

## Intervention

# Teaching social work in an era of New Public Management: Encouraging emotion, critical reflection, and collectivity as tools of resistance

Rosemary R. Carlton and Sue-Ann MacDonald

Number 154, 2021

Comprendre, saisir et mobiliser les émotions en travail social au  
prisme des transformations sociales

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1088312ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1088312ar>

[See table of contents](#)

### Publisher(s)

Ordre des travailleurs sociaux et des thérapeutes conjugaux et familiaux du  
Québec (OTSTCFQ)

### ISSN

2564-2375 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

### Cite this article

Carlton, R. R. & MacDonald, S.-A. (2021). Teaching social work in an era of New  
Public Management: Encouraging emotion, critical reflection, and collectivity  
as tools of resistance. *Intervention*, (154), 127–145.  
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1088312ar>

### Article abstract

*Educating the next generation of social workers to practice in accordance with the values of the discipline is increasingly complicated in an era of practice shaped by neoliberalism and systems of New Public Management. Based on data drawn from collaborative autoethnographic conversations between two social work educators, this article responds to a sense of disillusionment, anxiety and powerlessness associated with entering today's field of practice, as witnessed in their classrooms. Located at the intersection of two areas of scholarship – one stressing the importance of accompanying students in developing abilities to attend to emotion in social work practice with vulnerable, marginalised populations and, the other, identifying social work education as a potential site of resistance against the devaluing of social work evident in systems influenced by prevailing neoliberal attitudes – this article proposes considering emotion in the classroom as a means of confronting students' (and educators') feelings of disenchantment and powerlessness and inspiring hope for the (re)establishment of social work values in contemporary practice.*



# Teaching social work in an era of New Public Management: Encouraging emotion, critical reflection, and collectivity as tools of resistance

**Rosemary R. Carlton**, Ph.D., Professor, École de travail social, Université de Montréal  
rosemary.carlton@umontreal.ca

**Sue-Ann MacDonald**, Ph.D., Professor, École de travail social, Université de Montréal  
sueann.macdonald@umontreal.ca

---

## ABSTRACT:

*Educating the next generation of social workers to practice in accordance with the values of the discipline is increasingly complicated in an era of practice shaped by neoliberalism and systems of New Public Management. Based on data drawn from collaborative autoethnographic conversations between two social work educators, this article responds to a sense of disillusionment, anxiety and powerlessness associated with entering today's field of practice, as witnessed in their classrooms. Located at the intersection of two areas of scholarship – one stressing the importance of accompanying students in developing abilities to attend to emotion in social work practice with vulnerable, marginalised populations and, the other, identifying social work education as a potential site of resistance against the devaluing of social work evident in systems influenced by prevailing neoliberal attitudes – this article proposes considering emotion in the classroom as a means of confronting students' (and educators') feelings of disenchantment and powerlessness and inspiring hope for the (re)establishment of social work values in contemporary practice.*

127

## KEYWORDS:

*New Public Management, neoliberalism, social work values, social work education, critical pedagogy*

---

"It is imperative that we maintain hope even when the harshness of reality may suggest the opposite"  
– Paulo Freire (1997: 106)

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years and with new intensity in the context of the current Covid-19 pandemic, a certain disillusionment with respect to social work practice seems to have settled into the consciousness of social work students. This disillusionment is captured in the following fictitious statement composed with the intention of bringing to life students' commonly expressed concerns:

*It seems that no matter where I go, regardless of the setting – institutional or community – organisational structures constrain what I can do as a social worker while providing me no real support? And, the pandemic has only made the situation worse. Now, I'm even more doubtful about pursuing a career in social work. I'm afraid I'll just end up burnt out.*

Attending to emotions within the context of social work education, and specifically as they emerge in response to the challenge of practicing social work in today's climate of neoliberalism and New Public Management (NPM), is the subject of this article.

As social work educators with years of experience in the field, we are passionate about teaching the next generation of social workers to practice according to our profession's values of compassion, social justice, and respect for human dignity and self-determination. As we have witnessed the entrenchment of NPM in health and social service provision as well as education, we find ourselves increasingly challenged to prepare students for a practice terrain seemingly inhospitable to investing in the development of interpersonal relationships as well as complex understandings of social issues that we deem crucial to bringing these values to life.

In this article, we employ a collaborative autoethnographical approach, wherein we treat ourselves, our experiences, and our reflections as the object of study, to explore how we might respond to this challenge. We begin with a cursory discussion of New Public Management and its influence on current social service provision. We then provide an overview of the values informing social work while drawing attention to difficulties associated with adhering to such values in practice environments shaped by NPM. We follow this discussion with a consideration of social work education and the complexities and possibilities associated with teaching social work in an era of neoliberalism. Next, we introduce collaborative autoethnography as the methodology guiding our exploration process. The bulk of this article takes the form of a conversation wherein we reflect on our experiences and aspirations as we strive to respond to the "harshness of reality" (Freire, 1997: 106) of today's social work terrain in our teaching. We reflect on taking account of students' (as well as our own) feelings of disillusionment, anger, and anxiety as they prepare for practice in an era of NPM. We explore integrating emotion and relationship into interventions in ways that resist constraints of case management or risk-regulation approaches and allow for deep considerations of the diverse circumstances and social inequities that shape experience. We conclude with a call to consider the social work classroom as a "radical space of possibility" (hooks, 1994: 12) for inspiring hope and encouraging the next generation to practice in accordance with the value-driven and social justice-oriented nature of social work.

## 1. A New Public Management practice terrain

For over twenty years, waves of public service reforms have revealed the gradual entrenchment of neoliberal attitudes in the form of New Public Management (NPM) in the functioning and administration of health care and social services across Quebec (Bellot, Bresson & Jetté, 2013) and elsewhere (Ward, 2011). Inspiring such reforms is a discourse identifying the state as inefficient and costly with respect to the delivery of public services. Borrowing ideas from business management and economics, and grounded in neoliberal logics of individualism, choice, and entrepreneurship, NPM promotes a frugal approach that emphasizes efficiency, effectiveness, and excellence in practice (Shepherd, 2018) as well as employee accountability and responsibility (Jetté & Goyette, 2010; Varone & Bonvin, 2004). As noted by Ward (2011: 63), NPM reforms include the integration of audit and oversight systems wherein professionals' performance is monitored and evaluated according to productivity and efficiency markers, or "countable aspects of professional activities". Coinciding with NPM's audit culture is an intensification of work as professionals face increased expectations to comply with requirements of data-driven and data-producing practice tools designed according to narrow scripts of "what works" (Ward, 2011). Pushed aside in NPM are trust in professional autonomy as well as attention to the complexities of everyday practice. Privileged instead is the standardization of social work practices with a common emphasis on

