



International Journal of Design for Social Change, Sustainable Innovation and Entrepreneurship

<https://www.designforsocialchange.org/journal/index.php/DISCERN-J>

ISSN 2184-6995

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.



Innovating with social justice: Anti-oppressive social work design framework

Aakanksha Sinha

Published online: November 2020

To cite this article:

Sinha, A. (2020). Innovating with Social Justice: Anti-oppressive Social Work Design Framework. Discern: International Journal of Design for Social Change, Sustainable Innovation and Entrepreneurship, 1(1), 65-77.

Innovating with social justice: Anti-oppressive social work design framework

Aakanksha Sinha^a

^aDepartment of Social Work, Seattle University, USA. sinhaaa@seattleu.edu

Abstract

The world is experiencing myriad social, economic and political challenges that have exasperated inequities across communities. While there have been significant efforts to respond to the challenges, dwindling funds, hierarchical organizational structures, and an over-reliance on traditional methodologies have impacted the ability to create systemic changes. These limitations have paved the way for social innovation to create novel ideas to address social issues. Innovation has predominantly come from the field of business, engineering, design and public policy. Surprisingly, social work, with a professional mandate of advocating for social change and uplifting the voices of communities has made limited contributions to the field of social innovation. This paper introduces Anti-Oppressive Social Work Design (AOSWD) framework, which integrates the principles of anti-oppressive social work practice and a design method, Human-Centred Design (HCD). It explains how social workers can use AOSWD to develop collaborative power through empathy-building, co-creation and integrated feedback. Through the establishment of collaborative power, it explains how the role of HCD can be expanded from an approach to develop user-friendly programs, to a tool for social workers to create a change in thinking in how they view and tackle complex issues. A case example of its implementation in a non-profit organization in Seattle, WA has been provided. The paper has implications for social service professionals in the areas of training, organizational design, research and evaluation.

Keywords: Social Innovation, Human-Centred Design, Social Justice, Social Work, Anti-Oppressive Practice, Design Thinking

Background

The 21st century has witnessed a myriad social, economic and political challenges that have exasperated the inequities across the world. While governments, corporations, social service organizations, and grassroots movements have been responding to the challenges, dwindling funds, hierarchical organizational structures, and an over-reliance on traditional methodologies have impacted the ability to create systemic changes. These limitations have paved the way for social innovation to create novel ideas and processes that address social issues and improve the quality of human life at the micro and macro levels (Pol & Ville, 2009). Predominantly, the professions of business, engineering, design and public policy have been instrumental in leading the efforts related to social innovation (Brock & Steiner, 2009; Mirabella & Young, 2012). As a result, the innovations to challenge societal issues have been influenced by their professional values, skillsets as well as goals.

Despite a rich history of responding to complex social problems through innovative practices, social work has made limited contributions to the field of social innovation. Over the years, the practice of social work has transformed into a medium to deliver individualized services to ensure the well-being of individuals, families and communities rather than confronting social inequities (Clifford & Burke, 2009). Additionally, social work practice overwhelmingly emphasizes the use of evidence-based practices and authority-based models as primary solution mechanisms within the profession. These models are developed with

assumptions of a linear path from problem definition to an analysis of options and development of solutions for the client. However, this process is contradictory to the realities of the environment in which social workers and their clients operate, which are often ill-structured and complex.

Although the traditional and dominant methods have aimed to support communities that are marginalized, they have often left them disempowered, and unable to break away from the cycle of oppression and inequities. With the increased acknowledgement of the role of systemic inequities as a determinant of sustained positive social change, social workers across the world have been working towards developing and incorporating new ways of approaching existing problems. Anti-Oppressive Practice (AOP) framework has been one of the ways that the social work profession has been actively integrating social justice concepts within the practice, policy and research realms. Dominelli (1994; 1996) has defined AOP as a framework that addresses the role of social and structural inequities in the problems faced by clients and the solutions developed to address them. This shifts the focus from individualizing problems towards addressing the deep-rooted structural factors. AOP embodies a person-centred philosophy; an egalitarian value system concerned with reducing the deleterious effects of structural inequalities upon people's lives; a methodology focusing on both processes and outcomes; and a way of structuring relationships between individuals that aims to empower users by reducing negative effects of structural hierarchies on their interaction and the work that they do together (Dominelli, 1994, p. 3). While many social workers support this approach to incorporate social justice values, there is limited evidence of how it can be tangibly used within their day to day practice.

