SOCIAL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE "EXCLUDED"

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Abstract

The terms "marginalization," "inclusion," and "exclusion" are expressions of beliefs about the proper relations between groups in society. These terms are official components of European Union social policy. The terms not only raise issues, but they also provide opportunities for the development of social work if they are used mindfully. The preferred developmental role is that of "partner" with the excluded in efforts to gain social justice in relation to society's economic and social wealth. Examples of developmental social work are presented illustratively, and the challenges of partnership with both the included and the excluded are discussed.

Lithuanians have been extremely successful in the last fifteen years in becoming full members of Europe and the world community of nations. One of the costs of this stunningly rapid transition is that often there has been little time for social workers to analyze and critique many of the European and American policies, ideas, and ways of working that have been adopted. It appears that distinctively Lithuanian versions of social work and social policy have not developed very fully. Many ideas have not yet been examined critically. Examples would include "empowerment" and "social support," among the imported ideas, and "asocial family" from the Lithuanian.

Now Lithuanian social workers are working in a very international, primarily European environment, and they are using the conceptual scheme of inclusion and exclusion routinely. Like other countries, Lithuanians and others who were dominated by the Soviet Union have some specific problems concerning inclusion and exclusion, and in fact a recent issue of the journal *Problems of Post-Communism* (2004) focused on this scheme or model. But how critically has the conceptual scheme of inclusion and exclusion been examined in Lithuania? It seems that the prominence of this scheme is well correlated with the acceptance of European ideas about social policy. But what does this model mean, and what are its benefits and limitations?

Keywords: excluded, exclusion, included, inclusion, inclusive social work.

1. The importance of our words

Social workers aim to work on the "person in environment" or with "people as parts of social systems." Thus, it seems logical that social workers hold a social position on the imaginary line that divides "the excluded" from "the included." Drawing from your experience and imagination, please focus your thoughts on the ideas of the excluded and the included for a moment.

Excluded (or Atskirtis) Included (or perhaps Aprėptis)
Marginal (perhaps Marginalai)
Integrated (or Integruotieji)

Figure 1. Images and concepts

First, consider the term "excluded" (or "atskirtis"). What images come to mind? What ideas? What sort of motion or action?

Now focus on the word, "included" (or perhaps "aprėptis"). Then go on to think carefully about what your mind calls up concerning some other related ideas, "integrated" (or "integruoti"), and then "marginal" (perhaps "pakraštys"). What images and ideas came to mind? I am guessing that some ideas involve a picture or chart of the literal properties of being within or outside of a real boundary, and that some involve other ideas.

Figure 2. What are the assumptions implied by the model of inclusion, exclusion, and marginalization?

This figure shows no "dynamic" or process.

The forces that produced and maintained and might change the statuses are not present.

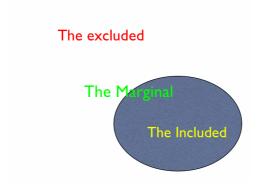The "included" are separated from the "left out" or excluded.

The excluded

The Marginal

The Included

Figure 2. Images and concepts

Perhaps you thought of people you know. Perhaps you saw yourself, or other social workers. Considering the basic scheme in Figure 2, where are you placed in terms of the excluded and the included?

Social workers are part of society's included group by the nature of our roles and positions in society. Most of us are sponsored and paid by the included to do work that this part of society wants or needs to have done. And social workers surely spend time outside the boundary, whether our identities are there or not. We are often out among the people who do not benefit much from the concrete and social aspects of inclusion. When we are at our best, we are empathic, that is, deeply understanding of the depths of experience of the excluded. We are among the prisoners, the parents who have difficulty with their children, with those addicted to drugs and alcohol. Most of all, we work with people who are excluded from the benefits of society because they are poor.

My position, as you will see, is that social work is valuable to both groups because of the profession's position on this boundary. There are examples of social work helping from outside of it, and inside of it, but most of our work occurs right on it. This is a stressful position, and it is the one that makes social work different from other specialties and professions. Physicians, lawyers, and others are *sometimes* involved with both parts of society, but social workers are almost *always* involved with both, because that is our specific commitment to the excluded and to people who are in difficult circumstances. Even when we are involved with people who are included, we are usually involved when something is at risk. We really must have one foot in each world to be what we claim to be.

