

Spring 4-27-2018

Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities as Advocates for Immigrants

Lindsey Moore

Western Kentucky University, lindsey.moore005@topper.wku.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/stu_hon_theses



Part of the [Social Work Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Moore, Lindsey, "Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities as Advocates for Immigrants" (2018). *Honors College Capstone Experience/Thesis Projects*. Paper 743.

https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/stu_hon_theses/743

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by TopSCHOLAR®. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors College Capstone Experience/Thesis Projects by an authorized administrator of TopSCHOLAR®. For more information, please contact topscholar@wku.edu.

SOCIAL WORKERS' ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES AS ADVOCATES FOR
IMMIGRANTS

A Capstone Experience/Thesis Project

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree Bachelor of Social Work with

Honors College Graduate Distinction at Western Kentucky University

By

Lindsey M. Moore

Western Kentucky University

2018

CE/T Committee:

Dana Sullivan, PhD, Chair

Simon Funge, PhD

Chris Keller, PhD

Copyright by
Lindsey M. Moore
2018

ABSTRACT

Within the past decade, immigration policy has become the subject of a fiery nationwide debate, with policymakers and lobbyists going head-to-head as policy reform is discussed. As a worrisome trend has emerged in which national security concerns are being prioritized over human rights concerns, it has become necessary that social workers get involved, as well. Due to the professional values and ethical standards laid out in the National Association of Social Workers' *Code of Ethics*, social workers are ethically obligated to engage in this discussion and advocate for fair and just policies on behalf of immigrants. Based off an understanding of these ethical obligations, this thesis seeks to evaluate social workers' performance in this discussion by examining current literature and the responses of practitioners and professional organizations. It is concluded that social workers have been startlingly absent from this discussion and that social work education has left workers ill-equipped to engage in this reform, due to a lack of understanding of immigrant/immigration policies and a lack of advocacy training. It is argued that social work education must expand beyond teaching cultural competence to teaching workers how to understand harmful immigration policies and fight against them at the macro level.

Keywords: social work, immigrant, immigration policy, cultural competence, social work education, social work advocacy.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks are due to Dr. Dana Sullivan, Director of the Bachelor of Social Work program at Western Kentucky University, for serving as the first reader for this CE/T. This thesis would not have been possible without her guidance, knowledge, and support. Additionally, I would like to thank Dr. Simon Funge, Assistant Professor of the Department of Social Work at Western Kentucky University, for serving as second reader and providing insightful feedback and added guidance during the writing process.

I would also like to thank the Department of Social Work at Western Kentucky University for equipping me with the knowledge and resources that were needed to complete this thesis. Thank you for encouraging and supporting my academic endeavors, and most importantly, thank you for teaching me what it means to serve, respect, and include others not only in professional practice, but also in daily life.

I would like to thank the Mahurin Honors College for encouraging its students to pursue challenging yet rewarding academic endeavors, such as this thesis, and for providing its students with the tools needed to succeed – academically, professionally, and personally. I would also like to thank the Mahurin Honors College for sponsoring my late-night writing sessions via its private study rooms in the Honors College and International Center building.

Of course, this thesis would not have been possible without my beautiful community of love, encouragement, and support. Thank you to my dear friends, Haley,

Lydia, and Elizabeth, for writing your theses alongside me at 3am, for reassuring me that we will get through this, for reminding me to set my mind on things above. Thank you to my mom for teaching me the importance of education and for seeing my academic potential. Lastly, thank you to my sweet fiancé, Adam, for encouraging me to pursue my goals, having gracious patience with me, and tirelessly loving me.

VITA

EDUCATION

Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, KY May 2018
Bachelor's of Social Work – Mahurin Honors College Graduate
Honors Capstone: *Understanding Social Workers' Ethical
Responsibilities as Advocates for Immigrants*

South Oldham High School, Crestwood, KY May 2014

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

HOTEL, INC, Bowling Green, KY August 2017 – May 2018
Housing Intake Intern

Louisville Rescue Mission, Louisville, KY June 2017 – August 2017
Volunteer Services Intern

Love Thy Neighborhood, Louisville, KY May 2017 – August 2017
Intern, Team Captain

Panera Bread August 2013 – Present
Associate Trainer

AWARDS & HONORS

President's Scholar (GPA of 3.8 or higher), WKU, 2014-2018
Session winner, WKU Student Research Conference, 2017
Study Abroad & Global Learning World Topper Scholarship, WKU, 2016
Travel Abroad Grant, WKU, 2016
1906 Founders Scholarship, WKU, 2014-2018

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

National Association of Social Workers
Phi Alpha Social Work Honor Society
Golden Key International Honor Society

INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Harlaxton College, Grantham, United Kingdom

January 2016 – May 2016

PRESENTATIONS

Moore, L. (2017, March). *Standing in the way: Criminalizing homelessness*. Poster presented at KASWE Annual Conference. Richmond, KY.

Moore, L. (2017, April). *Standing in the way: Criminalizing homelessness*. Poster presented at WKU Student Research Conference. Bowling Green, KY.

Moore, L. (2018, March). *Understanding social workers' ethical obligations as advocates for immigrants*. Poster presented at WKU Student Research Conference. Bowling Green, KY.

Moore, L. (2018, April). *Understanding social workers' ethical obligations as advocates for immigrants*. Poster presented at KASWE Annual Conference. Highland Heights, KY.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Vita.....	v
Chapters:	
1. Introduction.....	1
2. Social Work with Immigrants.....	8
3. Social Work Responses to Current Immigration Issues.....	25
4. Discussion and Implications.....	36
5. Conclusion.....	42
References.....	45

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glow world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
“Keep ancient lands, your storied pomp!” cries she
With silent lips. “Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!
(Lazarus, 1883).

This poem, titled *The New Colossus*, was written in 1883 by Emma Lazarus, a New Yorker of Sephardic Jewish descent (National Park Service, 2015). Lazarus was involved in work with refugees and immigrants, and this work is what inspired her aforementioned poem, which was written for an auction raising money for the construction of the Statue of Liberty's pedestal (National Park Service, 2015). In 1903, the poem was engraved on a bronze plaque and placed on the inner wall of the Statue's pedestal, and it remains on display today (National Park Service, 2015).

In her poem, Lazarus refers to the Statue of Liberty as the "Mother of Exiles" and describes her as a beacon of hope and welcome for those "yearning to breathe free." She portrays the Statue as a friend to the lowly and oppressed, as the gatekeeper of the land in which they may find rest, freedom, and opportunity. More importantly, she implies an America that is a refuge for the hurting, a home for the homeless, a safe haven for all. She describes a country that is *borderless*, that is *safe*, that is *welcoming* – a country that does *not* seem congruent with the United States of the twenty-first century.

In the United States of today, there are plans to build a heavily-reinforced wall along the southern border, an attempt to prevent individuals from Mexico and other Latin American countries from illegally entering the U.S. (Somerville, 2017). In the United States of today, there is such an atmosphere of hostility towards immigrants that there now exists a government office, Victims Of Immigration Crime Engagement (VOICE), whose sole purpose is to spotlight the criminality of immigrants and "support victims of crimes committed by criminal aliens..." (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2017, Mission Statement section, para. 1). In the United States of today, the two most recent Presidents – Barack Obama and Donald Trump – have both attempted to limit or

completely restrict immigration from certain Middle Eastern countries (Arango, 2011; Jarrett & Tatum, 2017). This is only a glimpse into how the U.S. has recently handled immigration affairs and treated immigrants, but these three characteristics are sufficient to illustrate a country which is the complete contradiction of one which is *borderless*, *safe*, and *welcoming*.

Furthermore, American attitudes towards immigrants are incredibly negative. For example, data from the Pew Research Center (2015) indicates that 50% of Americans believe that immigrants are making the economy and crime worse in the U.S. The Pew Research Center (2015) also reported that the word most commonly associated with immigrants is “illegal.” These ideological undercurrents may not be immediately alarming, but their impact on immigrants living in America is undeniably negative and harmful. This is especially true for immigrants from Mexico and other Latin American countries; even though these individuals accounted for 52% of U.S. immigrants in 2013, they have been the focus of much discrimination and hate (Pew Research Center, 2015). Univision News, a news organization targeting Latinx individuals in the U.S., reported receiving nearly 200 reports of hate crimes and incidents in the six months following the 2016 Presidential election (Weiss, 2017).