managing and controlling risk (MacDonald, Srikanthan, Ferrer et al., 2020). In the Quebec context, this process has been witnessed in the deployment of computerized clinical pathway tools (Outils de cheminement clinique informatisés [OCCI]) used in home-support settings to identify client needs and determine the level and nature of services to be provided. Similarly, the Practice Support System (PSS) has been introduced in child protection settings as a means of guiding social workers in determining the level of risk to a child identified as potentially experiencing abuse or neglect. These tools, amongst others, rely on reducing complex, diverse, temporal, and socio-politically influenced circumstances to singular units of risk, protection, and need (Baines, 2017). As a result, social workers only have access to a restricted, largely decontextualized and “very small snapshot of the complexity of people’s lives and the problems they experience” (Baines, 2017: 39-40).

Despite its widespread implementation, NPM has been widely criticized for reducing social work to standardized practices of case management and risk identification and regulation. In contrast to critical axiological approaches often associated with social work, such practices tend to prioritise individual rational choice as though unfettered by complex social circumstances and social inequities. Discouraged as risky, inefficient, and costly are interventions centred on gaining detailed subjective accounts of clients’ experiences; constructing and maintaining client-worker relationships; and collaborative actions to respond to co-constructed objectives (Baines, 2017).

## 2. Social work values under attack

Social work has long been considered a contextually practiced value-oriented discipline. National (Canadian Association of Social Work) and local (Ordre des travailleurs sociaux et des thérapeutes conjugaux et familiaux du Québec) governing bodies identify social work as grounded in and guided by a set of values. Founded on principles of social justice, these values include respect for human dignity and self-determination; promotion of individual and collective rights and well-being; belief in human capacity for change; professional integrity; commitment to provide service to others; and appreciation of human diversity and the effects of structures and systems of inequity (CASW, 2005; OTSTCFQ, 2019). At the heart of social work, as it is rooted in principles of social justice, is its “liberatory potential” as well as “a sense of hope and possibility” (Finn, 2021).

Bringing social work values to life and maintaining a “sense of hope and possibility” today, however, is increasingly complicated by demands for social work to adapt to neoliberal expectations of individual capacity and autonomy as well as organisational reforms shaped by NPM. A number of scholars have drawn attention to the resulting devaluing of social work (Bains & Waugh, 2019; Finn 2021; Golightley & Holloway, 2017; Rossiter & Heron, 2011), arguing that efforts to standardize practice and to promote efficiency and accountability serve to dissociate social work from the very values that define it. Critiquing a neoliberal turn towards identifying social work in terms of a set of marketable, rational “competencies,” Rossiter and Heron (2011: 306) claim that social work is under threat: “thinking, reflecting and making complex judgments – cannot be represented in the form of competencies. Competencies, by definition, eliminate the intellectual and ethical foundations of the profession in favour of rudderless behaviours.” According to these authors, at risk are “such crucial elements of good practice as critical judgment, ethical reasoning, broad understandings of social, political and historical contexts, and critical analyses of social work theories and practice” (306). The rational language of competencies ignores the complex and messy features of social work practice that facilitate getting close to the realities of marginalised and often oppressed populations. Golightley and Holloway (2017: 965) similarly claim that “when required to deliver and work within policies that undermine [social work’s foundational principles of human justice and human rights], other core social work values are breached: empathy,

partnership, advocacy on behalf of the vulnerable and voiceless”. Indeed, structural and historical understandings of power, privilege, and oppression as well as the emotional and relational aspects of practice, both essential to value-based social work, are in danger of being eclipsed within a context informed by neoliberal perspectives.

### 3. Teaching social work in a neoliberal landscape

A growing body of research has drawn attention to the critical influence of neoliberalism and NPM on social work education, noting specific adverse effects on pedagogy, curricula development and research (Ayala, Drolet, Fulton et al., 2017; Brown, MacDonald & Provencher, 2016; Fenton, 2014; Garrett, 2010; MacDonald, Srikanthan, Ferrer et al., 2020; MacDonald & Nixon, 2016; McConnell, Sammon & Pike, 2013; Morley, Macfarlane & Ablett, 2017; Preston & Aslett, 2014; Preston, George & Silver, 2014; Regehr, 2013; Wehbi & Turcotte, 2007). Schools of social work face further pressures to produce technically capable social workers with “an appropriate ideological disposition” (Garrett, 2010: 349) for practice in environments shaped by NPM. Wehbi and Turcotte (2007) voiced discomfort in witnessing social work education being progressively tied to the demands of the job market and thus reduced to ensuring students’ eventual employability. Such an approach to social work education is criticized as producing “technically competent practitioners who accept the status quo, even when it is against social work’s defining ethical principles” (Morley, Ablett & Noble, 2020: 4). Of added concern for Canadian Schools of Social Work is rising student enrolment associated with universities’ current reliance on tuition fees (CASWE-ACFTS, 2018; Regehr, 2013). The resulting larger class sizes and increased pressure on an already strained practice community to supervise more students in the field (Ayala, Drolet et Fulton, 2017; Regehr, 2013) add to the challenges of educating the next generation of social workers in a manner that reflects and reinforces social work values.

In a field where experiential learning, critical social theory, and reflection on issues of individual and social in/justices ought to be privileged, we, as social work educators, find ourselves ever more challenged to resist neoliberal and NPM modes of education and practice. Indeed, as suggested by Garrett (2010: 349), amongst others, “it could... be argued that social work education might provide something of a bulwark against the encroachment of neoliberal hegemony within the profession”. Correspondingly, Morley, Macfarlane & Ablett (2017: 33) remarked that:

“Given that social work is a practice-based academic discipline with a strong commitment to critical analysis and practices of social change, social work academics may be among the best equipped to formulate meaningful responses for resistance, by advancing perspectives that challenge neoliberalism across our own curriculum development, pedagogic, research and collegial practices.”