So much for where we are as a group. When you thought about Figure 2, the scheme about the relations between groups, did you imagine something with a dynamic, or movement, or forces pushing somehow on one another? Maybe you imagined more of a video, a moving, interactive story that leads to exclusion or integration? Or perhaps you considered the words excluded and included mostly in relation to one another, since it is not likely to have excluded people or things without included ones. Perhaps you thought about how the two are related and maintain differences or bring together one another. Again, thinking about social work, it is as if the social work specialization not only has one foot in each world, but also that the boundary is moving, making us always a bit unstable and insecure. This is the process of defining and working with exclusion, rather than the static picture of it.

At least in Europe and North America, the tension between social work that mainly serves the included and social work that serves the excluded has never been resolved very clearly. That is why in Lithuania, with the development of the new profession of social work, it has been particularly important to develop Lithuanian models that account for and learn from the tension that is seen in other parts of

the world. The force of a united Europe is clearly dictating a lot about what social work will become. At the same time, the historical and cultural differences between Lithuania and other societies make it possible still to develop a Lithuanian approach that is both distinctive and relevant. What would this be like?

More serious consideration of these ideas will hold benefits in Lithuania, since there is still so much professional development ongoing.

My theme is that the way we think about exclusion and inclusion is closely linked to our views of society and social work. We sometimes fail to be particularly "mindful" or aware of how words and thinking in terms of categories affect our practice and our development of social work (Langer, 1989). There are many examples, including the study that addressed the question of what the very popular word "empowerment" meant to practitioners (Ackerson and Harrison, 2000). While the term was widely used, it had very different meanings to individuals, ranging from a guiding principle in the social workers' life, to simply the name of the program where the person worked.

The words inclusion and exclusion lead us to do social work in certain ways. At the same time, the ideas and acts we own as social workers and members of organizations, lead us to think about exclusion in certain ways. Some of the ways we consider exclusion can be harmful to people when we put them into practice, especially when they turn into stereotypes or prejudices. I do not argue against using these ideas, just that we do so mindfully. These words are social creations, and we can influence how they evolve, at least in social work. There is still an opportunity to start using the terms in ways that advance social work and that do not contribute to the idea that social work's main function is to manage those called the excluded. We can avoid what Langer (1989) refers to as the tyranny of categories.

When we freely use the term "excluded groups," are we defining and confirming a category? If we are, what is the effect? Consider, for example, the entry in the Oxford University Press' *A Dictionary of Euphemisms: How Not to Say What You Mean*. The author tries to cut right to the point. He contends that when we say "socially excluded" we mean "poor" (Holder, 2003, p. 372). This leaves out the many who may or may not be poor, but who are not able to participate in the processes and benefits of society fully for other reasons, such as discrimination against those who have a disability or who do not practice the preferred religion. So, categories become stereotypes, ideas that do not take into account very many characteristics of people.

The adjectives "marginalized, excluded, included," can describe ideas, objects, processes, and people. Like the verbs (e.g. to exclude) there is a tendency for such descriptive words to become nouns. Consider how "alcohol" becomes "alcoholics" through this process. Or the idea of "asocial," meaning "avoiding association with others" becomes a category into which people are placed, "asocial families." So people are described through an abstract category ("excluded"), and we might start treating them as something other than persons, as "the excluded." It can become their identity, from our point of reference. The English words all have multiple meanings based on slight variations in context and the user's intentions. As I have learned, the Lithuanian versions or translations also involve uncertainty. Using them in Lithuania involves the creation of meaning and new uses for words that in the past might have meant something different.

These terms are expressions of beliefs about the proper relations between groups in society. They involve relative status, functional relations, and ideas about social justice. Social workers have the professional responsibility to use the ideas in the most advantageous ways for the people we aim to assist, and for our own interests. Our professional interest and the interest of those we serve can be thought to be the same when we work in partnership toward social justice.

As the terms are discussed fairly comprehensively below as official components of European Union social policy (Commission of the European Communities, 1993).