The framework of AOP closely aligns with the values of Human-Centred Design (HCD) which is a design and management framework that uses analytic and creative processes to engage people in opportunities to experiment, create and prototype models, gather feedback and redesign (Razzouk & Shute, 2012). Design thinking gives prime importance to the inclusion of citizens or end-users to define the problem, and develop solutions. Specifically, it emphasizes the need to work collaboratively and iteratively to ensure that all stakeholders can work together to bridge gaps in each-others learnings and create client-focused solutions (Mintrom & Luetjens, 2016). The origins of HCD can be traced back to the works of innovative architects, and designers in the early 20th century. Herbert A. Simon and Buckminster Fuller were instrumental in introducing the idea of centring the experiences and challenges of service users when developing products and services. Simon (1969) in his pioneering work "The Sciences of Artificial", emphasized the need for all professions to learn how to iterate, test and incrementally improve design to best meet the needs of the clients as well as experience the world more richly. Horst and Webber (1973) in their work "Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning" for the first time introduced the idea of design thinking as a tool to understand and solve social problems. They suggested that the solutions for social problems lie in the use of HCD framework that emphasizes on developing deep empathy with the clients and their context. This not only helps to better define the problem itself but also opens the possibility of finding solutions that are more effective, sustainable and aligns with the needs of the people being impacted.

In recent decades, HCD has gained significant momentum in developing creative solutions that focus on a diverse set of social issues through various global and national organizations. For example, IDEO, a global design company was one of the first organizations that used HCD to tackle social issues that impacted communities at large. They have created myriad tools and processes that have focused on the importance of client voices in the development of solutions. Till date, they have leveraged this model to create client-centred solutions in areas such as waste, emergency disasters, literacy, and health amongst others (IDEO, 2020). United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), has established an Office of Innovation that systematically

integrates HCD principles in all aspects of country-level work that is done by UNICEF staff, and grassroots workers. This includes situational analysis, development of insights that inform country programs, designing of inclusive and scalable models across various sectors, and participatory evaluation of the progress of country-level programs (UNICEF, 2016). This has helped UNICEF to develop country and community-specific child-centred programming to tackle problems such as malnutrition, illiteracy, pregnancy-related complications, amongst others (Malan & Newberry, 2019). While this framework has helped larger organizations, it remains largely untapped by local organizations, and social movements that are accountable for responding to individual and community level needs regularly. This can be attributed to being inundated by large caseloads, and limited financial and human resources, social workers are often unable to have the capacity to think innovatively. By having a structured way to enable social innovation and entrepreneurship within their organizational settings, social workers can build on social capital, knowledge and experience of existing organizations as well as leverage the resources within the community. Additionally, they can also use these frameworks for efforts that take place outside formal organizations, such as grassroots movements, community advocacy etc. This paper introduces social workers to the Anti-Oppressive Social Work Design (AOSWD) framework, which integrates the values of AOP within the three phases of HCD (inspiration, ideation and implementation), and provides an alternative lens that can inform how social workers view and tackle complex social issues.

Anti-Oppressive Social Work Design Framework (AOSWD)

Till date, the HCD framework has predominantly been used to create solutions that are focused on efficacy related to aesthetics, composition, usability and other technicalities (Buchanan, 2001). The term “human-centred” has therefore been defined to centre clients in the design process to ensure that the programs developed can be easily adapted by the target communities. However, upon using an AOP lens, one can interpret “human-centred” to advance human rights and dignity. By doing so, social workers can use HCD to evaluate how the services developed are positively or negatively impacting the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of people that they are designed for.

The AOSWD framework by integrating AOP and HCD approach empowers social workers to explore ways to pave the way for socially-just innovation. Here the focus is not only to create user-friendly programs but also dismantling oppressive systems that disproportionately impact marginalized communities. Additionally, it contributes towards Berzin and Pitt-Catsoupes (2014) efforts to expand the concept of social innovation to focus on the social justice element within outcomes. It also recognizes that social innovation can take place in multiple ways, including entrepreneurial efforts by individuals, organizational change through intrapreneurship as well as a combination of the two through partnerships between organizations and communities (Berzin & Pitts-Catsoupes, 2014; Berzin & Camarena, 2018). Specifically, the AOSWD framework embeds values of critical self-reflection, understanding the socio-cultural political and economic context, and establishing trusting relationships within the three HCD phases of inspiration, ideation and implementation. By doing so, it provides social workers with a way to use their professional values and existent skills to innovate by transforming the way we examine problems, the structure of organizations within which social workers function, and programs that have an objective to uplift the rights and dignity of our clients.

