calls us to critically dissect the traditional role of the university in the pursuit of truth and the sharing of knowledge and information, it is painfully clear that biases that uphold and maintain white supremacy, imperialism, sexism, and racism have distorted education so that it is no longer about the practice of freedom (hooks, 1994, p.27).

She has a valued premise that many can agree with however, is there a simple answer to what must be done to remain committed to freedom in both our public and private lives? Simple, we need to be cognizant of what needs to be done and embrace the change, despite the feeling of discomfort. We must instigate a revolution that brings about a transformation of our classrooms, our teaching and the content of what we teach (hooks, 1994). Despite the anticipated pain, alienation, and deviation from what we have come to know as truth in our classrooms. In doing so we embrace a plethora of realities different from ours, allowing ourselves and others to be free and embrace the complexity of a multicultural teaching and learning academia – one in which there are multiple truths and multiple realities.

*Embracing change: Teaching in a multicultural world.* Teaching and learning can no longer be a one size fits all dialogue in four wall boxes. This is especially true for social work educators and practitioners as the faces of our students and clients are changing. This is one reason hooks' work is so timely. If we stage the revolution for change and bring harmony

between our public and private struggles of freedom, it becomes less of a challenge to embrace diversity. Embracing diversity of cultures, persons, views, and understandings moves us closer to accepting others that look, sound, and value things very different from us. It moves us closer from positions of comfort to the acknowledgment of the need for change, to embracing change. A change that is hell bent on moving towards freedom and self-actualization where thinking, teaching, and interaction openly embrace classrooms of diverse knowledge bearers. A change that recognizes this adjustment does not jeopardize power in the classroom but enriches the learning experience creating multiple ways of knowing through multiple learning styles.

### *Closing*

This review gives only a glimpse of the wealth of knowledge and insight with which hooks's write. Each page moves you to value the learning environment, the position of power educators hold in the classroom and their ability to bring change. It teaches educators to value their position in the classroom as experts and to complement their knowledge with that of their learners. It urges us to build a teaching community, celebrate differences, and engage in critical dialogue in search for freedom for self and others. It is a book for all educators. It is a must read for social work educators. However, if educators are fearful of using their power in academia to move from disjointed to an engaged pedagogy, then the debate over change and transformation in the classroom may never begin – to the detriment of the clients we serve.

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### Book Review

**Razor, Peter. (2001). *While the Locust Slept: A memoir*. St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press. Reviewed by Nancy M. Lucero, MSW, LCSW**

In his compelling memoir, *While the Locust Slept*, a Minnesota Book Award Winner, Peter Razor gives a personal voice to the often unspoken heartbreak and loss that is shared by thousands of American Indian parents and grandparents who grew up away from kin and community. Writing in his seventies and compelled by realizations that his childhood experiences were affecting his own children and grandchildren, Razor reminds readers that the effects of dislocation from family and culture do not fade with the passage of time.

My children have been my joy, and they have saved me. Seeing them grow into happy, healthy adults has helped ease the pain of my childhood, but nothing can ever erase the memories. I'm still haunted by those seventeen years. (p. 200)

American Indian families and communities today still struggle with the intergenerational cultural loss that is the legacy of the systematic removal of Indian children in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

When families become involved in the child welfare system this struggle can intensify, and it is often accompanied by a paralyzing fear that their children will be lost to them forever. It can be difficult for non-Indian child welfare workers, who are likely to come from cultures that stress individualism over interdependence, to understand the power of historical and communal memories of the wholesale removal of Indian children and the effect these memories can have on individuals. It becomes imperative to provide culturally responsive services to American Indian children and families involved in the child welfare system (Bussey & Lucero, 2005; Mindell, Vidal de Haymes, & Francisco, 2003). Service providers need to have an understanding of the personal toll connected to the decades of policies aimed at breaking up American Indian families and dislocating Indian children from the foundations of their cultures (Cross, 1986; Gustavsson & MacEachron, 1999). Hearing the first-hand accounts of individuals who have lived through these experiences is a beginning step in achieving this understanding.

Peter Razor, an enrolled member of the Fond du Lac Band of Ojibwa, was sent to the Owatonna State School at ten months of age. He spent the following seventeen years as a ward of the State of Minnesota in its system of institutional schools and farm indenture foster care. Razor puts words to the fears that many parents have for their children who become involved in the child welfare system. His story can help shed further light on why the actions of American Indian family members in response to child welfare workers often appear puzzling and self-defeating (Horejsi, Craig, & Pablo, 1992). Through Razor's memoir we are also reminded that the wholesale loss of Indian children from communities is not a rapidly vanishing memory of a long-ago time, but resides as an embodied presence in the experiences of living members of contemporary American Indian communities.

Razor's book is the result of a reinterpretation of his foster care and institutional experiences which has brought him to a clear understanding of the connection between these experiences and his social position as an Indian person.

"I'm a state ward," I said. "They're the court. I'm in this mess because they couldn't find a better place for me. If they can't find a decent home for a state ward, they give him to a farmer. Good-looking white kids get decent homes." "Schauls got you because you're Indian, right?" I shrugged. (p. 92)

Razor has taken his personal experiences of the dehumanizing and brutal elements of institutional and personal racism and eloquently shaped them to speak in a way that expands the personal to the communal. He thereby relates through his own story the experiences of many Indian children, families and communities and their tortured relationship with the dominant culture, including the child welfare system. What Razor accomplishes better than other written portrayals of boarding school abuses is to capture how naturally and effortlessly Indian children were dehumanized and oppressed in institutional schools and the child welfare system. His childhood experiences with school staff and child welfare caseworkers illustrate that the attitudes and beliefs that found expression in abusive child welfare practices with Indian children had become so deeply embedded in the social system of the United States that they were seen as normal and necessary, thereby justifying their often tragic results.

*While the Locust Slept* should be read by all those involved with Indian children in the child welfare system. It should especially be read by those who question the necessity of the Indian Child Welfare Act or who find the Act's provisions requiring active efforts to prevent the breakup of the Indian family to be burdensome extra work. That this story takes place in the 1930s and 1940s may cause some readers to easily cast it aside, thinking, "All that's in the past. Indian children are no longer treated that way." This however, would be short sighted. For

Razor's story is not just about his experiences in institutions and foster care. His story, rather, is about what happens to the mind, heart and spirit of a young person who grows up without meaningful connections to family and community. His story speaks to what it is like, as an adult, to try to create some sense of self by piecing together one's life from desperate memories, one grainy 16-millimeter film shot in the 1930s, a single group photo of the boys at the school and case records that show indifference, at best, and at worst, complicity in the abuse. This is a task not unfamiliar to many present-day adults who were former foster children. In this respect, *While the Locust Slept* is both an American Indian story and a story that crosses cultures; it is both a memoir and a current accounting. Most of all, it calls us, as social workers, to renew our commitment to rebuilding and strengthening families in the hope that some day no child and no family will have to carry the loss that Razor and his family do.

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In order to be considered for publication in *Perspectives on Social Work*, all submissions must meet the following criteria:

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- Only electronic submissions are accepted. Submissions should be e-mailed as a Microsoft Word attachment to the following e-mail address: [journal@sw.uh.edu](mailto:journal@sw.uh.edu)
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- Submissions must meet APA guidelines (5th Edition) for text, tables, and references.

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