Social exclusion refers to the multiple and changing factors resulting in people being excluded from the normal exchanges, practices and rights of modern society. Poverty is one of the most obvious factors, but social exclusion also refers to inadequate rights in housing, education, health and access to services. It affects individuals and groups, particularly in urban and rural areas, who are in some way subject to discrimination or segregation; and it emphasizes the weakness in the social infrastructure and the risk of allowing a two-tier society to become established by default. The Commission believes that a fatalistic acceptance of social exclusion must be rejected, and that all Community citizens have a right to the respect of human dignity (Commission of the European Communities, 1993, p. 1).

Note how this statement, while not precise, does imply a great deal about society and the ways that groups relate to one another. Of the many discussions of this topic that are available, I especially recommend the work of Percy-Smith (2000).

The European definition and others imply that there is some part of a society that is more central and integrated than other parts. The part of society that is included in the center, not excluded or located on this metaphorical margin, is assumed to be relatively stable, with access to both formal and informal social functions to address needs through the life cycle and to enhance the experience of living in the society. The excluded are often thought to have so much less of these social characteristics that they can be seen as a different category of people. They are often "asocial", isolated, institutionalized when considered from the viewpoints of the core of society. Most typically, those called excluded are poor in relation to the society, and usually have at least one other characteristic that sets them apart.

Despite the clear direction of the European policy, nations and societies are mixed in their beliefs and feelings about those who are not well integrated. People and societies adopt principles that are translated into guidance for social work organizations. On the one hand, countries develop policies aimed at the control of those called "the excluded." This can be thought of as the sort of one-sided attempt at adaptation in which the part inside the boundary is assumed not to be in need of change (Harrison and Jagelavičius, 1999). On the other hand, countries aim policies toward improvement of the well-being of those excluded, and the attainment of some degree of social justice. Usually, both attempts are present, and social workers may be working to change the excluded, the included, or both at once.

2. Inclusive social work

The most important ideas in considering either "inclusive social work" or "social work with excluded groups" is that social work can serve the forces that push people out into exclusion; it can work with people from excluded groups to assist them in being included; or social work can work with the included to make it more likely for inclusion to occur. Social work does all of these to some degree, but the work that matters most combines helping people to be able to be included when they want to be, while at the same time working with the included to make the boundaries with inclusion more permeable.

Thus, social workers are themselves marginal *to the problems* (Smale, Tuson, and Statham, 2000), working across the boundary between exclusion and inclusion. Much of this work is done with "excluded *groups*," rather than individuals. Very often the best work involves *partnering* with the groups so that they can find their own way with social workers standing beside or behind, providing support. But social work is complicated. Social work involves both the will of the included, which is often to control the outsiders, and the will of the excluded, which may want inclusion, or may have grown passive or resistant to change. It might aim at big goals of social change and social justice; too, although we sometimes do not know how to help people articulate this.

The most desirable social work is that which finds the common goals and works toward changing both included and excluded groups. But, since there are often three dialogues occurring at once, this is a difficult task. Scott (1992) shows us how the dialogue among the excluded, the different one among the included, and the third and distinct one between members of the two groups when they interact, may serve domination, survival, and resistance functions. Social workers have to understand this multi-discourse phenomenon and work with it to make it more functional and developmental for the whole. This is the key skill in "social work with excluded groups."

One of the social functions that social work has assumed is normative, meaning that the there is an attempt to have people move in from the world excluded from norms or typically accepted parts of society. It has to do with and deals mainly with the control aspects of policy. The other function is developmental, creating new social processes that allow for progression of desirable social relations and material well-being. The fact that social work embraces both, for example in community-building work associated with child welfare or work with the aged, shows that both are possible. But the included who sponsor us are ambivalent, that is, they hold two or more positions or give two or more directives at once. We risk taking on the controlling side of the ambivalence while not having the time or the will to do much with the developmental side. The developmental work and the push toward inclusion and cohesion are necessarily more difficult to conceptualize and accomplish. Social work often seeks to "manage" certain of the excluded by attempting to assist them in conforming to social norms, by choice or by authority.