To achieve social work education’s potential for resistance, a number of scholars have promoted engaging in “activist” (Swift, Gingrich & Brown, 2016: 387) and critical pedagogies (Morley, Ablett et Noble, 2020; Morley, Macfarlane & Ablett, 2017) wherein multiple and diverse ways of knowing are encouraged; critical theory is mobilised to deconstruct and confront dominant discourses of social problems and solutions; critical reflection is advanced as a method of exploring the impacts of and moving beyond one’s own social, biographical positioning and understanding of reality(ies); and classrooms shaped by democratic engagements between and among students and educators are privileged. Swift et al. (2016: 387) added that an activist pedagogy requires curricula designed around developing “a thorough understanding of the economic regime of neoliberalism and how it has fundamentally changed the social service terrain as well as our work and everyday lives. Without this understanding, social workers risk becoming complicit”.

Pursuing social work education in ways that take account of and tackle not only the ongoing influence of neoliberal attitudes on social work and everyday lives but also our own (students' and educators') social positioning, world views, privileges, and oppressions is far from being a comfortable or easy experience. While social work education scholarship highlights the emotional labour associated with social work practice and thus the importance of integrating attention to emotion in the classroom (see for example, Ikebuchi & Rasmussen, 2014; Keinemans, 2015; Mishna & Rasmussen, 2001; Sewell, 2020), little attention has been given to the linkages between emotion and social work education aimed at (re)establishing social work values in an era of neoliberalism and NPM. Existing literature refers to nurturing students' development of "emotional intelligence" (Grant, Kinman & Alexander, 2014; Keinemans, 2015) or "emotional competence" (Ikebuck & Rasmussen, 2014) as critical to their eventual ability to engage in social work practice with vulnerable and marginalised populations. Such a perspective is grounded in an understanding of emotion as a key driver influencing social work decision-making, interventions grounded in relationship and empathy, and analysis of complex situations (Ingram, 2015). Also weaving through scholarship on emotion in social work education is the recognition of social work practice and learning as emotionally demanding, thus indicating the importance of teaching students tools for critical introspection and self-care. Rather than placing sole responsibility on students to manage their emotions through their learning process, however, Sewell (2020: 9) reminds us of educators' responsibility to create safe spaces for exploration and expression:

"through establishing appropriate boundaries, responding to student feedback, providing support in and outside of the classroom, and avoiding instructor behaviors that compromise safety for students (e.g., belittling, shaming; Carello & Butler, 2015) [and] providing referral information for supports and mental health resources for students experiencing mental health needs or trauma responses to social work content."

131

As observed by Ikebuchi and Rasmussen (2014: 295), "to risk honesty or to challenge their own or others' values, students need to feel safe". These authors claimed that educators must assume responsibility in terms of understanding their own emotions while simultaneously remaining attuned to the needs of students in the classroom: "This is not to say that the instructor has a responsibility to meet these varied emotional needs of students — but rather demonstrate an awareness of their existence and a purposeful inclusion in the learning process" (295). The reflections that follow seek to contribute to such considerations of integrating attention to emotion in social work classrooms by demonstrating specific awareness of students' (and our own) emotions in the face of entering a field of practice shaped by neoliberalism and NPM and exploring their purposeful inclusion in our curricula and pedagogical approaches as a means of inspiring possibilities for resistance and hope.

#### **4. Methodology – Collaborative autoethnography**

This article began long before we knew we were writing it. Our shared interests in social work practice and critical pedagogies spurred numerous conversations about enhancing our teaching methods and responding to various challenges encountered in our classrooms. The collaborative autoethnographic approach adopted for this article emerged naturally from these discussions.

Collaborative autoethnography is a qualitative methodological approach to exploring the self through reflexive inquiry and collective, cooperative exchange within a team of two or more researchers (Chang, Ngunjiri & Hernandez, 2016). Grounded as it is in autoethnography, collaborative autoethnography focuses on the self as both the object and the instrument of inquiry (Chang, Ngunjiri & Hernandez, 2016) and, thus, involves drawing data from individual experience



– as it is situated within specific but shifting sociocultural contexts – with the goal of developing insights on a particular subject through the interpretive lens of the self (Chang 2008; Chang, Ngunjiri & Hernandez, 2016). Whereas autoethnography refers to a solo research endeavour, collaborative autoethnography involves a process of collective self-exploration as a means of gaining deeper understandings of a shared aspect of daily life (Chang, Ngunjiri & Hernandez, 2016; Hernandez, Chang & Ngunjiri, 2017). According to Hernandez, Chang & Ngunjiri (2017: 252), “When multiple autoethnographers engage each other in CAE [collaborative autoethnography] data collection and analysis, they complement, contradict, and probe each other as critical peers.” As such, collaborative autoethnographers “work together, building on each other’s stories, gaining insight from group sharing and providing various levels of support as they interrogate topics of interest for a common purpose” (Chang, Ngunjiri & Hernandez, 2016: 23). Collaborative autoethnography brings a sense of community to the research process wherein co-researchers encourage and support each other to deepen individual self-exploration while collectively eliciting meaning from their respective personal stories.

As co-authors of and participants in the collaborative autoethnography on which this article is based, our identities, social locations, and experiences were simultaneously treated as the object of study and considered deeply influential on our analysis and conclusions. Collaborative autoethnography demands that we inhabit and shape every aspect of the research process. As expressed by Marak (2015: 6), an autoethnographic approach to research requires researcher “involvement that is unabashedly subjective”.

Autoethnography as an approach to research that privileges insider knowledge and self-reflection has been criticized for its potential to produce self-indulgent, self-aggrandizing, or narcissistic ramblings rather than rigorous examinations of phenomena embedded in diverse contexts and cultures (Lapadat, 2017; Philaretou and Allen, 2006; Roy & Uekusa, 2020; Winkler, 2017). While the multivocal approach of collaborative autoethnography has been held up as a response to such criticism, it is still challenged “for its non-accountability, non-generalizability and non-representativeness” (Roy & Uekusa, 2020: 388). Collaborative autoethnography is subjective and, like much of qualitative research, makes no claims of generalisability. Its strength, however, lies in the depth and nuance that can be drawn from analyses of the autoethnographers’ experience. Crucial to autoethnography and, by extension, to collaborative autoethnography, is researchers’ determination of “how to balance the study of personal lives, on one hand, and the focus on how these stories are embedded in and informed by a cultural context, on the other hand” (Winkler, 2017: 237). Can we, as co-researchers, discuss our experience as representative of other social work educators? Not exactly. However, we can draw from our experience to gain insights into the influences of the educational and social contexts within which we teach on students’ learning.