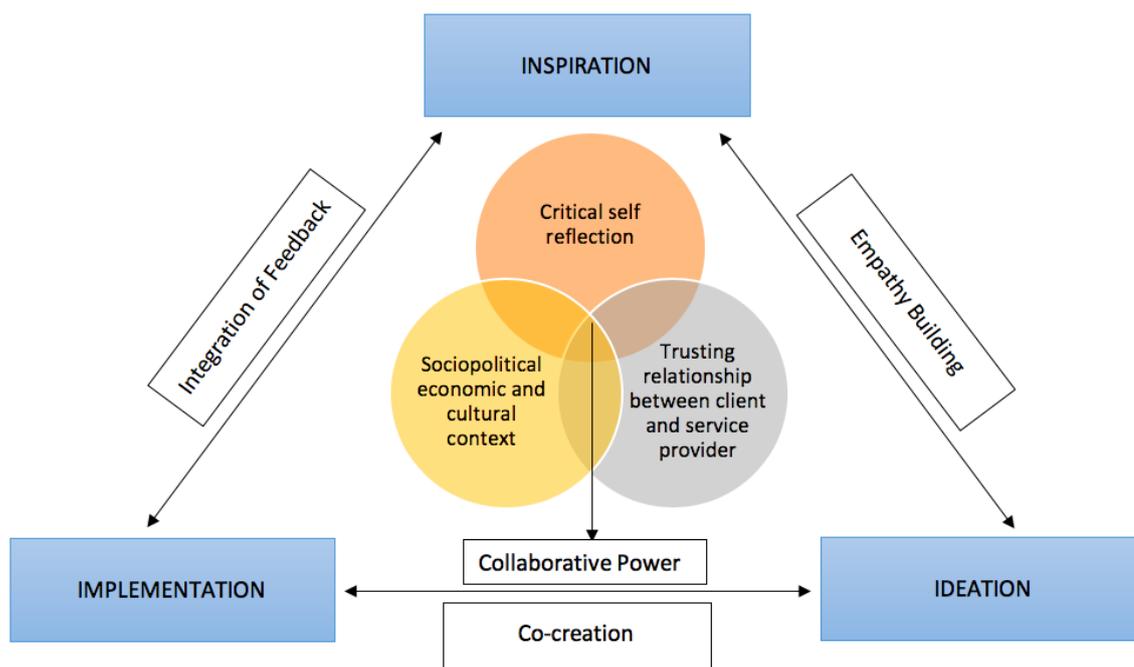


Figure 1: Anti-Oppressive Social Work Design Framework.

Figure 1 displays the AOSWD framework. This framework operates within the larger HCD process, which includes the 3 phases of inspiration (data gathering), ideation (solution development) and implementation (solution execution). The first phase, inspiration, is primarily focused on developing deep empathy with the clients. The second phase, ideation, is aimed to consolidate and analyse the information gathered from clients, and develop a range of potential solutions for the identified challenge. The third phase, implementation, focuses on two aspects, that is, execution of the prototypes and evaluating their effectiveness. In this phase, a few high-fidelity solutions are implemented cost-effectively and rapidly. Also, feedback from all stakeholders is gathered to evaluate the efficacy of the various prototypes. Each of these phases is bi-directional and interconnected, thus indicating the fluidity and dynamic nature of HCD framework. Additionally, both ideation and implementation phases are mediated through inspiration, thus emphasizing the importance of centring the voices of the clients, and the consistent integration of their experiences in the design process.