In short, this certainly is not the America that Emma Lazarus so lovingly alluded to in her nineteenth-century sonnet. Rather, this is an America that is hostile to foreigners, that has grown more and more unforgiving and unwelcoming throughout the years. This change, however, is more than a mere evolution of American values; it is an infiltration of hatred, oppression, and injustice into American culture and politics. This infiltration is appallingly apparent in America’s discussion of immigration and

immigrants. Of course, discussing and altering immigration policies and processes is necessary, as the U.S. and its immigration trends are always changing. However, creating policies and processes that reflect hateful, unjust, and discriminatory attitudes is a great wrongdoing, and unfortunately, this seems to be an appropriate description of how the U.S. has recently handled immigration reform.

During the recent Presidential election, immigration was a hotly-debated topic, and immigration reform emerged as a central component of many candidates' platforms. It was obvious from this election that immigration, particularly immigration reform, was at the forefront of citizens' minds. However, also obvious was the harsh tone with which immigration and immigrants, particularly Latin American immigrants, were being discussed. Perhaps one of the most indelible statements from the election was made when Donald Trump announced his Presidential bid: "When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best. . . . They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists" (Washington Post Staff, 2015, para. 15).

However, though this statement and many others made by Trump are undeniably audacious, it is inaccurate to suggest that he ignited this ideological current in the U.S. or that his behavior and statements are unprecedented. Rather, he has simply become the spokesperson for a mindset that has been present and influential in the U.S. for quite some time. For example, over a decade ago, the Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act was introduced to Congress (H.R. 4437, 2005). This bill would have classified as felons anyone who helped an immigrant enter or remain in the U.S. illegally, and the bill also had provisions for reinforcing fencing along the U.S.-

Mexico border (H.R. 4437, 2005). The bill did not make it through the Senate, but its proposal and success in the House demonstrates how deeply-rooted the troubling biases against Latinx immigrants are. Padilla, Shapiro, Fernández-Castro, and Faulkner (2008) accurately described this type of legislation – of which there has been no shortage – as “proposals . . . that fail to balance security concerns with respect for constitutional protections, human rights, or equality” (p. 5).

This harsh rhetoric and legislation represent an undercurrent of hate, fear, and misunderstanding in many Americans’ perceptions of immigrants, particularly Latin American immigrants. It is clear that these words and actions are socially unjust, failing to consider the human rights of immigrants. Therefore, it is also clear that something needs to be done, as this social injustice cannot be left unaddressed. Someone – or, more realistically, a group of people – needs to intercede on behalf of these immigrants, present them as *people* rather than criminals, and advocate for their human rights.

However, herein the dilemma lies: who is this someone – or this group of people – that is going to step up? Who will challenge these massive injustices? *Where are these advocates?* The common answer, the individual usually looked upon to be a representative and advocate, is a politician. Rightfully so, Americans often look to their politicians to be the problem-solvers, the voices, the advocates, especially when it comes to issues that are quite complex and perceived as too large for ordinary citizens to handle. However, looking to politicians to address this injustice may be overlooking another group of individuals that is able to challenge these injustices, that can step up and tirelessly advocate for immigrants and their rights: social workers.

Though social work is commonly associated with government services for family and children, its roots are much different. Jane Addams is often considered the “mother” of social work, and her work began with opening the well-known Hull House in an immigrant neighborhood in Chicago (Allen, 2008). She passionately worked with and advocated for vulnerable populations, including immigrants. Furthermore, later in her life, she co-founded the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), an organization that still exists today and is prominent in the fight for immigrant justice (Allen, 2008). This work and legacy of Jane Addams are remembered as foundational to the social work profession, and they showcase the intimate ties social work has had with immigration reform – ties of which social workers today may need to be reminded.

Unfortunately, social workers are often forgotten as players in these complicated, large-scale issues – sometimes, even social workers themselves forget what they have to offer in addressing these issues. However, social workers should recognize and remember that their skills and services can be instrumental in achieving sensible and humane immigration reform. Furthermore, workers should recognize that absence and inaction is unacceptable, as indicated in the profession’s *Code of Ethics* (National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2017). The *Code of Ethics* (NASW, 2017) makes it clear that social workers should be serving immigrants during this time, as they are *ethically obligated* to “promote social justice and social change with and on behalf of clients” and “strive to end discrimination, oppression, poverty, and other forms of social injustice” (p. 1). However, are social workers doing enough to adequately fulfill this responsibility? Are social workers responding effectively enough to this crisis which these immigrants find themselves in?

In light of this ethical obligation set forth by the *Code of Ethics* (NASW, 2017), this thesis seeks to further explore and evaluate social workers' performance in this macro level immigration discussion. Furthermore, this thesis will focus specifically on immigration sourced from Latin American countries, as these immigrants compose the majority of authorized and unauthorized immigrants in the U.S., and policy reform and discrimination is commonly directed towards these individuals (Pew Research Center, 2015). In seeking to understand social workers' performance as macro-level advocates for Latinx immigrants, this aforementioned ethical obligation and the macro practice context in which it must be fulfilled will be adequately explored and understood. Second, the responses of the social work profession – consisting of the responses of professional organizations and individual practitioners and researchers – to this nationwide injustice will be presented and evaluated. Lastly, based on these evaluations, implications and recommendations for practice and education will be discussed.

CHAPTER TWO

SOCIAL WORK WITH IMMIGRANTS

An Introduction to Social Work Macro Practice

Social work is commonly associated with government services for family and children and other individual- and family-level interventions, and those unfamiliar with the profession may question whether social workers could play a valuable role in U.S. immigration reform. Unfortunately, even social workers themselves may question whether their training and skills enable them to contribute to this complex and broad topic. Therefore, before evaluating how social workers have contributed to and responded to this issue, it is important to establish an understanding of the context in which social work practitioners may contribute their expertise to this issue.

Netting, Kettner, McMurtry, & Thomas (2012) describe social work as a “dualistic professional model,” meaning that there are two types, or levels, of social work practice (p. 70). These two levels are typically referred to as the micro level and macro level, and the context in which social workers are expected to contribute to the nation’s immigration reform and treatment of immigrants is the macro level. Understanding these two levels and their differences begins with understanding the origins of the social work profession.

The social work profession emerged in the United States during the mid- to late-nineteenth century. Essentially, social work is a byproduct of the industrial revolution, which brought an array of social problems along with its industrialization and urbanization (McNutt, 2013). For example, new factories exploited child labor and fostered unsafe work conditions; booming urban centers became environments which fostered mass poverty, starvation, unhygienic living conditions, and diseases (McNutt, 2013). In response to these newfound and worsening social problems, organized efforts emerged to assist individuals in overcoming these problems and improving their well-being, and these organized efforts gave way to the development of the social work profession (McNutt, 2013).

Two noteworthy organized efforts that emerged during this time are the Charity Organization Societies (COS) and settlement houses. These two movements, both modeled after parent movements in Great Britain, approached the social problems of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries quite differently. On one hand, the COS movement sought change at an individual, case-by-case basis, and the movement promoted “scientific charity” and some ideals of Social Darwinism (McNutt, 2013; Netting et al., 2012). Essentially, these societies viewed poverty as the result of an individual’s shortcomings, and therefore, they sought change via the individual level. The most well-known way in which they did so was through their use of “friendly visitors” – volunteers, commonly middle- and upper-class women, that would visit poor individuals and families, offer advice on how individuals could “better themselves,” and supervise their progress. Though their perception of poverty as a consequence of poor morality was

problematic, the COS movement is largely considered the beginnings of social casework and micro-level interventions (McNutt, 2013; Netting et al., 2012).