Our collaborative autoethnography followed an iterative process (Chang, Ngunjiri & Hernandez, 2016) whereby data was collected through a combination of individual and collective strategies. Our data collection began with a series of conversations over FaceTime, Zoom or the telephone during which we consciously revisited and furthered past exchanges about our experiences of practicing and teaching social work. During these early conversations, we brainstormed about potential directions for self-reflection that might open avenues for deepening our understanding of the subject matter. We then held one 5-hour meeting during which we delved more deeply into various aspects of our lives, our reasons for pursuing social work, different experiences we deemed critical to our understanding of social work practice and values, methods of teaching social work, and our experiences of responding to our own and our students concerns relating to the current field of practice. The final stage involved exchanging written responses to a series of open-ended questions. This process of writing and exchange deepened our individual and collective critical

reflections on our experiences. Our written exchanges, presented below, integrate narratives of our experiences with ideas for enhancing our teaching in ways that might better prepare students for practicing social work in an era of neoliberalism and NPM.

## 5. Evolving conversations

Our conversation that follows emerged in response to a series of questions we asked ourselves relating to our entry into, experience of, and hopes for the future of social work practice and education. How did we get here? How does our experience inform our vision of social work? What practice realities influence our teaching of social work according to our values? What feelings are provoked by our awareness of current realities? And how do we inspire hope? Given the organic and often messy nature of our exchanges, the following sections are organised according to emerging themes to facilitate readers' engagement with our reflections.

### 5.1 Falling into social work

Throughout our conversations, we wondered how we had each found ourselves first practicing then teaching social work. Common to both of us were notions of having “fallen into” it, as if social work was not necessarily chosen but rather just happened. As we furthered our conversations, however, we unearthed connections between our falling and our past experiences, identities and developing ways of viewing social relations and issues. The following excerpts showcase transformative moments that shaped our entry into social work.

Sue-Ann:

*So to begin with, I truly did not know anything about social work before applying to do a Master's of Social Work at the University of Toronto. I applied on a bit of a whim. I had completed a multidisciplinary undergraduate degree in International Development Studies at the University of Toronto, a very selective combined bachelor of arts and science program. It is a five-year honours cooperative program, with one-year spent abroad working in NGOs. Our coursework drew on economics, political science, environmental science, anthropology, etc... so we were really taught to think about development from a local and global development standpoint. It wasn't optional to think of individual difficulties without thinking about community, social structures and geopolitics, it was ingrained in our training from the very beginning. How did the person's community shape responses, understandings of development, what in fact did “development” mean? Looking back, I also had the good fortune of growing up in the late 80s, in Ethiopia. So I had these very early experiences, which I think made me want to “make a difference” somehow, but I wasn't sure how. Witnessing so much absolute poverty and political unrest at a young age and being exposed to so many different cultures (I attended an international school at that time), well it exposes you to a plethora of lived experiences, human struggles, and understandings of community. These early experiences drew me to the kind of work that I hoped would make a difference in people's lives, meaningful work. During undergrad, I worked in local development projects in India and in Northern Uganda in the mid-90s. When I came back to Canada though, I felt really disillusioned with development work and felt that I should pursue other ways to “make a difference”. I also realized that I wanted to do less project management work and work more closely with people. I figured an MSW would bring me closer to that goal. Also, upon returning to Canada from Ethiopia at age 16 and Uganda almost a decade later, I realized that I maybe didn't enjoy international development work in the way that I had hoped, and I certainly did not enjoy the culture shock that I experienced coming back to Canada, a feeling of total disconnect. A kind of limbo where I couldn't find*



a place to belong. I figured I needed to find a way to do meaningful work but perhaps without all the constant paralyzing analysis of international development work – i.e. Are we simply transposing Western ideals onto economically disadvantaged nations? Was I complicit in what seemed to be the continued postcolonial projects of Western nations? The apolitical posture required at this time to do the work deeply troubled me. It also felt futile, like we were just applying band-aids to deep-seated problems of capitalism, patriarchy, environmental exploitation. Interestingly these same reflections, 25 years later, rise to the surface now with our students who aptly ask: “est-ce que nous sommes-là simplement pour réparer les pots cassés?”. The same profound structural issues (sexism, racism, classism, etc.) remain. We just understand their complexity better and these different realities feel more entrenched.

Rosemary:

My usual response to such questions is “I just kind of fell into it.” But did I? I think I began my journey to social work years before recognising it as my career path. I come from a privileged upbringing, where I benefitted from growing up in a home where both learning and social awareness were encouraged. “There but for the grace of G-d go I” was a phrase I learned from my mother. Rather than being an indication of fate being in the hands of a divine being, my mother’s message was one of humility and social awareness. Simply, she wanted to awaken me to the unevenness of life and social positioning. I was lucky whereas others might be less so. Today, I’m conscious that my circumstances and the opportunities available to me by virtue of my social location offer me privileged access to safety and success (whatever that might be). That’s not to say that I haven’t worked hard to get to where I am right now. Another memento from my upbringing is a logic of bootstrapping. My British immigrant parents instilled in me an understanding of individual effort, hard work and responsibility as crucial to achieving my goals, whether they be in relation to education, employment or even relationships. They arrived in Canada seeking opportunity but with no expectations of guaranteed success. Alone, young and with twin newborns, they understood that it was up to them to create their future and they passed that conviction on to me.

After completing my Master’s in English Literature, I was lost as to what to do next. I knew I didn’t want to pursue a PhD. I was concerned about being detached from the world in the ivory tower of higher education. I’d been volunteering in social service organisations since high school, and I thought perhaps I could help people in a more concerted way if I were trained to do so. So I went back to school. In retrospect, I realise I chose social work without understanding what it was. I knew simply that I wanted to make a difference. 13 years of social work practice later, I was again back in school. This time working on a PhD.

Who I am, where I come from, and the various experiences I’ve had along the way to where I am now have shaped my still evolving understanding of social work. In witnessing people’s diverse struggles and circumstances, I am ever more convinced of the importance of giving meaningful attention to the influence of social location and interlocking systems of power and oppression on people’s lives. While individual effort grounded in notions of bootstrapping might bring us certain benefits, hard work is no guarantee of a safe and successful future. I believe in individual agency and choice, but I recognise as well that choices are constrained by time, circumstance, and where we stand at socially determined intersections of power and privilege.