The AOSWD framework hypothesizes that the HCD process can only be an effective way to innovate within the social work profession if collaborative power between the service providers and clients is established in all three phases. Collaborative power can be defined as a collective action and mutual support that is developed out of a shared understanding of the reality in which we operate (Pinderhughes, 2017). This departs from the predominant way in which power is often understood and used in social service agencies, especially when working with marginalized communities. Pinderhughes (2017) highlights that power is commonly defined as having enough control over forces affecting life to meet individual and group needs, secure necessary resources, and bring desired goals. In the social service arena, this power is often used to exert authority and make decisions on behalf of the clients. Providers often use top-down measures to protect and provide for communities they serve, thus excluding them from actively participating in their change process. Fitzsimons and Fuller (2002), Pinderhughes (2017), Romney (2005), and Tew (2006) have emphasized that building power with clients, allows a shift in entrenched identities of the service provider as the controller of resources and the client as the passive recipient. It, therefore, opens opportunities for all participants to be included in the process of social change. The AOSWD framework indicates that to

build collaborative power between the client and service provider, the process of social change has to include (i) understanding of the socio-political, cultural and economic context of the client, (ii) ability of the social worker to critically self-reflect and (iii) developing trusting relationships between the client and social worker (Figure 1). Within the HCD framework, this collaborative power between social workers and clients can be established through (i) empathy building at the inspiration phase, (ii) co-creation at the ideation phase and (iii) integrating feedback at the implementation phase.

Phase 1 Inspiration: Empathy building

“Empathy-building” in the AOSWD framework is a process imperative to develop deep relationships between the client and service provider, and a way to assess the systematic marginalization of communities that social workers serve (Bennett & Rosner, 2019; Morgaine & Capous-Desyllus, 2015). Typically, empathy can be defined to understand and respond to the emotional state and ideas of another person (Barker, 2003). However, within the context of AOSWD, empathy-building entails a detailed understanding of not only the individual but also the structural inequities faced by them. According to Segal (2011) and Berzin and Pitt-Catsoupes (2014), by understanding the complex social conditions and experiences of others, it promotes innovation that challenges poverty, discrimination and inequity.

Within this phase, empathy can be developed during (i) rapport building process with the clients, (ii) exploration of client challenges, and (iii) assessment of systemic causes of the identified challenges. The empathy-building process will foster deep relationships between the social worker and client, thus paving the way for collaborative innovation to create social change. Cultivating empathy will require social workers to engage in critical self-reflection, and use assessment measures that shift the focus from individual blame to structural inequities. By integrating reflexivity, social workers are less likely to impose their biases and assumptions on the clients. This, in turn, improves their skills to understand client’s experiences and to contextualize it within the socio-political, cultural and economic environment within which the individual, family or community operates.

Phase 2 Ideation: Co-creation

Co-creation within the AOSWD framework refers to the process of developing services and programs by dismantling the hierarchical power dynamics between the service provider and clients. This process embraces the values of social workers as being embedded in the community and dedicated to bringing change through the involvement of various stakeholders rather than in an isolated fashion. Additionally, it recognizes that to create an effective solution that applies to the target community, the process of program design has to be inclusive of their views right from the time of conceptualization of the problem to the implementation of the solution. This is different from the widely used EBP model, which has been lauded as the gold standard for effective programs, but at the same time has been critiqued for its lack of effectiveness in marginalized communities (Sinha et al, 2020). One of the major limitations of the EBP model is that while marginalized communities are included in the feasibility tests, they are often excluded in the conceptualization of the program or intervention, and are therefore not designed to address their unique challenges. Martinez et al. (2010) have suggested that for EBP to be effective in a minority or marginalized communities, the knowledge and experiences of community members should be included when designing interventions.

The co-creation process through systematic integration of voices of the community departs from the focus on social workers as controllers of resources, and decision-makers on behalf of the clients. It provides clients and social workers a platform to collaborate and develop ideas that contribute to a common mission of social change (Sinha, 2020). This not only reduces distrust regarding the social workers and social service

agencies but also leads to an increased buy-in from clients to advocate for change for themselves as well as their community.

Phase 3 Implementation: Integration of feedback

Integration of feedback from clients in the AOSWD framework is imperative to develop programs that target the complex and dynamic realities of marginalized communities. In most social service settings, the feedback from clients is gathered to evaluate the effectiveness of a program after it has been fully implemented. This method of gathering feedback assumes that the social programs operate in a static environment, and cannot be iterated to meet the changing needs of the clients. Additionally, the feedback has been viewed to determine whether a program should be continued or not, rather than assessing how it can be improved to make it more responsive to the needs of the clients (Hasenfeld, et al.,2004).