The other function of social workers as people embracing the margin is developmental, or a social justice approach. The developmental role is that of "partner" with the excluded in efforts to gain social justice in relation to society's economic and social wealth. Developmental work often means working as partners with people and groups that are unpopular to the included. That is part of our

professional commitment. It means finding the parent whose behavior has been abusive, the people who are homeless and have mental illnesses, the Roma in camps or on the move, isolated people with HIV, and other unpopular groups. We must not just try to manage or change them, but also to change the parts of the included society in the center in ways that give more choice, more empowerment, to the excluded concerning their inclusion or life chosen on the outside. Can this be done?

3. Examples of Inclusive Social Work

Is it realistic to do this sort of work? Some old and new examples of North American and European social work practice that have successfully integrated the normative and developmental social justice approaches might help. I will summarize three of them.

St. Paul Family Centered Project

Some fifty years ago, in the city of St. Paul, in Minnesota, one of the landmarks of American social work began (Compton, 1981). Minnesota had a relatively progressive social welfare outlook, and there were a number of NGOs and state agencies that were led and staffed by professional social workers. Out of concern for the relatively small number of families that used relatively large proportions of the community social welfare resources, a coalition of leaders began a community organizing program. This became The Family Centered Project. The organizations would be, by today's standards, part of "the included." But the leaders possessed a genuine concern, grounded in practice, to better the lives of those excluded from the many civic and material benefits of that community.

Social workers in this community were beginning to move from a psychological orientation largely oriented to Freud's view that personality is relatively unchangeable if the aggressive and sexual drives had never been tamed by the ego, the part of the person that balanced the drives with the rest of the world. A new alternative view was taking root among the social workers in the community. The type of ego psychology that they were learning and putting into action was based on the belief that there were much more constructive drives in the person, drives aimed not only at sex and aggression, but also at being the cause of desired effects and being able to interact with other people and social structures competently. There was a beginning interest in working with families as a whole. A similarly advanced part of the project that brought the workers together was the idea of integrating research into the project to understand why and how much families changed, if they did. And it is essential to realize that this was both a casework project and a major community organization project.

Project workers developed a practice model that is embedded in many of the ideas and processes that we learn, teach, and practice today. In order to be part of the project, the families had to have immediate risk of the removal of a child, as well as at least one other problem, in the form of disability, criminal behavior, poverty, or others. These families were often considered hopeless, unchangeable, and beyond the treatment approaches of the day.

Along with the new psychology that taught that even very difficult and deprived people could change, the project's family orientation is an innovation that has stayed with us. For many of us, it is so firm that we often do not even think about how it might have been different. Another innovation was the involvement of the families in a very open way in many aspects of the project. In fact, the term that has become so extremely common, "multi-problem family," was chosen by the families themselves to describe themselves. The term has developed a rather stereotyped usage, and has fallen out of favor in many places, but originally it was simply a description. Asking people what they would prefer to be known as was one way that the excluded people who were part of the project were involved from the start.

The multi-level partnership model of work that the Project participants evolved is very significant. The model included the way that agencies worked with one another, a lesson that is certainly worth discussing in Lithuania today. Agencies, those organizations of the included, had often duplicated or even contradicted one another in their work with families. The average number of agencies these excluded families dealt with regularly was more than six! Families had difficulty with this, and especially with the nature of many of the contacts, having to do with controlling, however beneficent the intent, the families' behavior in the interest of child welfare. It became clear to all that the organizations could save resources through reducing the number of workers and the families responded extremely well to having a "captain of the team" through which all contacts went. The "creative use of authority" was articulated with great care. And the idea of taking the time to develop family members' and families' own goals, however impractical they might seem at first, was proven as a motivational principle.

While the results of the research were mixed over the several years of the project, there were clear areas of gain. It is important to understand that the research was not done from the viewpoint of the families, though, and there were many reports of benefits that were not measured on the scales of family movement. The reforms of the way that the included organizations have related to the excluded have endured in our knowledge and standards of "best practice" up to today. The emphasis on a belief in the ability to change on the parts of both the excluded and the included has for many years been the enduring legacy of this project, the presentation and assessment of which was a central learning opportunity in my own social work education in Minnesota.