## 5.2 Envisioning Social Work Education

The notion of evolution arose as crucial to our views of social work education and our roles as educators. As we shared our thoughts and aspirations for social work education, we both revealed fluid visions situated in past and current experience and observations. While our origins continue to influence our view of social work education, so too do our awareness of and embeddedness within various intersecting sociopolitical structures that shape everyday life. In a manner in keeping with recommendations from authors cited above who encourage a critical pedagogy as resistance to the hegemony of neoliberalism (Morley, Ablett & Noble, 2020; Morley, Macfarlane & Ablett, 2017; Swift, Gingrich & Brown, 2016), these exchanges reflect our constant effort to acknowledge and move beyond our own social, biographical positioning and to pursue understandings of multiple truths.

Sue-Ann:

*I see now that the things I hold dear in teaching, are intimately connected to my early life experiences and learning. During my MSW and afterwards I worked for a long time in homelessness and mental health. Despite having hospital inpatient field placements and work experiences (forensic psychiatry, schizophrenia...etc.), I naturally gravitated towards work without walls, where community was central to my understanding of practice, especially with regards to populations that I felt were more disenfranchised, where the systemic and structural issues seemed more impactful (poverty, discrimination, stigma); where injustice appeared more stark. So I often ask students about their practice perspectives, and whether as social workers our goal is to work so that people adapt better to society's expectations and inequalities or rather that we help society adapt to people's abilities and needs. Combatting injustice and inequities by making structures more equitable (and holding them accountable) as opposed to making people fit into inequitable structures: for me this is the essence of social work. It is primarily a rights-based practice, promoting and protecting individual and collective rights. How do we help people and communities actualize, protect and enshrine them? That is the work. Of course, this runs counter to a neoliberal world where strategies and blame for "misfortunes" are so individualized; dynamic complex understandings are reduced to units of risk, are swept aside.*

*I remember one of the first social work theory and advanced practice courses I taught included presenting the values of social work. Teaching about equality, self-determination, respect, etc., and I remember feeling like something was missing. It was the articulation between them and feeling as if each was presented as a unique unit. For me, the missing link was interdependence or interconnectedness. These values are often presented as atomized, but in fact depend upon one another for their actualization and in dynamic relationship with one's context, one's environment. By environment, I mean social-political and physical environment. Meaning, what are the social, political and environmental conditions needed to fully exercise them in their wholeness. This brings me back to the community and the complex pieces that infiltrated my early thinking, as well as the importance of individual and collective rights in a citizenship relational perspective.*

*Actively distancing from binaries, and moving towards complexity and multi-pronged, irregular, interlocking systems of oppression is heavy work. It also means that no two situations are the same, and so we use our creativity, our capacity to adapt each time we are confronted by the work in a new social work encounter with the available resources and people's agency. This piece is often one of the most difficult teachings to get across and increasingly so because a neoliberal vision wants predictability, to ensure the same outcome can be repeated, over and over again. However, this replicability runs counter to the very nature of complexity, as one small change in a complex system can in fact completely transform it (Homer-Dixon, 2020). And we don't always know which one small*

*change will tip the balance. It also requires knowing critical social theory but not in a formulaic way, that we simply apply a tool and expect X outcome. It means taking risks and trying new things, but taking risks is contrary to standardized practice, to rigid systems that demand conformity and predictability.*

Rosemary:

*My experiences of social work as well as my observations of how social work is evolving in Quebec inspire my teaching. Most of my experience has been in institutional settings: youth protection and a paediatric hospital – settings clearly influenced by neoliberal ideology and NPM reforms. Recently, youth protection has received a great deal of attention relating not only to whether current practices are meeting the needs of children (Gouvernement du Québec, 2021) but also with respect to the challenges facing youth protection workers. Devastatingly, in February of last year, two young youth protection workers took their own lives. While impossible to say that their employment was the sole precipitating factor for their deaths, I can't help but wonder about the influence of their working environment. In the aftermath of their deaths, there was a flurry of attention to the importance of professionals seeking help for feelings of distress or burnout – a typically neoliberal response to a potentially structural issue. Aren't feelings of powerlessness, sadness, anxiety, uncertainty, etc. expected when social workers intervene with typically marginalised and vulnerable populations? Isn't it likely that such feelings would be exacerbated within a context wherein systems of accountability and risk management have taken hold while supports for professionals remain inexistant or inadequate? In a thoughtful article written in response to the women's deaths, Steve Geoffrion and Delphine Collin-Vézina (2021) commented that emotion and distress ought to be seen as signs of empathy for the people with whom youth protection professionals work. They called for prioritising reforms that would support the emotional health of youth protection workers, claiming them to be beneficial not only to the social workers themselves but also the children and families with whom they intervene. Rather than identify emotion or distress as evidence of personal inadequacies and the responsibility of individuals to resolve, I want to underscore with students the expected emotional aspects involved in social work practice and continue to advocate for organisational support for emotion in practice.*

*While I'm concerned by the impact of NPM on social workers' well-being, I also worry about reducing social work activities to rational, short-term, decontextualized interventions aimed at assessing and managing individual functioning, competence, and action. Promoted as neutral and objective, these practices do little to address inequity and oppression (Brown & MacDonald, 2020). Are we too caught up with molding a citizenry of workers and consumers able to contribute to society through participation in a market economy that we lose sight of people's complex situations and needs? How can I teach students to attend to intersecting systems of inequity as well as the diverse circumstances of individuals, groups, or communities in their interventions in today's context of NPM? Pursuing social work in a way that takes into account the messiness of everyday life and integrates analyses of social inequities and oppressions is demanding work! It takes knowledge, time, social sensitivity, curiosity, clinical skill, and emotional intelligence.*

*As a social work educator, I want to support students in their professional development – accompany them in honing their skills, deepening their knowledge, and enhancing their abilities for critical reflection. But sometimes I fear that I'm setting students up to fail. Is a practice terrain shaped by NPM conducive to social work practice that adheres to the values of our profession? Is there enough organisational will to ensure the support and guidance necessary for social workers to pursue sensitive practice with people and communities dealing with various complex, emotionally charged, and often unjust circumstances?*

### 5.3 Beyond individualism and risk – countering with community and curiosity

Throughout our conversations, we shared an intense concern for the individualisation of experience, opportunity, and responsibility for managing the effects of social ills that has come to shape our public services. Our own feelings of frustration and anger were palpable. But we also shared hope for the rewards of a social work practice that encourages community as well as the pursuit of situated knowledge of people's circumstances and needs.