The integration of feedback within the AOSWD framework, recognizes the dynamic social, political and economic context in which the social workers and their clients operate. It highlights that to create effective programs, there is a need to systematically integrate continuous feedback of clients so that the programs can align with their changing needs and realities. In addition to this, the AOSWD framework within the inspiration phase highlights an essential ethical principle of social work, which is to respect the inherent dignity and value of the clients (NASW, 1996). By acknowledging, and incorporating the feedback of the clients as a method to improve services, the social workers and agencies take a step forward to value them as equal partners in the process of social change. The collaborative power in this phase will therefore enable social workers to test the novel ideas, critically assess their effectiveness and iterate programs to align with the complex nature of client realities.

The next section provides an example of how AOSWD framework was used to develop a Community Social Council, aimed at empowering the voices of residents living in affordable housing units managed by Community Roots Housing (CRH) in Seattle, WA.

AOSWD in practice: A case of Community Roots Housing

Community Roots Housing is a corporation established in 1976 that owns and manages 48 properties throughout the Seattle area (Community Roots Housing, 2020). It currently provides safe and affordable housing to more than 2000 residents from a variety of income levels. The residents include individuals and families who are transitioning from homelessness, single parents and their children, seniors with limited incomes, and recent immigrants. As a Public Development Authority (PDA) and Community Development Corporation (CDC), it is committed to providing programs, services and activities to promote and support community engagement. This service is carried out by the Resident Services Program unit within the organization.

To ensure that the services are better aligned with the needs of the residents, a redesign process to develop a community-informed residential services program was conducted. The objective of this process to develop a framework to integrate client voice throughout the process of program design, development and implementation. Thus, improving Community Roots Housing's ability to clearly define the needs clients, and create nuanced solutions that integrate the values of dignity, autonomy, equality and solidarity (Mintrom & Luietjens, 2016; Sarmiento-Pelayo, 2015).

Methods

The redesign process utilized the AOSDW framework to create deep empathy between the Community Roots Housing staff and the residents, with an ultimate objective of creating a community-informed

resident services program. To inform this process, a mixed-methods needs assessment was conducted to gather information regarding their living conditions, challenges and strengths. To gather quantitative data, a survey was sent to residents in all 46 buildings managed by Community Roots Housing. The survey was completed by 373 residents and provided information on (i) demographics, (ii) assessment of the current housing, (iii) assessment of basic needs, (iv) and community residential engagement needs. In addition to this, in-depth interviews were conducted with 15 residents to gather information about residents' beliefs regarding their wellbeing, living situation, and community engagement. The information gathered increased the understanding of the lived experiences of the residents, which was an imperative step in the empathy-building stage. The research yielded significant insights about the prioritization of needs, barriers in the utilization of resources offered, the importance of community trust and gaps in understanding between service providers and clients.

To ensure that the information was systematically integrated into the co-creation process, the research results were used to develop "Personas" (Figure 2). Three personas of residents were developed to highlight the key opportunities and challenges that emerged from the results. In addition to this, a word cloud was also developed to communicate the prioritized needs and challenges of the residents. Both tools were used to ensure that the participants in the co-creating process had a holistic understanding of the context of the challenges and strengths of the clients.



MEET DASHA

Age: 34 years
Gender: Female
Race & ethnicity: African American
Profession: Mom & Student
Languages spoken: English, Arabic, Amharic
Household Income: <\$20,000
Length of stay in CRH: 0-2 years

What Dasha needs for her wellbeing.

Some of the things that Dasha believed were crucial to her wellbeing particularly related to her living situation included:

1. Feeling of safety
2. Better cleanliness of laundry and common areas
3. Sense of belonging/ community
4. Safe play area for her child

How does she feel CRH can support her.

Dasha has a lot going on in her life and feels like she cannot commit to building a community, unless her basic needs are taken care of. She is not particularly interested in events, because she usually has long days and then is taking care of her child. She is thankful for her housing situation, but would like to have a cleaner and safer environment for herself and her child. As a new resident she believes it would be great to know what is going on in the building, and how residents can use their own skills/ strengths to support each other.

Dasha's experience living in a CRH managed building

Dasha moved to a CRH managed building a year ago. She was happy to move to a place that was more spacious and was conveniently located. She says *"its not fancy but at least its close to where I work, where I study and its easier to get places with my kid"*.

Dasha indicates that her overall experience has been very positive, however is never able to meet any one in person because she works or has to be in school during the day. If there was a way to get more "face to face" time it would be helpful, than to send emails and have no personal connection.

Dasha would love to have more supports available to her and her child. She did not think that was the role of the management property, and was pleasantly surprised to hear about the Resident Services- *"I had no idea that a service like this was available. If this is true I would like to meet them and figure out how I can get help for legal concerns and child care"*.