Community Social Work in the UK

One of the most innovative approaches to social work I have experienced as a practitioner and researcher occurred from the late 1970s to the 1990s in Great Britain (Harrison and Hoshino, 1984; Harrison, 1987; Harrison, 1991; Smale, et al., 2000). Under various labels, including "patch" and "community social work," the emphasis was going from the case to the local community as the main unit of government social work. This developmental work was oriented heavily toward inclusion, often in the form of building awareness and functionality within the communities that individuals formerly thought of as clients lived and worked. Often oriented to forming groups of people around common experiences, many of which involved the circumstances and behaviors that were related to exclusion, these communities had the chance for inclusion from the outside (Harrison and Hoshino (1984). Particularly important in this work was the inclusion was promoted through the development of new centers of social life, inclusion first at the very local level. Many communities and groups were then able to approach the larger society in new ways (Harrison, 1987; 1991). This work was especially notable because the social workers clearly saw themselves on the margin, and they used this knowledge in re-framing situations creatively to break down the old categories and relations between the people identified with them (Harrison, 1987; Harrison, 1991).

Center for Family Life

The Center for Family Life in New York is a living project in Brooklyn, New York. In many ways the Center works with earlier ideas of inclusion, particularly those from the Family Centered Project and work from the UK that simultaneously emphasizes community building and services to individuals and families. The combination of these two sorts of work is a powerful formula for inclusion-oriented social work with people who have been parts of excluded groups. One of the most interesting things about this organization is how it combines several groups that might be thought of as excluded by finding common ground and building it into inclusive local communities. This program has an excellent website (www.cflsp.org), and there is a great deal of additional material, including a video production, available to describe the Center and its programs.

Godparent Visits® Program

In the tiny town of Spring Lake, North Carolina, an extraordinary example of inclusive social work has been developed by Anna Green. This is work based on organizing the excluded to give choices about moving toward and across the boundary of full inclusion in the benefits of society. Like community social work in Britain, the program moves from the individual's situation to the collective redefinition of problems, without losing an emphasis on either. From her own encounters with police and child protective services around the care of her daughter, who has very serious disabilities, Green has developed an innovative set of services to strengthen families, communities, and the bonds between the various parts of communities. The program is linked with a para-social work program that provides both service and advocacy, with and emphasis on prevention.

The Godparent Visits® program builds on the strong cultural practice of godparenting in African American communities by recruiting families to serve as godparents for children in their communities to agree to serve the children in any way possible for as long as possible. This program has had dramatic effects in reducing the number of children who have unnecessarily gone into the state care system, being excluded from the community their families and roots are in. The innovation is in taking a cultural practice and expanding it to deliberately organize "matches" between people to prevent further exclusion. The program has been an inclusion-oriented one as shown by the change of attitude toward the program on the part of the social service department and local judges. No longer a curiosity or threat, the Godparent Visits® program is now accepted as a part of community services.

An exemplary practitioner of the art of articulating the discourses of the included and the excluded, and especially the discourse between the two, Anna Green has successfully followed the invitation of foundations and governments to establish the program in a number of other places,

including work with Ugandan "AIDS-orphans," impoverished Jamaican communities, and appointment as a special United Nations ECOSOC representative.

There are many other examples of services that are inclusive, not just of individuals, but of communities with one another. They range from Simon Hackett's work in the UK to normalize the treatment of young people with aggressive or problematic sexual behavior to the work of Rūta Butkevičienė and her teams on building a program of incremental research documenting the experiences of parents of children with disabilities in becoming excluded from their Lithuanian communities.

4. Implications or You've Got to Serve Somebody: Which Way for Social Work?

There are some common principles of these examples of inclusive social work. Social workers' successes in inclusive practice are significantly balanced between the perspectives of the included and the excluded. Attention to the excluded has to be emphasized because they are usually, excluded, even by social work, when we think of partnership! Inclusive practice starts by the social workers being seriously, credibly, inclusive in their conceptualization of practice. It grows from there, because the social work relationship allows people to grow and to generalize to other situations. Flexibility is essential, because it is never simple to work with groups that have been excluded, if for no other reason than many of the included resist the effort or deny its potential. Yet that is the only way that progress has ever occurred, by finding the elements that can be used in building the bridge from both ends, excluded toward included, and included toward excluded. Social workers are in a position to see and help organize both.