Interventions taking place at this level comprise the practice, known as micro practice, that is commonly and most readily associated with social workers, which is why the obligation of social workers to tend to unjust immigration and immigrant policies and related discriminatory political rhetoric may not be immediately realized. However, social work practice extends beyond serving individuals, families, and groups to serving organizations, communities, and society at large. Practice which occurs at this level, the macro level, is referred to as macro practice, and while the COS laid the foundations for social work micro practice, the settlement house movement laid the foundation for social work macro practice. Settlement houses were situated in impoverished areas, and educated, middle- to upper-class individuals would “settle” in these houses. Settlement houses were community centers, of sorts, and the residents would provide services such as literacy education, job training, day care and so forth. Unlike the COS, settlement houses were concerned with change at a community level, and settlement houses were mindful of the larger systems that affected the well-being of individuals and families. Therefore, settlement houses became hubs for activism, as community members and the settlement house residents came together to address social issues affecting the community. Additionally, settlement house workers were involved in reform and research, as they worked with other activists for community and policy reform and researched urban problems in order to better understand them (McNutt, 2013).

One of the most well-known settlement houses is Hull House, which was founded in Chicago in 1889. Hull House was located in West Chicago, in a densely-populated

immigrant neighborhood. The purpose of this settlement house was “to provide a center for a higher civic and social life; to institute and maintain educational and philanthropic enterprises, and to investigate and improve the conditions in the industrial districts of Chicago” (Allen, 2008, para. 6). The work of Hull House expanded far beyond the industrial districts of Chicago, though, as its residents and supporters proved to be instrumental in sparking local and national reform in favor of immigrants, women, and children (Allen, 2008; McNutt, 2013).

Hull House and its fellow settlement houses are illustrative of many principles and values that comprise social work macro practice today. Furthermore, one of the co-founders of Hull House, Jane Addams, is often considered the “mother” of social work, as her work at Hull House and her activism set the precedent for much of social work, specifically at the macro level. According to Allen (2008),

Addams recognized the need to direct attention toward policies and laws that were at the root of poverty. Addams quickly became a political activist and tirelessly worked on behalf of the most vulnerable. She lobbied for legislation designed to protect immigrants, women, and children. (para. 7)

The social work profession is wide and deep, encompassing a variety of occupations at multiple levels of practice. However, despite the profession’s beginnings with activist Jane Addams and her work at Hull House, social work is most commonly associated with micro-level interventions, and the importance of advocacy and public policy work and research within the social work profession may not be as robust as Addams and her contemporaries had envisioned. According to McNutt (2013), it is “undeniable” [that direct services and casework are the] “primary practice orientation in

social work” (The History of Social Work Practice Considered section, para. 1). McNutt (2013) goes on to note that casework or psychotherapy seem to be social workers’ only answer to problems, and it is not always the right answer. Echoing these sentiments, there are social problems – such as the immigration matter at hand – which cannot be addressed solely at the individual level and times when casework and psychotherapy are not enough to sustainably enhance an individual’s well-being. These unfortunate truths were discovered early on by Jane Addams and her fellow residents at Hull House, which is why they began seeking change at community, city, state, and even national levels, setting the precedent for future social work macro practice, and it is important that social workers continue to put down strong roots in macro practice in order to continue working with and on behalf of immigrants, as Jane Addams and her fellow Hull House residents once did.

Foundations of Social Work Macro Practice

Upon understanding the context in which social workers must fulfill their ethical obligation to advocate on behalf of Latinx immigrants, it is important to additionally understand the building blocks of social work macro practice. First, it is necessary to understand the theoretical framework within which social workers can interpret and assess the challenges immigrants face, and second, it is necessary to understand these aforementioned ethical obligations, where they come from, and how they should guide practice. These two building blocks – the theoretical framework and ethical basis of macro practice with and for immigrants – complete the foundation upon which social workers can begin to build an effective practice of contributing to immigration reform and advocating for Latinx immigrants.

Theoretical Framework

Netting et al. (2012) describe macro practice as “professionally guided intervention designed to bring about change in organizational, community, and policy arenas” (p. 5). Considering how these interventions are “professionally guided” necessitates an understanding of the perspectives and theories which are common guideposts in the social work profession. Due to the diversity of the field of social work, the knowledge base of the profession borrows from many different disciplines, such as psychology and sociology; however, the hallmark of social work’s approach to understanding and addressing social problems is its emphasis on understanding a person or group *within* their environments. This is often referred to as the person-in-environment perspective, and this perspective guides practitioners by urging them to consider an individual and their behavior within their various environmental contexts (Kondrat, 2013). This approach to tackling social problems guides practice at all levels, as it is important for all practitioners to understand the effects that various environments have on individuals and groups.

The prevalence of the person-in-environment perspective is evident in social workers’ widespread use of the ecological systems theory, also called ecosystems theory. Basic systems theory emphasizes that there are multiple parts – systems – of any entity and that each system interconnects and interacts with one another (Netting et al., 2012). The ecological systems theory, developed in the 1970s by Urie Bronfenbrenner, builds off this basic theory and uses its concepts to understand the ecological environment in which a human develops (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner (1979) conceives the ecological environment as a “nested arrangement of concentric structures, each contained

within the next” (p. 22). He identifies these structures as the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. The microsystem is the smallest of these structures, and the microsystem is comprised of the individuals, activities, and settings that *directly* affect an individual’s life, such as family and school. The mesosystem refers to interactions between microsystems – such as interactions between parents and teachers. The exosystem refers to settings that indirectly affect the individual – settings in which events occur that affect the individual even though he/she does not have an active role in these settings. The macrosystem describes the broader cultural context in which an individual lives (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The macrosystem refers to “consistencies ... at the level of the subculture or the culture as a whole, along with any belief systems or ideology underlying such consistencies” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 26). For example, laws and cultural norms are considered aspects of the macrosystem, and addressing problems and issues which are originating in laws or cultural norms would be considered macro-level interventions, or macro practice. Lastly, the chronosystem refers to events and transitions that happen over time, including historical, sociological trends (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Using Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecosystems theory as a framework within which to understand and interpret the challenges of Latinx immigrants enables a social work practitioner to recognize how unjust federal immigration policies and discriminatory political rhetoric in the macrosystem affects the daily lives and struggles – the microsystem – of these individuals. Furthermore, applying this theory to the lives of Latinx immigrants should compel workers to intervene at the macro level, as this theory showcases the ways in which macrosystem events can negatively impact the well-being

of these individuals. As discussed in the upcoming section, social workers have an ethical responsibility to the profession and their clients to address these events and variables which are causing detriment to the well-being of individuals.

Ethical Basis

The person-in-environment perspective and the ecosystems theory are essential to successful macro practice, as they create a framework within which social workers can understand and address complex social issues. Furthermore, this framework can guide social work practice and interventions, as it allows social workers to trace individual challenges to their origins in the broader context of society, and these origins – whether they are events or ideological currents or cultural norms – then become the focus of macro-level interventions. This theoretical framework can serve as an important guidepost in social work practice and interventions, and an additional guidepost is professional ethics.

As in any human services profession, ethics are of utmost importance within social work. Practitioners can expect to face ethical dilemmas regularly, and it is necessary for ethical standards to exist as guides for practitioners dealing with such dilemmas. These ethical standards are documented in the NASW (2017) *Code of Ethics*.

The *Code of Ethics* (NASW, 2017) is widely accepted amongst social workers as the guidelines for professional social work practice, even amongst those that are not official members of the NASW. Any individual that has completed an accredited social work degree program certified by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) is familiar with the *Code of Ethics*, as the CSWE requires baccalaureate and master's social work programs to teach students about the *Code of Ethics* and its contents (CSWE, 2015;

NASW, 2017). Social work can be a difficult profession, subjecting practitioners to an array of difficult situations and ethical dilemmas, and the *Code of Ethics* (NASW, 2017) aims to alleviate the likelihood of unethical practice by providing practitioners with a detailed outline of ethical standards, as well as clarification of the overarching mission, core values, and ethical principles which should guide practitioners' conduct.

According to the Preamble of the *Code of Ethics* (NASW, 2017), the mission of the social work profession is "to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty" (p. 1). The Preamble goes on to highlight some of the characteristics and responsibilities of social workers: "Social workers promote social justice and social change... Social workers are sensitive to cultural and ethnic diversity and strive to end discrimination, oppression, poverty, and other forms of social injustice" (NASW, 2017, p. 1).