Residential services according to Dasha can play a pivotal role as a "connector" and a "builder of community". She wishes there was readily available information about the residential services and how it connects to the larger CHH management - *"I didn't know the management people are different from the residential services people"*.



Figure 2: Community Roots Housing Resident Persona.

Co-creation Process

The design team consisted of 14 participants: 5 Resident Services Program staff, 1 research assistant, 1 facilitator, and 7 resident representatives from 5 distinct buildings. They engaged in two 5-hour design sessions to review the needs assessment results and, personas which were direct reflections of the challenges and successes of many residents. The empathy-building phase was therefore focused on discovering the concerns and underlying systemic issues within the research results. This helped all participants gain a mutual understanding of the social, political, economic and cultural context in which the residents and Community Roots Housing function. It also prompted the staff to critically reflect on their biases regarding

the residents, thus assessing the appropriateness of services offered. This phase led to the development of three main criteria that drove the development of potential solutions for the overarching objective of “How might we reimagine the residential services program to empower residents to feel more valued and heard in their living community?”. The three criteria included: 1) programs or services should be directed towards making residents feel included and valued in the community, 2) clear communication between the staff and residents to increase accountability, and 3) resident leadership to integrate community strengths and interests within programs offered.

The participants engaged in the co-creation phase by creating a minimum of three actionable ideas that would incorporate all three criteria. To ensure collaboration between staff and residents, the participants were divided into three groups, such that, each included at least 1 staff member and 2 residents. A total of 9 actionable ideas were created. All 9 ideas were presented to the full design team. Along with the description of the idea, the residents and staff from each team discussed the feasibility and, impact from an organization and client perspective. Each participant was asked to vote for 1-2 ideas that they believed would be the most effective. All participants unanimously chose one idea, that they believed would empower the residents and, bridge the gap between the management and clients. This idea focused on developing a resident council that would integrate resident voices in all decisions regarding types of services needed, effective implementation of programs, and creating community identity. The residents, staff and facilitators collaborated to improvise and finalize the concept.

The final prototype “Resident Leadership Council”, was assessed against the three design criteria and the overall objective of the design process, that is, empowering residents to feel more valued and heard in their living community. Upon this assessment, three changes were made that integrated the complex realities of the residents and Community Roots Housing. Firstly, the name of the council was changed to “Resident Social Council” to ensure that a hierarchical power dynamic does not arise between resident leaders and the larger resident community. Second, all council members and staff would be required to attend anti-bullying, conflict resolution training, to ensure that they can develop skills to successfully navigate challenging conversations with residents and staff. Lastly, a list of feasibility criteria was established to ensure that the council had buy-in and financial support from Community Roots Housing.

Outcomes for Community Roots Housing

The use of the AOSWD framework ensured that the residents’ voices were centred throughout the process of the needs assessment, analysis of results, and development of the final product, that is, The Resident Social Council. By building empathy with the clients keeping in mind, their social, political, economic and cultural context, staff were able to critically reflect on the efficacy of current programs. Additionally, staff recognized their bias as service providers in assuming the needs and wants of residents. On the other hand, clients had an opportunity to learn about the complex realities of organizations and barriers in developing client-centred programs. By developing a sense of trust, both, clients and staff were able to collaborate to develop a program that would not only integrate the opinions of clients but would also be cost-effective and sustainable for the organization itself.

Implications for the social services profession

The AOSWD framework, embodying the true essence of the social work profession which is rooted in social justice; attempts to provide social workers with a tangible way in which they can integrate their professional principles with that of innovation. It also attempts to expand the scope of social workers to be innovators, intrapreneurs and entrepreneurs that partner with their clients to develop ideas that meet immediate needs effectively as well as works towards structural reform. This can further strengthen the

overall field of innovation, by prioritizing the core values of service to others, advocating for social justice, recognizing the dignity and worth of a person, importance of human relationships, integrity and trustworthiness, and professional competence. It can therefore redefine social innovation to be focused on uplifting human rights and dignity rather than solely developing solutions to meet the immediate needs of their clients. This framework can be integrated by social workers and other social service professionals in three specific areas (i) professional training of professionals, (ii) service delivery and evaluation by small to medium non-profits, and (iii) assessment of needs and assets.