Adapting these models of social work to contemporary Lithuania would necessitate some significant changes. Primarily, it would require the adoption of an "inside-out" perspective. The viewpoints of the professionals and policy makers would be balanced with the understanding of the social world of "the excluded." This inherently inclusive approach could further the well-being of many who do not share the benefits of society, and it would offer social work a foundation on which to continue its development as a profession based on furthering people's dignity and self-determination. Social work has historically had difficulty in building itself and its "alliances for power," having failed to bond readily with the included or the excluded (Keith-Lucas, 1975). The question of whether power is the key, as the term empowerment might suggest, is unanswered, but it is most likely that a form of "co-planning" in which social workers are partners with people on both sides of the line is the most likely to promote the values we hold dear.

The Bob Dylan song, "Gotta Serve Somebody," uses a religious metaphor, stating that whatever your occupation, "Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord, But you're gonna have to serve hose aspects of membership in society. We can do both, and we must. Somebody" (Dylan, 1979). So it is with social work. But I do not think we have to serve either the part of society that fully participates in its responsibilities and privileges, or that part that is excluded from t

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SOCIALINIS DARBAS IR PARTNERYSTĖ SU „ATSKIRTAISIAIS"

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Santrauka

Sąvokos „marginalumas", „aprėptis", „atskirtis" reiškia įvairių grupių visuomenėje santykį. Šios sąvokos vartojamos ir Europos Sąjungos socialinėje politikoje. Jos ne tik kelia probleminius klausimus, bet ir suteikia naujų socialinio darbo plėtros galimybių. Tradiciškai socialinis darbas suprantamas kaip darbas su tais, kurie patyrė atskirtį. Toks požiūris dar labiau „atskiria" nei jungia. Kritiškai įvertinus socialiniame darbe vartojamus sąvokas „atskirtis" ir „aprėptis", pereinama prie kitokios socialinio darbo sampratos, kurioje pageidautinas socialinio darbuotojo vaidmuo turėtų būti jungti ir tuos, kurie patyrė atskirtį ir aprėptį.

Lietuva per pastaruosius penkiolika metų sėkmingai įsiliejo į Europos ir pasaulio bendruomenes. Vienas iš šio staigaus perėjimo trūkumų yra tas, kad socialiniai darbuotojai neturėjo pakankamai laiko kritiškai išanalizuoti Europos ir Amerikos socialinės politikos, socialinio darbo praktikos metodų, koncepcinių idėjų. Daugelis sąvokų, pavyzdžiui, „įgalinimas", „socialinė pagalba", „asociali šeima", nėra kritiškai apsvarstytos ir įvertintos.

Socialiniai darbuotojai Lietuvoje nuolat naudoja koncepcines aprėpties ir atskirties schemas. Jie dirba su „asmeniu aplinkoje" arba „su asmeniu kaip socialinės sistemos dalimi", todėl socialinis darbuotojas visada yra ant įsivaizduojamos ribos tarp tų, kurie patyrė atskirtį, ir tų, kurie patyrė aprėptį. Tokiu atveju socialinis darbas reikšmingas ir vieniems, ir kitiems, ne tik tiems, kurie patyrė atskirtį.

Žmonių požiūris į tai, kas yra aprėptis ir atskirtis, glaudžiai siejasi su požiūriu į visuomenę apskritai ir į socialinį darbą. „Socialiai atskirtieji" dažniausiai siejami su neturtingaisiais, nors atskirtį patyrę asmenys nebūtinai tokie yra. Taip sąvokos tampa stereotipais. Socialinio darbuotojo profesinė atsakomybė yra vartoti sąvokas palankiausiai savo klientų atžvilgiu, todėl socialinis darbas neturėtų apsiriboti tik darbu, padedant patyrusiesiems atskirtį. Jis turėtų apimti ir patyrusiuosius aprėptį arba esančiuosius ant ribos tarp šių dviejų grupių. Socialinis darbas, veikdamas iš abiejų perspektyvų, tampa aprėpiančiu (*inclusive*). Straipsnyje pateikiami pavyzdžiai iliustruoja tokio pobūdžio socialinį darbą.

Pagrindinės sąvokos: patyrusieji atskirtį, atskirtis, patyrusieji aprėptį, aprėptis, įtraukiantis socialinis darbas