

Rethinking Social Work Practice with Immigrants in Child Welfare Services: The Case of Norway

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Abstract : The social work profession utilizes Western and Eurocentric perspectives on social structures, culture, history, belief systems, and education. This affects social work practice with indigenous groups as well as other minorities who have different perspectives. Some of the challenges that characterize social work with families, especially immigrants in western countries, are a result of different world views on child-rearing practices in the global north and the global south. A shift towards cultural sensitivity and the promotion of cultural competence has been a move towards addressing some of the challenges in child welfare practice with immigrants. However, emphasis on cultural differences presents other challenges of stereotyping and discrimination, which call for the examination of current practices to fit other groups of people. In this paper, we introduce the need for emancipatory social work in child welfare practice with immigrant parents. Emancipatory social work is directed at heightening awareness of external sources of oppression and/or privilege that hold the possibility of increasing self-esteem and courage to confront structural sources of marginalization, oppression, and exclusion. This paper draws on two research projects, respectively, "Immigrant parents' perceptions and experiences of the welfare system" and "Norwegian- Somali parents' fears of the Norwegian Child welfare service. The first data set comprises 15 in-depth interviews with 18 nonWestern immigrant parents, representing 10 families. The second data set consists of nine months of ethnography, seven months in Oslo, and two months in Somalia among returnees from Norway. Based on these data sets, we explore how immigrant parents' child-rearing practices might be perceived through a racialized lens.

Keywords : child welfare, immigrants, racialization, social work

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