To tackle the grand challenges that are being experienced by our society, social workers should be trained in skills that build their capacity to think and act innovatively. Currently, social innovation curriculum is mostly housed in management and design schools. Recently, some social work programs across the globe have introduced courses to train students in social innovation (E.g. social work programs in Boston College, Boston University, San Diego State University, University of Denver, and the University of Toronto amongst others). However, they seldom integrate social justice principles within the curriculum and do not apply to the social service settings in which most of the social workers will be placed. The AOSWD framework provides an opportunity for educators to expand the training in innovation principles to all social service professionals while prioritizing values of social justice. Faculty teaching social work courses can integrate the AOSWD framework as a theoretical lens for assessing case studies, conducting needs assessments, and analysing the effectiveness of solutions. Additionally, the framework can also be used as a way to develop specific skills, such as (i) assessing client problems within their context, (ii) collaborating to create solutions that are feasible, sustainable and account for the multidimensional nature of human problems, and (iii) critically reflecting on their positionality as service providers and its influence on the programs created.

AOSWD framework is a beneficial tool for small to medium size non-profits that are often limited in their resource capacity. The AOSWD framework can be used as a cost-effective organization tool to help service providers (i) assess the alignment of their programs with values of equity and anti-oppression, (ii) redesign services, programs and policies to ensure that they are reflective of the needs of the clients, and (iii) prioritize services to leverage community strengths thus making it more cost-effective and sustainable. The framework can also be used by social scientists to integrate social justice values in the development and analysis of empirical knowledge. This is particularly useful for community-based researchers and evaluators that are often assessing the needs and assets of communities, as well as the effectiveness of services provided. By using AOSWD lens the research process can systematically integrate the recognition of the power of communities, focus on emancipation and can be action-oriented (Lather, 1986; Parada & Wehbi, 2017; Strega & Brown, 2015); thus, integrating and centring the client's problems and context.

Conclusion and way forward

Social workers and other helping professionals, similar to designers have the power to impact people's lives in a very significant manner. An oppressive service, policy or product can have a long-lasting negative effect on the lives of the people that use it, as well as the larger community. In the same way, a program or policy that systematically incorporates social justice values can empower communities and improve their overall quality of life. This paper provides one of the first frameworks of how the professional values and skillsets of designers and social workers can be leveraged to create socially just, cost-effective and sustainable solutions for marginalized and vulnerable communities. To ensure that the efficacy of this framework can be measured, it should be implemented in diverse settings, including skill training, organization development, program design and evaluation. By doing so, social workers and other social service professionals can develop flexible ways to use the framework to benefit the communities they work with.

References

- Barker, R.L. (2003). *The social work dictionary* (5th ed.). NASW Press.
- Berzin, S.C. (2012). Where is Social Work in the Social Entrepreneurship Movement? *Social Work*, 57(2), 185-188.
- Berzin, S.C., & Camarena, H. (2018). *Innovation from Within: Redefining How Non-profits Solve Problems*. Oxford University Press.
- Berzin, S.C., & Pitt-Catsoupes, M. (2014). A Social Work Approach to Social Innovation. *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change*, 1(4), 7-18.
- Bennett, C.L., & Rosner, D.L. (2019). The Promise of Empathy: Design, Disability, and Knowing the "Other". *Computer-Human Interaction*, 4(9), 1-13.
- Brock, D., & Steiner, S. (2009). Social entrepreneurship education: Is it achieving the desired outcome? SSRN 1344419. DOI: 10.2139/ssrn.1344419
- Buchanan, R. (2001). Human Dignity and Human Rights: Thoughts on the Principles of Human-Centered Design. *Design Issues*, 17(3), 35-39.
- Clifford, D., & Burke, B. (2009). *Anti-Oppressive Ethics and Values in Social Work*. Palgrave MacMillan Publishing.
- Cohen, B.J. (2012). Design-based Practice: A New Perspective for Social Work. *Social Work*, 56 (4), 337-346.
- Community Roots Housing (2020). Our Story. Retrieved from <https://communityrootshousing.org/our-story/>
- Council on Social Work Education (1994). *Handbook of accreditation standards and procedures*. Council on Social Work Education Press.
- Dalrymple, J., & Burke, B. (1995). *Anti-oppressive Practice: Social Care and the Law*. Open University Press.
- Danso, R. (2009). Emancipating and Empowering De-Valued Skilled Immigrants: What Hope Does Anti-Oppressive Social Work Practice Offer? *The British Journal of Social Work*, 39(3), 539-555.
- Dominelli, L. (1994). *Anti-racist Social Work Education: Models for practice*. MacMillan Press LTD.
- Dominelli, L. (1996). Deprofessionalizing Social Work: Anti-Oppressive Practice, Competencies and Postmodernism. *The British Journal of Social Work*, 26(2), 153-175.
- Hasenfeld, Y., Hill, K., & Weaver, D. (n.d.). A participatory model for evaluating social programs. The James Irvine Foundation. Retrieved from https://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/Eval_Social.pdf