Sue-Ann:

*Something I try to engage with in my teaching is to intentionally ask students to move beyond rigid thinking that falls in either/or binaries, such as “us” or “them” or “individual” versus “collective” practice. For example, I attempt to teach practice from an integrated approach, by demonstrating and asking how can we weave micro, mezzo and macro practices in the same practice contexts of violence, homelessness, or mental health. This is also a purposeful attempt on my part to move away from what Thorpe (2018: 3) calls “pathological individualism” so endemic in Western society. Another way to approach this is through an emphasis on community and relationships. I was introduced to the philosophy of Ubuntu in different African countries where I lived and worked, and later learned about it in books through the inspirational lives of Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu. Ubuntu is an African philosophy mobilized through different cultures that has several definitions but where the basic framework is that of human connectedness, or a common humanity. One of the most common translations is: “I am because you are” – or “a person is a person through other persons” (Ngomane, 2019: 14), meaning that we exist through our relationships with others, that we are all interconnected. Archbishop Desmond Tutu expounded on this human connectedness in his definition of Ubuntu, where he defines Ubuntu as, “My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours” (Desmond Tutu in Ngomane, 2019: 13). In this vein, we have a duty to act, a responsibility to one another, which allows us to build our communities with a focus on the importance of relationships (Ngomane, 2019). However, I humbly recognize that I come to these understandings through a “white privileged lens” (van Breda, 2019). Thinking about community and Ubuntu allows us to emerge from a certain solitude that could be associated with individualism. These perspectives for me inspire hope, connection, and the broadening of our perspectives: a certain surpassing of oneself, cultivating solidarity, connection and compassion. It also recognizes the importance of emotions and relationships in this work. Philosophies based on a common humanity and connections allow us to be more present, and move beyond our own frames of reference, gain larger perspectives but also be in a better position to truly listen, to witness, and to think about how to respond to the important emotions at play in our work, and consider this as a source of knowledge.*

Rosemary:

*Over these past crazy months of the COVID-19 pandemic, I've found myself reflecting a lot on notions of individuality and community. I've been disheartened by what I consider the consequence of the insidious establishment of neoliberal individualism in public consciousness. For example, claiming government violation of individual civil rights, some individuals and groups have leveled angered responses at public efforts to instill measures for containing community transmission of the COVID-19 virus. Reflected in such expressions appears to be a concern for the one over a sense of shared responsibility for all. Corresponding with neoliberal ideology's increased attention to and expectations of individual citizens has been a retreat of the State and a devaluing of community. Considered responsible for our own well-being, the emphasis turns inward rather than outward toward our connections with communities and our shared responsibilities for the well-being of our society. What does all this mean for social work? What might we be able to learn from the global pandemic? What are our responsibilities to our communities... our society at large?*



*Individualism seems also to have integrated itself into social work, specifically with respect to the heightened emphasis on individual responsabilization. Through processes of assessment and intervention planning, individuals are treated as responsible for creating and then managing any variety of risks or difficulties in their lives – regardless of whether those risks or difficulties are within their control to alter. Failures to meet the objectives of intervention plans are too easily identified as indications of noncompliance, deviancy, individual incapacity, etc., rather than as being tied to impossible and unequal circumstances. Unfortunately, social work is much easier if we treat people as rational actors, “constrained only by their ignorance” (Lupton, 2013: 32) and able to act to better their situation when given the appropriate information and guidance from a well-meaning social worker. But social work values suggest that good practice requires so much more. As Donna Baines (2017: 33) suggests, we ought to look “beyond the immediate problem presented ... to the larger context of community and culture, to the economy and to racial and gender inequities. This kind of multi-dimensional perspective reveals how [people] have been socially positioned and conditioned by all these forces to end up where they are and to be limited in their options for change.” I’m afraid bringing to life such multi-dimensional perspective and practice is harder work. It is uncertain – there is no one-size-fits-all response. It demands taking risks and exploring options for change situated in the real context of people’s lives and opportunities. And there is no doubt about such practice provoking feelings of anger, frustration, sadness... yet also reward.*

## 5.4 On Power and Vulnerability

Taking risks in social work practice was something both of us believed critical to resisting neoliberal and NPM modes intervention. We also recognised it as difficult and as something that ought to be modeled in our classroom. Ikebuchi and Rasmussen (2014), cited above, called for social work educators to understand their own emotions while being attuned to those of their students. Our conversations about power revealed certain of our own fears and vulnerabilities as practitioners and educators. In the excerpts that follow, we wade into reflections not only on how to understand power but also how to address its vagaries in the classroom. For both of us, doing so evoked doubts and emotions we realise ought not to be hidden from students but rather opened up as points for discussion and learning.

Sue-Ann:

*We talk a lot about anti-oppressive practice in social work, but we often ignore the basics in our discussions with students about understanding power and how it operates and conceiving of social work as political practice (Finn, 2021). It seems maybe a bit banal to say that, but when you ask students to really consider power: individual and collective, and times when they feel disempowered or empowered - they struggle to connect practice experiences of disempowerment to their own experiences. I really appreciate Dumbrell and Yee’s (2019) explanations of the importance of understanding power in social work theory and practice whereby they claim that power is “central in almost everything that happens in the social world” (: 58). They take up Bertrand Russel’s proposition: “the fundamental concept in social science is power, in the same sense in which energy is the fundamental concept in physics” (: 58-59). In essence, power infuses everyday life and practice. Power in the social world is the same as energy in the physical world – nothing happens without it. Further they state that if we fail to understand how power operates, not able to recognize it and resist it, or use our/others power in intervention, efforts will be in vain (: 59). These nuanced understandings of power: power over, power to and power with, are elements that provoke a lot of emotions in the classroom but that can be transformed into understanding and practice wisdom. They also can make us feel quite vulnerable, when confronted by our own powerlessness, exposing our vulnerabilities, especially of not-knowing (humble*

standpoint), in different practice contexts. One way to dissect power is to connect it to emotions, by exposing our own fragilities. And connect with the vulnerability people in social work encounters must experience through our own vulnerabilities. It can become a shared sense of humanity.