In addition to identifying the mission of the profession, the Code of Ethics (NASW, 2017) highlights six core values upon which the profession is based. These core values include service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence (NASW, 2017). These six core values coincide with six ethical principles, which are broad ideals that social workers' practice should emulate. For example, the first ethical principle coincides with the core value of service and states, "Social workers' primary goal is to help people in need and to address social problems" (NASW, 2017, p. 5).

Though these core values and ethical principles are somewhat broad, they are critical standards to which every practitioner's service must be held. With more

specificity, the *Code of Ethics* (NASW, 2017) details social workers' ethical responsibilities (1) to clients, (2) to colleagues, (3) in practice settings, (4) as professionals, (5) to the social work profession, and (6) to the broader society (p. 7). Over twenty pages of the *Code of Ethics* (NASW, 2017) are devoted to these ethical standards, but even so, it is impossible to anticipate every circumstance and ethical dilemma which may arise. For this reason, the aforementioned core values and ethical principles must guide social workers' performance in any arena.

Arguing that social workers have an ethical responsibility to advocate for immigrants at the macro level is an argument rooted in a full understanding of the *Code of Ethics* (NASW, 2017). Advocating for immigrants within the macro-system of the U.S. is an activity clearly consistent with the mission, values, and ethics of the profession and is one of the ethical responsibilities of practitioners. Section 5.01(b) states that is the social worker's ethical responsibility to "uphold and advance the values, ethics, knowledge, and mission of the profession" (NASW, 2017, p. 27). Additionally, Section 1.01 indicates that the primary responsibility of social workers is to "promote the well-being of clients" (NASW, 2017, p. 7). Practitioners limiting this responsibility to the micro level should refer back to the Preamble of the *Code of Ethics* (NASW, 2017), which states that promoting the well-being of clients "may be in the form of direct practice, community organizing, supervision, consultation, administration, advocacy, social and political action, policy development and implementation, education, and research and evaluation" (p. 1).

Furthermore, an entire section of the *Code of Ethics* (NASW, 2017) discusses social workers' ethical responsibilities to the broader society, and a significant portion of

this section highlights workers' obligation to engage in social and political action.

Section 6.04(a) states:

Social workers should engage in social and political action that seeks to ensure that all people have equal access to the resources, employment, services, and opportunities they require to meet their basic human needs and to develop fully. Social workers should be aware of the impact of the political arena on practice and should advocate for changes in policy and legislation to improve social conditions to meet basic human needs and promote social justice. (NASW, 2017, p. 30).

This section goes on to state that workers should “promote conditions that encourage respect for cultural and social diversity” and “promote policies that safeguard the rights of and confirm equity and social justice for all people” (NASW, 2017, p. 30). In the U.S., there is clearly not an atmosphere of respect surrounding the nation's discussion of immigration reform, and the human rights and equity of Latinx immigrants are rarely considered in this discussion. There are policies, both implemented and proposed, which make life significantly difficult for Latinx immigrants – authorized or unauthorized – in the U.S. Social workers utilizing the person-in-environment perspective and the ecosystems theory will recognize these injustices that are currently happening in the U.S., and the aforementioned ethical standards, values, and principles of the social work profession should compel workers to fulfill their ethical obligations to the profession and advocate for fair and equitable policies on behalf of Latinx immigrants.

Where Social Work Macro Practice Meets Immigrants

U.S. Immigration Issues

As previously mentioned, Bronfenbrenner (1979) defines the macrosystem as “consistencies... at the level of the subculture or the culture as a whole, along with any belief systems or ideology underlying such consistencies” (p. 26). These consistencies may be the results of laws and governing institutions or societal trends and cultural norms and ideologies. It is important to consider these consistencies of the macrosystem when working with Latinx immigrants in particular, as immigration across the southern border has been a contentious topic in the United States’ macrosystem during recent years. Though this discussion occurs primarily in policy arenas at state and federal levels, many of the everyday challenges faced by Latinx immigrants are either the direct or indirect results of these trends and events occurring in the macrosystem. Therefore, using the person-in-environment perspective and ecosystems theory, it is important for social workers to understand this political climate surrounding immigration and proposed policy reforms. Moreover, it is important to understand how these macro-level issues affect both Latinx individuals and their communities.

Of course, immigration reform is a timely and necessary topic for the U.S. to discuss. As of 2013, 13.1% of the U.S. population is foreign-born – a percentage nearing the historic high of 14.8% in 1890 (Pew Research Center, 2015). This percentage equates to more than 41 million immigrants currently living in the U.S., of whom 28% – the largest group – are of Mexican nationality (Pew Research Center, 2015). An additional 24% are from other Latin American countries, meaning that over half – 52% – of U.S. immigrants are of Latin American origin (Pew Research Center, 2015). Considering this

data and the large number of Latinx immigrants in the U.S., it does make sense that immigration from Latin American countries seems to be heavily focused on when discussing U.S. immigration.

Unfortunately, though, this topic is not often discussed positively amongst Americans. While the majority of Americans are somewhat more likely to say that immigrants are making American society better, this view is contingent upon a variety of factors, including immigrants' ethnicity (Pew Research Center, 2015). Concerning immigrants from Latin America, Americans are more likely to say that their impact has been mostly negative (Pew Research Center, 2015). This view has been reflected in American culture and media during recent years. In 2015, while campaigning for President, Donald Trump famously said:

When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best. They're not sending you. They're not sending you. They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people.

(Washington Post Staff, 2015, para. 15)

Furthermore, these negative views are evident in discussions on immigration reform, as well. According to the Pew Research Center (2015), 50% of Americans believe that immigrants are making the economy and crime worse – even though research has concluded that immigration has an overall positive impact on the U.S. economy (Gubernskaya & Dreby, 2017). Additionally, when Americans were asked what word comes to mind when thinking about immigrants in the U.S., the word “illegal” was offered more than any other word (Pew Research Center, 2015). Considering these

attitudes, it makes sense that nearly half (49%) of Americans feel that immigration should be decreased and that 82% of Americans feel that the immigration system either needs major changes or needs to be completely rebuilt (Pew Research Center, 2015). However, many of the changes and solutions that have been suggested fail to balance concerns for the human rights of immigrants with concerns for national security (Padilla et al., 2008). These suggested policies are reflective of the negative bias against Latinx immigrants, and this discrimination greatly impacts the daily lives of these individuals.

As previously mentioned, the word that Americans most commonly associate with immigrants is “illegal” (Pew Research Center, 2015). Carol Cleaveland (2010) points out that this label carries clear connotations of criminal status, and she investigates how this label and its connotations of criminality affect individual unauthorized immigrants. In her interviews with Mexican day laborers, she found that they “made considerable efforts to explain that they are not criminals and to note the differences between true criminality ... and the status of ‘illegal immigrant’” (Cleaveland, 2010, p. 77). Many of the Mexican immigrants whom she interviewed expressed feelings of anger, frustration, and exasperation at the label of “illegal” (Cleaveland, 2010).

These individuals also noted the hardships of life in America. Cleaveland (2010) observed that “illegal status is clearly a barrier separating men aspiring to work from the jobs they need” (p. 78). Cleaveland (2010) also observed many of the immigrants expressed fear of “bad Americans” – those known to assault migrant laborers (p. 78). This is a reflection of how negative American biases against Latin American immigrants affects the daily functioning and well-being of Latinx individuals in the U.S. However, to further contextualize the plight of these individuals, one interviewee stated, “I want to

send [Americans] this message that one suffers here. It is not easy. But we were earning 50 pesos per day in Mexico ... Because of that, we came to [America] to make an effort, to struggle to come out in front for our children” (Cleaveland, 2010, p. 78).

Gubernskaya and Dreby (2017) present another devastating effect that bias against Latinx immigrants and discriminatory immigration policies have on these immigrants. Under the Trump administration, new guidelines indicate that all unauthorized immigrants, as well as authorized immigrants with criminal convictions, “are eligible for deportation regardless of familial ties in the U.S.” (Gubernskaya and Dreby, 2017, p. 418). Even though such drastic deportation is not feasible, Gubernskaya and Dreby (2017) note that these imposed guidelines amplify the fears of family separation and have profound psychological affects on immigrants, authorized and unauthorized alike. Research by David Becerra (2016) also indicates that Latinx immigrants reporting a greater fear of deportation were also significantly more likely to report trouble keeping a job, trouble finding a job, that their friends and family have suffered, and lower confidence in a better future.