IDEO (2020). About us. <https://www.ideo.com/>

Lather, P. (1986). Research as Praxis. *Harvard educational review*, 56(3), 257-278.

Malan, J.L., & Newberry, J. (2019). Human Centered Design in the Field. UNICEF. Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/innovation/media/12111/file>

Martinez, K., Callejas, L., & Hernandez, M. (2010). Community-Defined Evidence: A Bottom-up Behavioral Health Approach to Measure What Works in Communities of Color. *Emotional & Behavioral Disorders in Youth*, 10(1), 11-16.

Mintrom, M., & Luetjens, J. (2016). Design Thinking in Policymaking Processes: Opportunities and Challenges. *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 75(3), 391-402.

Mirabella, R., & Young, D.R. (2012). The development of education for social entrepreneurship and nonprofit management. Diverging or converging paths? *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, 21(1), 43-57.

Morgaine, K., & Capous-Desyllas, M. (2015). *Anti-Oppressive Social Work Practice*. Sage Publications.

National Association of Social Work, NASW (1996). Code of ethics. Retrieved from <https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics-English>

Parada, H., & Wehbi, S. (2017). Reimagining anti-oppressive social work research. *Canadian Scholars*.

Pol, E., & Ville, S. (2009). Social Innovation: Buzz word or enduring term? *The Journal of Socio-Economics*, 38, 878-885.

Pinderhughes, E. (2017). Conceptualizing of How Power Operates in Human Functioning. In Pinderhughes, E., Jackson, V. & Romney, P.A. (Eds.), *Understanding Power: An Imperative for Human Services* (27-62). NASW Press.

Razzouk, R., & Shute, V. (2012). What is Design Thinking and Why Is It Important? *American Educational Research*, 82(3), 330-348.

Rittel, H.W.J., & Webber, M.M. (1973). Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning. *Policy Sciences*, 4(2), 155-169.

Rogers, J. (2012). Anti-oppressive social work research: reflections on power in the creation of knowledge. *Social Work Education*, 31(7), 866-879.

Romney, P. (2005). The art of dialogue. In P. Korza, B. Schaffer Bacon, & A. Assaf (Eds.), *Civic dialogue, arts & culture: Findings from animating democracy* (pp. 57-79). Americans for the Arts Press.

Sarmiento-Pelayo, M.P. (2015). Co-design: A central approach to the inclusion of people with disabilities. *Revista de la Facultad de Medicina*, 63, 149-154.

Segal, E.A. (2011). Social Empathy: a model built on empathy, contextual understanding and social responsibility that promotes social justice. *Journal of Social Service Research*, 37(3), 266-277.

Simon, H.A. (1969). *The Sciences of Artificial*. MIT Press.

Sinha, A. (2020). Creating Collaborative Solutions with Communities using “Gift Explosion”, and “See it My Way”. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*.

Sinha, A., Hanna, M., & McRoy, R. (2020). Chapter 6: Domestic Children. In Hanna, M., Fong, R., Rolock, N. & McRoy, R. (Eds.), *Introduction to Child Welfare: Building a culturally responsive, multisystemic, evidence-based approach*. Cognella Academic Publishing.

Strega, S., & Brown, L. (2015). *Research as resistance: revisiting critical, indigenous, and anti-oppressive approaches*. Canadian Scholars Press.

Tew, J. (2006). Understanding power and powerlessness: Towards a framework for emancipatory practice in social work. *Journal of Social Work*, 6(1), 33-51.

Traube, D.E., Begun, S., Okpych, N., & Choy-Brown, M. (2017). Catalyzing Innovation in Social Work Practice. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 27(2), 134-138.

UNICEF (2016). *Human-Centred Design: Accelerating results for every child by design*. Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/innovation/media/5456/file>