Rosemary:

*I find that talking about power can be very confrontational for students. And, I must admit, such conversations provoke certain of my own insecurities. That said, as social workers, for the most part we work with vulnerable, marginalised, and oppressed populations and I believe that talking about power – either in the classroom or in the helping relationship – is crucial. Critically taking account of who we are and what we might represent to the people with whom we work can contribute to efforts to develop egalitarian relationships. We talk a lot about professional identity in the classroom, but our personal identities are also important when considering power. I remember a conversation, in the context of a research study (Krane & Carlton, 2008), that I had with a young black woman who had sought refuge from violence at a local women's shelter. She told me that it took her a long time to reach out for help. She was concerned about how she would be seen and treated as a black woman: "I was afraid the counsellor would say 'here's another black girl being beaten up by a black man,' This is bashing my brothers and I hate it." So, when she finally called the shelter, she began the conversation by announcing she was black – "just in case" – and "the worker said 'okay, so what?' and I felt stupid." I see this as a missed opportunity on the part of the shelter worker to explore their respective understandings of power, identity and help-seeking. With a great deal of courage, the young woman opened a door to such a conversation. But, while surely well intended, the worker shut it down by claiming that all women were welcome at the shelter regardless of race, culture, religion, etc.*

*As social workers, our power is defined not only by our professional identity but also by where we are situated at the intersections of different social relations. We are not neutral, and we are not without our own power, privileges, disadvantages, and oppressions. We can choose to ignore such facets of our identities and pretend that our relationships with the people with whom we intervene are unfettered by social differences and dynamics of power and oppression. But, if we do, we risk, even unintentionally, reinforcing inequities in our interventions, and potentially muting the voices of the people we are aiming to support. How do I encourage students to be critically introspective and prepared to engage in uncomfortable conversations about power, privilege, and oppression? As a social work educator, I am in a privileged position to model what I teach: to be vulnerable in acknowledging my professional and social locations; to invite uncomfortable conversations; and to be present with students as they engage in hopefully transformative introspection and critical reflection.*

139

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS AND HOPES FOR RESISTANCE

Investigating our shared stories of social work practice and education according to a method of collaborative autoethnography not only provided us with insights into potential avenues through which to invite emotion and treat it as useful to resisting NPM forms of practice, but a sense of support and solidarity as well. Lapadat (2017: 599) reminds us of the utility of collaborative autoethnography as a method for expanding "the research scope beyond personal situations engendering powerlessness". She suggests that a strength of such research methodology lies in the "relationship building" and "collective agency" that can arise through collaboration: "when personal experiences are acknowledged, respected, and seen as embedded within workplaces and social structures, people are more likely to work together to change workplace and societal practices from the bottom up" (: 600). While the merging of our stories allowed us to acknowledge our shared



feelings of powerlessness, anxiety and disillusionment, the process also exposed the structural and ideological factors that inspire such emotions and pointed the way to potential sites and actions for change. Our conversation did not end with this article; rather, it necessarily remains ongoing and is one that we invite social work educators, practitioners, and students to enter into with us.

As we noted above, attention to emotion is not new to social work practice and education. Ikebuchi and Rasmussen (2014: 297) remarked that if we are ready to accept that social work is emotionally demanding, then “schools of social work have to develop ways to prepare students to deal with not only the emotional content that their clients’ will bring to them but also their own emotional material and the reactions that will arise in practice”. Normalising the range of emotional responses of social work students, practitioners as well as the people with whom social workers intervene can serve as an important step towards developing coping mechanisms and intervention skills (Sewell, 2020). In this way, students can be reassured that emotional responses ought not be viewed as problematic or as signs of incompetence or weakness but rather as expected and crucial to developing nuanced understandings of their own and others’ situated experiences and to engaging in empathic helping relationships. Emphasizing the use of self in relationships and the ability to evoke and work with emotion as key elements of social work intervention, social work education scholars have proposed certain pedagogical tools to be integrated into the classroom. These tools include experiential learning involving not only field placements, but also presentations from practitioners and service users relating to their emotional experiences of social work intervention; reflective writing activities; educator self-disclosure; mindfulness practices; simulation and role playing; and activities placing emphasis on linking and developing substantive knowledge, intervention skills, and critical and emotional reflection about students’ selves and others (Grant, Kinman & Alexander, 2014; Ikebuchi & Rasmussen, 2014; Sewell, 2020).

140

Over the last several decades social work theory, policy and practice have become ever more focused on individualised explanations of problems “at the expense of the social” (Thorpe, 2018: 3). As state expenditures and policy have shrunk attention to the collective wellbeing of citizens, we have witnessed a concomitant increase in the responsabilisation of individuals for both causing and resolving social problems, regardless of uneven distributions of power and resources based on race, class, gender, sexuality and the like. It is against this backdrop that social work risks being reduced to the conduct of functional and risk assessments, “lean” interventions, and processes of surveillance and regulation, and social work education to the preparation of students to function according to a set of predefined competencies. Students’ experiences of disillusionment and powerlessness are not so surprising in such a climate and can be understood as a natural response to an ideological environment posing threats to their potential to practice social work according to the values taught in social work classrooms. Rather than attempting to soothe students’ apprehensions with ingenuine promises that all will be okay once they adjust to the rhythms of day-to-day practice, our challenge becomes to explicitly acknowledge students’ emotions, explore the ramifications for professional development, and explore ways to mobilise such emotions as a means of combatting the effects of neoliberal ideologies on social work practice. To this end, we turn to bell hooks’ call for transgression in the classroom, Swift et al.’s (2016) recommendations for integrating an activist pedagogy into social work education, as well as recent explorations of the Slow movement’s potential for resisting neoliberal orientations to social work practice and education.

According to bell hooks (1994), an engaged pedagogy that “enables transgressions” (: 12) requires that educators rethink and reinvent classrooms so as to create possibilities for dialogue, critical thinking, dismantling dichotomies of mind/body and public/private evident in traditional pedagogies, and confronting issues of power within and beyond educational settings. Inviting students to actively participate in such reimaginings of the classroom begins, according to hooks,

with educators who are willing to be critical of their own pedagogical practices, to be vulnerable in their examination and voicing of their own positionality, and to continue to learn alongside and in interaction with students. Both authors spoke of being vulnerable specifically in addressing issues of power and positionality in the classroom. While Rosemary mentioned vulnerability in association with acknowledging her own social and professional locations as a means of modeling and inviting students' engagement in transformative introspection, Sue-Ann spoke of exposing vulnerabilities – her own and students' – as a first step towards connecting with the vulnerability of the people with whom social workers intervene. hooks reminds us, however, that sharing ought to be reciprocal and meaningful if we hope to empower students as subjects rather than objects in the learning process. In keeping with tenets of an engaged pedagogy, inviting students to share “confessional narratives” (: 21), whether about their respective positionalities within social relations of power and oppression or their reflections and feelings relating to present day social work, requires being attentive to students' well-being, making explicit efforts to diffuse hierarchies, and encouraging a sense of community within the classroom. Here the notion of inviting versus insisting is essential given that, as educators, we cannot assume shared experiences of vulnerability and ought to be sensitive to our own and our students' varying experiences of power, privilege or oppression (in and out of the classroom) based on raced, gendered, socioeconomic, cultural, sexualised, etc. identities and social locations.