Immigration Issues as Social Work Issues

These aforementioned studies make it clear that the seemingly-distant conversations, attitudes, and actions happening at the federal and societal levels are negatively impacting the individual and collective well-being of Latinx immigrants as they reside in the U.S. It has already been emphasized that this injustice should concern social workers and compel them to take action because of the ethical responsibilities laid out in the *Code of Ethics* (NASW, 2017). However, it must also be emphasized that this

injustice affects social workers in other ways, as well, and fighting for change should be done for the sake of the profession, as well as for the sake of the affected immigrants.

For example, in 2013, 28% of recently-arrived immigrants were living below the poverty line, compared to 15% of U.S. born individuals (Pew Research Center, 2015). Furthermore, those who are unauthorized immigrants are not eligible to receive any government assistance, such as SNAP benefits or Medicaid – making poverty even harder to grapple with for this population (MacGuill, 2018). These are examples of unfair and unjust immigrant policies; these policies unnecessarily worsen the lives and hardships of Latinx immigrants in the U.S. These policies also impose cumbersome challenges on the services that micro-level social work practitioners may provide to Latinx immigrants. The lack of resources available to Latinx immigrants – due to discrimination, unfair immigrant policies, and other discriminatory practices – greatly hinders these social workers from effectively providing services.

Furthermore, the Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act introduced to Congress in 2005 (H.R. 4437, 2005) would have criminalized anyone helping an immigrant enter or remain in the U.S. illegally. For social workers, the *Code of Ethics* (NASW, 2017) does not differentiate between clients that are authorized or unauthorized residents in the U.S.; it emphasizes the dignity and worth of *all* persons, not just those that are legal residents of the U.S. This policy would have undoubtedly created a dire ethical dilemma for many social workers. Fortunately, this legislation did not make it through Congress.

This is an example of how immigration policies can not only have unfair and unjust effects on the Latinx immigrants which they target, but also have unfair and unjust

effects on social workers that regularly interact with and serve these individuals. From these examples, it is clear to see that this is not just an issue that social workers should get involved in because they have a responsibility to advocate on behalf of immigrants – this is also an issue that social workers should get involved in because these unfair policies hinder the social work profession from accomplishing its mission to “enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people” (NASW, 2017, p. 1).

CHAPTER THREE

SOCIAL WORK RESPONSES TO CURRENT IMMIGRATION ISSUES

It has been established that social work is not a profession which is solely contained to practicing at the micro level. Rather, social work is a profession which uses the ecosystems theory to recognize that there are varying systems in which an individual lives, and social workers intervene in whatever system necessary in order to enhance the well-being of their clients. It has also been established that the nation's current focus on immigration across the southern border and related policy reform is having a negative impact on the individual and collective well-being of Latinx immigrants. Furthermore, according to the Code of Ethics (NASW, 2017), social workers have *ethical responsibilities* to intervene in the macrosystem and advocate on behalf of immigrants for just and fair immigration and immigrant policies.

Considering this ethical obligation, this chapter will explore the ways in which social workers have been responding to current immigration issues, in attempts to fulfill their ethical responsibilities. First, the emphasis of cultural competence within the social work profession will be discussed, as this competency is commonly discussed alongside immigrants and immigration. Second, the responses of organized bodies of social workers, such as the NASW, will be discussed. Third, the responses appearing in social

work literature – the responses of individual social work practitioners and researchers – will be presented and discussed.

Cultural Competence

It is important to understand that, within the field of social work, there is a great emphasis on cultural competence. Thanks to the work of the NASW and the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), there is not a social worker in the U.S. that is unfamiliar with the term “cultural competence.” According to the NASW (2015), cultural competence is:

the process by which individuals and systems respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, religions, spiritual traditions, immigration status, and other diversity factors in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, and communities and protects and preserves the dignity of each. (p. 13)

Essentially, cultural competence is acquiring knowledge about other cultures in order to interact with and serve diverse individuals in a manner that is culturally appropriate and respectful. Cultural competence is a natural extension of the core values outlined by the *Code of Ethics* (NASW, 2017): service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence. The duty of social workers to be cultural competent is made explicit in that this professional responsibility is reiterated numerous times throughout the *Code of Ethics* (NASW, 2017). Section 1.05 of the *Code of Ethics* (NASW, 2017) calls for social workers to possess an understanding both of culture and its function in society and of clients’ specific cultures and its function in their lives. Social workers are instructed to pursue education about

social diversity and oppression, to tailor services to best suit their clients' cultures and lifestyles, and to express respect and appreciation for all cultures and aspects of social diversity (NASW, 2017).

Cultural competence is so heavily emphasized amongst social workers that the guidelines for culturally competent service could not be contained to the *Code of Ethics* (NASW, 2017). The NASW has also published *Standards and Indicators for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice* (NASW, 2015) to provide further standards for social workers' behaviors and practices with diverse clients. This detailed 55-page document lays out ten standards that social workers' practice should meet and numerous concrete, observable ways in which a social worker may meet those standards. Furthermore, this document showcases how strongly the NASW values cultural competency amongst its workers – a necessary value, considering that social workers often find themselves interacting with and serving clients of varying cultures, ethnicities, and lifestyles on a daily basis.

The emphasis on cultural competence does not begin and end with the NASW's guidelines, though. Prospective social workers can expect to learn about cultural competence and its importance as early as their first semester in any accredited social work program. This is due to the CSWE's *Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards* (2015), also known as the EPAS, for baccalaureate and master's social work programs in the U.S. The EPAS (CSWE, 2015) outlines nine core competencies that social work students should demonstrate competence in by their time of graduation, and these competencies guide the content in each course of a social work program. Of course, cultural competence – though the phrase is not explicit – is woven into these

competencies. Competency two states that social workers should “engage diversity and difference in practice” and apply and express an understanding of diversity at each level of social work practice (CSWE, 2015, p. 7). Competency three states that social workers should “advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice” through understanding issues of diversity and oppression and advocating for justice on behalf of clients (CSWE, 2015, p. 7).

The NASW and the CSWE clearly place a heavy emphasis on cultural competence, and this emphasis indicates a concentrated effort from organized social work to understand and effectively serve diverse clients, including Latino immigrants. However, on its own, this emphasis may not constitute sufficient response to the U.S.’s complex immigration issues; therefore, responses which specifically address immigration and immigration policy issues should be considered in conjunction with this emphasis on cultural competence.

Responses from Social Work Organizations

One such response is the NASW’s *Immigration Policy Toolkit*, which was published in 2006. The purpose of this publication is to provide social workers with “policy information and tools to promote the competency of social workers in the immigration field, to fight discrimination against immigrants, and to take social and political action in support of the rights of immigrants” (NASW, 2006, p. 2).

Acknowledging the turbulent immigration discussion taking place in the U.S., this *Immigration Policy Toolkit* (NASW, 2006) provided social workers with extensive information about immigration and immigrants in the U.S., detailed information regarding the NASW’s position on immigration policies, and instructions for how social

workers should respond to the matter. This publication was an incredibly important move by the NASW, and it showcased their attention to the immigration issues of that time and their dedication to advocating for justice at the macro level. However, this toolkit was published over ten years ago, meaning that much of the statistical and policy information in it is outdated, and the NASW has not published an updated version since.

However, the NASW does continually update and publish its policy positions and statements in *Social Work Speaks* (NASW, 2018). This book is updated every three years to reflect the changing trends in the U.S. and in social work, with the most recent edition being published in 2018. The policy statements set forth in this publication determine the positions that the NASW takes on a variety of public policy issues, including immigration policy. There are over 60 chapters in the latest edition, and each chapter addresses a different topic. The chapter titled “Immigrants and Refugees” is devoted entirely to educating social workers on statistics about migration into the U.S., the history of and current immigration policy in the U.S., and detailing the characteristics of immigration policies which the NASW will support (NASW, 2015). This book is one of the ways that the NASW is able to continually respond to the dynamic discussion of immigration policy and encourage social workers to work “toward fair and just immigration and refugee policies...” (NASW, 2015, p. 180).

Another way in which the NASW regularly responds to immigration issues is via public statements. These public statements are made in response to changing policies or major political events and are published on the NASW’s website. For example, if a policy is implemented that does not align with social work values or ethics, the NASW will likely release a public statement expressing its disapproval of the policy and urging its

members to advocate for the policy's dismantlement. An example of a recent public statement made by the NASW in response to an unfavorable immigration policy change was published in September 2017, in response to President Trump's decision to revoke the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program (NASW, 2017). DACA is a program which provides individuals that immigrated to the U.S. as children with a period of deferred action – meaning these individuals would be eligible to work and not eligible for deportation (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2018). The public statement described this policy decision as “cruel, unwise, and unjustified” and urged NASW members to speak out against this decision, providing them with resources to do so (NASW, 2017, para. 2).

This public statement is an example of how organized social work, specifically the NASW, has provided timely responses to the immigration issues in the U.S. Additionally, CSWE, though focusing specifically on social work education, is another major organization within the field of social work that has made contributions to the immigration discussion.

However, Ortiz, Garcia, & Hernández (2012) have argued that CSWE has not been responding to this matter as it should. In 2012, the CSWE held its Annual Program Meeting (APM) in Atlanta, at a time when Georgia had recently enacted its Illegal Immigration Reform and Enforcement Act of 2011, which was one of many discriminatory, anti-immigration acts that states were enacting at that time (Ortiz et al., 2012). Ortiz et al. (2012) and many others were expecting the APM to be an opportunity for the organization to clarify its standing on this racist, socially unjust legislation and advocate for immigrants; however, the CSWE assumed a position of “neutrality” at the

APM (p. 197). This lack of social action on the CSWE's part disappointed many social work educators that are part of the CSWE, and Ortiz et al. (2012) have argued that the CSWE and social work educators must learn how to "more effectively merge their educational mission with the profession's mandate to social justice" (p. 202). This suggests that there may be a disconnect between social work educators and the social work profession – that, perhaps, social work educators do not feel as obligated to fulfill the ethical responsibilities of practitioners working in the field. However, echoing the authors' sentiments, this is an unacceptable position for the CSWE and social work educators to take, as their duty to teach students the *Code of Ethics* should be coupled with a duty to abide by the *Code of Ethics* (NASW, 2017).

Responses in Social Work Literature

Publicizing research and literature about this complicated issue and its relevance to social workers is an effective method of responding to this injustice, and this is an ideal way for individual educators and practitioners to get involved in this issue, advocate for social justice on behalf of immigrants, and motivate other practitioners to get involved, as well. However, unfortunately, the literature – scholarly, peer-reviewed articles – discussing the intersections of social work and immigration or service to immigrants is limited. A comprehensive search of 59 databases via EBSCOhost provided scarce literature. A search for scholarly, peer-reviewed articles published within the last 10 years and containing "social work", "practice", and "Latino immigrant" produced only 20 articles. To compare, a search for scholarly, peer-reviewed articles published within the last 10 years and containing "social work", "practice", and "child welfare" – a more commonly-researched subject amongst social workers, considering the large proportion

of social workers in the child welfare field – yielded over 7,000 results. Searches in *Social Services Abstracts*, one of the major databases for social work and other social service literature, yielded similar results – only 69 results for articles containing “Latino immigrants” and 4,539 results for articles containing “child welfare.” Furthermore, much of the available literature was not peer-reviewed research; many articles were opinion-based editorials, forewords, and so forth. With national attention given to Latinx immigration within the last 10 years, it is surprising that this issue has not been more heavily investigated by social work researchers.

It seems, though, that this surprise is warranted and validated by other authors, as numerous have noticed this topic’s lack of presence in social work literature and concur that social workers and social work researchers and educators have been absent from the immigration discussion (Bhuyan, Park, & Rundle, 2012; Cleaveland, 2010; Furman, Negi, & Cisneros-Howard, 2008; Ortiz et al., 2012). For example, Furman et al. (2008) state that there have been “a paucity of discussions in the social work literature regarding the needs and concerns of undocumented residents” (p. 283). Bhuyan et al. (2012) note that “while immigration policy and its impact on immigrants and service provision to immigrants have garnered much public attention in recent years, the social work literature has not reflected this trend” (p. 975).

As previously highlighted, the *Code of Ethics* (NASW, 2017) calls social workers to “enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty” (p. 1). Considering this mission of the social work profession, it is not only appropriate but *necessary* that social work education, research,

and professional practice be informed by current social policies regarding immigration. This sentiment is echoed in the available literature, with Furman et al. (2008) framing the immigration debate as an opportunity for “social workers to recommit to the protection and care of those who are vulnerable and in need of support” (p. 283). Androff and Tavassoli (2012) have argued that, due to the profession’s ethical standards, social workers “cannot choose to remain neutral and allow the tragedy of migrant deaths to continue,” referencing the over 5,000 migrants who have died in the Sonoran desert while trying to cross from Mexico to the U.S. – a result of the U.S.’s discriminatory efforts to stop immigration across the southern border (p. 172). David Becerra (2016) referred to professional ethics as well when we stated that “social workers in the U.S. are ethically obligated to fight against harmful policies and advocate on behalf of migrants and their families” (p. 109).

These authors have reiterated what ought to be well-known amongst social workers: the ethical obligation social workers have to serve immigrants – documented and undocumented – negatively impacted by harmful U.S. immigration policies and to advocate on their behalf for positive and just policy changes. However, in order for social workers to advocate for immigrants’ rights, social workers must first understand immigrant and immigration policies and how they may be harming immigrants and infringing upon their rights. Considering the immensely complicated immigration policies being discussed and implemented in the U.S., learning about and possessing cultural competence is likely not adequate preparation for social workers to truly understand these policies and advocate for just policy changes. Ortiz et al. (2012) have argued, “Reliance on cultural competence with its focus on knowledge and self-

awareness is not sufficient to prepare students for work with this population because immigration issues are complex and social structural by nature” (p. 201). Furthermore, Bhuyan et al. (2012) surveyed 1,124 social work practitioners and found that coursework on practice with immigrants was much less successful at impacting practitioners’ attitudes towards immigrants than coursework on immigration policy. In other words, coursework that teaches students about the complex, modern immigration policies is more likely to positively impact students’ work with immigrants than coursework that prepares students with cultural competence skills (Bhuyan et al., 2012).

This gap in social work education is realized and addressed by many authors, and through their publications, these authors have set out to provide social workers with more knowledge on the complicated details and effects of immigration policies. For example, Becerra (2016) seeks to educate practitioners on the harmful effects of immigration policies and how the fear of deportation can affect Latino immigrants on a day-to-day basis. His study found that a greater fear of deportation correlated with greater difficulty finding and maintaining a job. This finding should be of great concern to social workers, especially considering that undocumented immigrants do not qualify for government assistance programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Medicaid (MacGuill, 2018).

Becerra’s (2012) finding echoes Padilla et al.’s (2008) call for social workers to work with and on behalf of immigrants. His study’s results illustrating the damaging psychological and economic effects of exclusionist immigration policies are only one reason why social workers should involve themselves in this nationwide discussion. There are many other reasons for social workers to get involved. Even for the large

number of social work practitioners who find themselves working in the child welfare field, the immigration discussion is of utmost relevance. As previously mentioned, Gubernskaya and Dreby (2017) echo this point in their article by discussing how damaging current immigration policies are to mixed-status families and advocating for immigration policies which preserve family unity. These authors and the others discussed in this chapter make powerful calls for social work practitioners, educators, and researchers to get involved in this immigration discussion and contribute to the collective response of the social work profession to this social problem. These authors demonstrate a well-rounded understanding of the mission of the social work profession and the subsequent ethical responsibilities of social workers to respond to the struggles of Latinx immigrants in the U.S.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The previous chapter highlighted the ways in which the social work education, research, and practice have attempted to respond to the discrimination against Latinx immigrants in the U.S. and advocate on their behalf. A few key themes emerge.

First, as previously discussed, there is a strong emphasis on cultural competence. Essentially, cultural competence is knowledge about the characteristics and nuances of various cultures that is incorporated into interactions with diverse individuals, in order to interact with and serve them in a manner that is respectful and competent. Of course, cultural competence is incredibly important to the social work profession, particularly for social workers practicing at the micro level. It is vital to effective practice and consistent with social work ethics that social workers maintain cultural competence and incorporate it into their practice with clients.

However, as argued in several scholarly articles, it seems that the emphasis on cultural competence is overshadowing the importance of acquiring and maintaining knowledge about the unique policy-related challenges individuals from other cultures will face during their time in the U.S. (Bhuyan et al., 2012; Ortiz et al., 2012). For Latinx immigrants, it is not enough for social workers to understand their culture. Possessing

this knowledge is incredibly important when it comes to interacting with Latinx immigrations, but this knowledge does not equip social workers to understand the challenges and barriers Latino immigrants will face in the U.S. as a result of unfair and unjust immigration and immigrant policies and discriminatory ideologies. It is vital that social workers pair this cultural knowledge with policy knowledge in order to effectively serve Latino immigrants. For example, social workers need to be aware of how the discriminatory attitudes in the U.S. will impact the lives of Latinx individuals; workers need to be aware of how exclusionist immigration policies will psychologically burden immigrants (Becerra, 2016; Cleaveland, 2010; Gubernskaya & Dreby, 2017).

The second theme that emerges is related to the responses of social work organizations, specifically the NASW and CSWE. The NASW has done a good job of updating and publishing its policy positions in *Social Work Speaks* (NASW, 2018), and the organization has also succeeded in providing timely responses to unjust and harmful policies affecting immigrants via its public statements. These responses certainly indicate efforts of social work's most influential professional organization to respond to immigration matters, but it should be noted that more could be done by the organization to move its members to action. Much of the responses, specifically the public statements, made by the organization can be considered passive – consisting of little more than a one-time acknowledgement of an issue, a statement of disapproval, and an encouragement for social workers to launch their own advocacy efforts in opposition. The content published in *Social Work Speaks* (NASW, 2018) and the *Immigration Policy Toolkit* (NASW, 2006) constitutes a much more valuable and meaningful response to immigration issues. However, *Social Work Speaks* (NASW, 2018) is not as accessible as the NASW's public

statements, and the *Immigration Policy Toolkit* (NASW, 2006) has not been updated in over a decade. An updated toolkit and a widely-distributed publication of immigration policy stances would be helpful and valuable additions to the NASW's contributions to this social problem.

As for the CSWE, it has already been noted that there is too narrow a conceptualization of cultural competence in social work, specifically within social work education. The CSWE has quite a bit of power in determining what content is taught in social work degree programs, and adding more focus on specific, current policy issues and advocacy skills would be valuable contributions on the part of CSWE. Increased coursework on immigration policy would prepare students to engage in policy reform, but as Bhuyan et al. (2012) noted, this coursework would also make a positive impact on students' personal attitudes towards and work with immigrants, thereby reinforcing the ideals of cultural competence.

Lastly, a third theme is the lack of social work literature focusing on Latinx immigration and the struggles of Latinx immigrants in the U.S. Considering the extent to which this immigration and its related policies have been highlighted in the media during recent years, it is surprising and disappointing that there is not more available social work literature on this topic. This response is certainly not what it should be, and there is much more to be done in this area. However, this shortcoming seems to be recognized by many social work researchers (Bhuyan, Park, & Rundle, 2012; Cleaveland, 2010; Furman, Negi, & Cisneros-Howard, 2008; Ortiz et al., 2012). Though the social work literature focusing on immigration and immigration policies was limited, the available literature frequently highlighted the lack of this sort of literature and the need for greater social

work contributions to this social problem – more public advocacy efforts from social workers, more literature investigating the daily struggles of Latinx immigrants in the U.S., and more literature that relates social work practice, immigration from Latin America, and Latinx immigrants in the U.S.

Thankfully, the social work profession has not been absent from this important and timely issue. The NASW has made concentrated efforts to respond to policies inconsistent with social work values and ethics, and individual social workers have contributed their knowledge and research as responses to these issues. However, it is also clear that there are deficits and areas for improvement, the implications of which are discussed in the following section.

Implications for Education, Practice, and Research

Based on the deficits noted in the previous section, there are several ways which the profession can improve and strengthen its responsiveness, thereby more wholly fulfilling the profession's ethical obligation to intervene at the macro level and advocate on behalf of Latinx immigrants.

Considering the unmatched emphasis on cultural competence and CSWE's limited incorporation of content on immigration policy, there are a few improvements that could be made to social work education. Within baccalaureate and master's social work degree programs, there should be greater emphasis on educating students about immigration policy and macro-level advocacy in this area. It is important that students are given the opportunity to learn about the importance of incorporating cultural competence, immigration policy knowledge, and advocacy skills into their practice, rather than just focusing on the importance of cultural competence. This expanded education would

demonstrate efforts on part of CSWE and social work degree programs to respond to the current immigration issues and the current struggles of Latinx immigrants in America.

Additionally, the NASW should match this educational enhancement at the collegiate level with a greater distribution of materials and resources that social workers can use to aid in advocating for more just and fair immigration and immigrant policies. Specifically, a more accessible, comprehensive statement of the organization's stance on immigration policy (such as that found in *Social Work Speaks* [NASW, 2018]) and an updated version of the *Immigration Policy Toolkit* (NASW, 2006) would be incredibly beneficial. The organization has made it clear that this is a social issue that workers should be aware of, but the organization can do more to ensure that the social work profession is attempting to fulfill its ethical responsibility to advocate for the well-being of Latinx immigrants.

Furthermore, the NASW should make social workers aware of advocacy opportunities outside of the NASW, as well. There are many influential immigrant rights groups that exist and actively advocate for immigrants, and the NASW, as well as individual social workers, could form fruitful partnerships with these organizations. Some of these organizations include the American Civil Liberties Union (which was co-founded by social work pioneer Jane Addams) and the Latino Social Workers Organization (LSWO). Aligning with these organizations and those which are similar would be an excellent way for the NASW and individual social workers to express their commitment to advocating for Latinx immigrants and to access more advocacy opportunities.

Lastly, individual social workers should take it upon themselves to contribute to the knowledge base of the profession by researching immigration- and immigrant-related issues and publishing this content for other social workers to access. Specifically, content investigating the specific struggles faced by Latinx immigrants whilst in the U.S. would be beneficial, as this information would help other practitioners better serve these immigrants. Content researching and analyzing current immigration policies alongside an understanding of social work ethics would be beneficial, as well, so that workers can better understand these complex policies and how they relate to social work. Additionally, research on promising practices within social work advocacy efforts and work with Latinx immigrants would be a valuable contribution encouraging increased activism in this area. Researching and publishing is an effective way for individual practitioners and educators to contribute their skills and knowledge to the profession's collective efforts, and these individual responses will serve to spur one another on in the fight for more just and equitable immigration policies.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

In the 19th century, Emma Lazarus lovingly illustrated a United States of America that was borderless, safe, and welcoming. She depicted the Statue of Liberty as the warm gatekeeper of a country in which the world's weary and oppressed may find rest, freedom, and opportunity. The Statue cried, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free" (Lazarus, 1883). Now, in the 21st century, immigration into the U.S. is nearly as high as it was when this poem was written, but the Statue seems to have lost its enthusiastic welcome (Pew Research Center, 2015). This sentiment is echoed by an immigrant stating, "Here they have the Statue of Liberty but there is not the liberty that we need so that we can live here for a while" (Cleaveland, 2010, p. 78).

Rather than finding a safe and welcoming new home, immigrants to the U.S. are finding hardship and discrimination. Even though research has concluded that immigration has an overall positive effect on the U.S. economy, 50% of Americans believe that immigrants are making the economy and crime worse in the U.S (Gubernskaya & Dreby, 2017; Pew Research Center, 2015). Despite the fact that 54% of immigrants in the U.S. are from Latin America, Americans are more likely to say that the

impact of Latin American immigrants has been mostly negative rather than positive (Pew Research Center, 2015). These negative biases against Latinx immigrants have been reflected in the nationwide, macro-level discussion of immigration and immigration policy reform. Policies that are unjust and have negative effects on Latinx immigrants have been proposed and implemented, and this bias, discrimination, and policy practice has made life in the U.S. difficult for Latinx immigrants.

Taking a nod from the “mother of social work,” Jane Addams and her work with immigrants at Hull House, social workers today should be outraged by this unfair and unethical treatment of Latinx immigrants and should use their voices and social work training to advocate on behalf of these immigrants. Moreover, social workers should recognize that they have an *ethical responsibility*, according to the NASW *Code of Ethics* (2017) to fight unjust and exclusionist immigration policies and advocate on behalf of Latinx immigrants. The mission of the social work profession is “to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty” (NASW, Code of Ethics, p. 1). It is clear that fighting against this discrimination is a fulfillment of this mission, and social workers have attempted to respond to bias and discrimination and fulfill this mission in a variety of ways. These responses indicate that there is care and attention given to improving the well-being of Latinx immigrants in the U.S. and that social workers are actively attempting to respond effectively to biased, discriminatory, exclusionist immigration policies.

However, these responses also indicate that there is more work to be done. Of course, there will always be more work to do, as there may always be bias and

discrimination to fight against, but as for now, there is certainly more that social workers can do to contribute to this nationwide discussion of immigration and immigration policy reform. Social workers may doubt their ability to contribute, but the skills and services of social workers are incredibly valuable. Should social workers strive wholeheartedly towards bettering the well-being of Latinx immigrants in the U.S. and advocating on their behalf, social workers could prove to be instrumental in achieving just and equitable immigration policy in the U.S. Though this social problem is widespread and complex, this crisis affords social workers “a new opportunity to rekindle [their] leadership and renew [their] commitment to working with and on behalf of immigrant populations just as, and ideally better than, [their] predecessors did at Hull House” (Padilla et al., 2008, p. 8).

References

- Allen, J. D. (2008). Jane Addams (1860 – 1935): Social worker and peace builder. *Social Work and Society*, 6(2). Retrieved from <http://www.socwork.net/sws/article/view/68/370>
- Androff, D. K., & Tavassoli, K. Y. (2012). Deaths in the desert: The human rights crisis on the U.S.-Mexico border. *Social Work*, 57(2), 165-172. doi:10.1093/sw/sws034
- Arango, T. (2011, July 12). Visa delays put Iraqis who aided U.S. in fear. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/13/world/middleeast/13baghdad.html>
- Becerra, D. (2016). Anti-immigration policies and fear of deportation: A human rights issue. *Journal of Human Rights and Social Work*, 1(3), 109-119. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41134-016-0018-8>
- Bhuyan, R., Park, Y., & Rundle, A. (2012). Linking practitioners' attitudes towards and basic knowledge of immigrants with their social work education. *Social Work Education*, 31(8), 973-994. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2011.621081>
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Cleaveland, C. (2010). "We are not criminals": Social work advocacy and unauthorized migrants. *Social Work*, 55(1), 74-80. doi:10.1093/sw/55.1.74

- Council on Social Work Education. (2015). *Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards*. Retrieved from https://www.cswe.org/getattachment/Accreditation/Accreditation-Process/2015-EPAS/2015EPAS_Web_FINAL.pdf.aspx
- Furman, R., Negi, N., & Cisneros-Howard, A. L. (2008). The immigration debate: Lessons for social workers. *Social Work*, 53(3), 283-285.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/sw/53.3.283>
- Gubernskaya, Z., & Dreby, J. (2017). U.S. immigration policy and the case for family unity. *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, 5(2), 417-430.
<https://doi.org/10.14240/jmhs.v5i2.91>
- H. R. 4437, 109th Cong. (2005). Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/bill/109th-congress/house-bill/4437>
- Jarrett, L. & Tatum, S. (2017, September 25). Trump administration announces new travel restrictions. *Cable News Network*. Retrieved from <http://www.cnn.com/2017/09/24/politics/trump-travel-restrictions/index.html>
- Kondrat, M. E. (2013). Person-in-environment. *Encyclopedia of Social Work*. Retrieved from <http://socialwork.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199975839.001.0001/acrefore-9780199975839-e-285>
- Lazarus, E. (1883). *The new Colossus*. New York, NY: (n.p.)
- MacGuill, D. (2018, January 16). What happens when you cross the United States border illegally? *Snopes*. Retrieved from <https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/illegal-immigrant-benefits/>

- McNutt, J. G. (2013). Social work practice: History and evolution. *Encyclopedia of Social Work*. Retrieved from <http://socialwork.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199975839.001.0001/acrefore-9780199975839-e-620>
- National Association of Social Workers. (2006). *Immigration policy toolkit*. Washington, DC: National Association of Social Workers. Retrieved from <https://www.socialworkers.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=5y6LIGaBFRw%3D&portalid=0>
- National Association of Social Workers. (2015). *Social work speaks* (10th ed.). Washington, DC: National Association of Social Workers.
- National Association of Social Workers. (2015). *Standards and indicators for cultural competence in social work practice*. Washington, DC: National Association of Social Workers. Retrieved from <https://www.socialworkers.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=7dVckZAYUmk%3D&portalid=0>
- National Association of Social Workers. (2017). *Code of ethics*. Washington, DC: National Association of Social Workers. Retrieved from https://www.socialworkers.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=ms_ArtLqzeI%3D&portalid=0
- National Association of Social Workers. (2017, September 7). *Statement: President Trump decision to rescind DACA is cruel, unwise, and unjustified*. Retrieved from <http://www.socialworkblog.org/advocacy/2017/09/statement-president-trump-decision-to-rescind-daca-is-cruel-unwise-and-unjustified/>

- National Association of Social Workers. (2018). *Social work speaks* (11th ed.). Washington, DC: National Association of Social Workers.
- National Park Service. (2015, February 26). *Emma Lazarus*. Retrieved from <https://www.nps.gov/stli/learn/historyculture/emma-lazarus.htm>
- Netting, F. E., Kettner, P. M., McMurtry, S. L., & Thomas, M. L. (2012). *Social work macro practice*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Ortiz, L., Garcia, B., & Hernández, S. H. (2012). Why it is important for social work educators to oppose racist-based anti-immigration legislation. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 48(2), 197-202. <https://doi.org/10.5175/JSWE.2012.201100174>
- Padilla, Y. C. (1997). Immigrant policy: Issues for social work practice. *Social Work*, 42(6), 595-605. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sw/42.6.595>
- Padilla, Y. C., Shapiro, E. R., Fernández-Castro, M. D., & Faulkner, M. (2008). Our nation's immigrants in peril: An urgent call to social workers. *Social Work*, 53(1), 5-8. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sw/53.1.5>
- Park, Y., Bhuyan, R. Richards, C., & Rundle, A. (2011). U.S. social work practitioners' attitudes towards immigrants and immigration: Results from an online survey. *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies*, 9(4), 367-392. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2011.616801>
- Pew Research Center. (2015). *Modern immigration wave brings 59 million to U.S., driving population growth and change through 2065: Views of immigration's impact on U.S. society mixed*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center. Retrieved from http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2015/09/2015-09-28_modern-immigration-wave_REPORT.pdf

- Somerville, H. (2017, October 23). Border wall prototypes a first small step on Trump campaign promise. *Thomson Reuters*. Retrieved from <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-wall/border-wall-prototypes-a-first-small-step-on-trump-campaign-promise-idUSKBN1CT007>
- Turper, S., Iyengar, S., Aarts, K. & van Gerven, M. (2015). Who is less welcome?: The impact of individuating cues on attitudes towards immigrants. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 41(2), 239-259.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2014.912941>
- U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. (2018, February 14). *Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)*. Retrieved from <https://www.uscis.gov/archive/consideration-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca>
- U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. (2017, September 18). *Victims Of Immigration Crime Engagement (VOICE) Office*. Retrieved from <https://www.ice.gov/voice>
- Washington Post Staff. (2015, June 16). Full text: Donald Trump announces a Presidential bid. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2015/06/16/full-text-donald-trump-announces-a-presidential-bid/?utm_term=.f137d2ba8ff0
- Weiss, J. (2017, June 14). Six months of hate: How anti-immigrant sentiment is affecting Latinos in the United States. *Univision News*. Retrieved from <https://www.univision.com/univision-news/united-states/six-months-of-hate-how-anti-immigrant-sentiment-is-affecting-latinos-in-the-united-states>