hooks (1994) acknowledged her approach to teaching to have been greatly influenced by the work of Paulo Freire and referred to a single sentence of his as having a “revolutionary” influence on her approach to teaching: “We cannot enter the struggle as objects in order to later become subjects” (hooks, 1994: 46). Along with encouraging students to actively engage in the co-construction of knowledge through sharing of experiences, emotions and critical reflections, hooks interpreted Freire's words as relevant to teaching in a manner that invites students into the struggle against the “colonizing process” (: 46) of traditional learning. Borrowing from hooks' pedagogical approach, we suggest treating social work students not as passive recipients of knowledge or technical training, but rather as active subjects with situated knowledge of their own social locations, histories, and circumstances who are capable of transformative learning. In this way, our intention is to accompany students in the development of their capacities for thoughtful introspection, critical reflection, respectful exchange, and transgression in practice.

According to Swift et al. (2016: 387), in order to challenge neoliberalism and avoid becoming complicit in its influence, “it is essential that we develop a thorough understanding of the economic regime of neoliberalism and how it has fundamentally changed the social service terrain as well as our work and everyday lives”. In our conversation above, we talked about exploring neoliberalism's effects on social work practice in the classroom. Doing so, however, requires grounding such discussions in specific and critical attention “to social, economic and political processes and discourses relating to trade agreements, structural adjustment programs, banking practices, austerity measures and their effects as they related to social justice goals” (Swift, Gingrich & Brown, 2016: 387). Bringing attention to students' emotions in such conversations provides opportunities for identifying the weakness of neoliberal claims of the ideal, autonomous, self-sufficient citizen and the insufficiency of systems constructed on such claims – systems such as NPM. In this way, emotions are treated as a source of knowledge. Feelings like disillusionment and powerlessness thus become indicative that something is not right – with the system, not with the student, the social worker or the educator – and can be articulated as a basis for challenging social work practices grounded in neoliberal individualism and responsabilisation.

So, how can we accompany students to move beyond critique and resist such social work practices? In invoking an activist pedagogy, Swift et al. (2016) suggest that educators ought to

teach a revaluing of social work by embracing the social. These authors remind us that, despite its prevalence and endurance, neoliberalism is but one way of seeing the world and that we can learn from various Indigenous and African cultures and philosophies that hold communal worldviews and assume social interconnectedness. By first underscoring the neoliberal “fallacy” that individuals are independent of the social, we can work towards a (re)turn “to *social* ideas and ideals – a commitment to social rights and shared responsibility through public dialogue and collective action” (: 387). Here we borrow from Swift et al.’s encouragement of a social reflexivity in the classroom that builds from and extends beyond individual self-monitoring to pursue reflections not only about who we are, but with whom are we connected and in what ways. “The aims are to change the conversation; to invite students to reclaim concepts that have been devalued and discredited; and to develop a counter-narrative of compassion, common good, cooperation, shared responsibility, collectivity and altruism” (: 387).

The call by Swift et al. (2016) to reclaim the social aligns with recent explorations of the Slow movement’s potential for social work and education. The Slow movement began with Carlos Petrini and food in the late 1980s (Petrini, 2007). Objecting to fast food institutions associated with capitalism and a disrespect for local, native food traditions and the environment, the Slow Food Movement emerged in support of a concept of food grounded in the principles of “good, clean and fair,” wherein *good* refers to quality food, *clean* to food production that poses no harm to the environment, animals or people, and *fair* to accessibility of prices for consumers and fair conditions and pay for producers (Petrini, 2007). The Slow Food Movement is also associated with notions of co-production, “meaningful connections with others – be they human or non-human – and ... protecting the environment” (Bozalek, 2020: 84). Since its inception with food, Slow has been taken up by various disciplines and professions as a reaction to the influence of market rationalities, managerialism, and neoliberal values of self-sufficient, rational individualism on various spheres of life and work, including social work and higher education (Bozalek, 2020; Leibowitz & Bozalek, 2018). Importantly, Slow does not refer to doing less or moving at a slower pace. In the context of social work and social work education, the Slow movement provides guidance in developing ways of practicing and teaching that eschew prescriptive solutions to complex issues and instead value local co-constructed knowledge, relationship, the amplification of axiological considerations, process over outcome, and thoughtful attention to political ideology and global and environmental contexts (Berg & Seeber, 2016; Bozalek, 2020; Leibowitz & Bozalek, 2018). Bringing Slow into the social work classroom allows a reconceptualization not only of the practice of social work, but also of the practice of teaching. A Slow pedagogy includes consciously promoting situated, affected, and embodied knowledge alongside historical, empirical, and theoretical sources of knowledge and incorporating process-oriented activities into the classroom wherein students and educators are invited to sit with, reflect upon, (re)write, (re)read, and dialogue about these multiple sources of knowledge (Berg & Seeber, 2016; Leibowitz & Bozalek, 2018). Doing so in a fair and responsible manner, however, remains critical. This means being accountable in relationships as well as refusing innocence and acknowledging “past and present damages that have been done” (Bozalek, 2018: 87). Exploring with students the various effects of past and present social work practice with diverse groups, including Indigenous, racialized populations as well as those struggling with poverty and social exclusion, is sure to elicit a multitude of emotional and intellectual reactions, including those sentiments of disillusionment and powerlessness that inspired this article. In recommending a Slow approach to social work education, we encourage delving into such reactions as an important step towards developing a sense of accountability for our actions as social workers and re-visioning a practice grounded in social work rather than neoliberal values.

In concluding this article, we wish to acknowledge the context within which it was written. Over the past many months, the world has been struggling to respond to the effects of the COVID-19

pandemic. We have been witness to incredible disruptions to global and local economies, diverse communities, and everyday life in general. We have also been witness to the magnification of social inequities through the differential experience of the pandemic for certain groups and individuals based on race, socio-economic status, gender, geographical location, age, and physical and mental health. While these and other social inequities pre-existed, they have been compounded by the pandemic. Neoliberal attachments to the invisible hand of the free market have proven insufficient in responding to basic needs in this time of crisis and have instead been criticized as having contributed to the rise, perpetuation, and uneven experience of the pandemic (Hil, Lyons & Thompsett, 2021). Rather than being paralysed by our frustration and seeming powerlessness in the face of the injustices of the moment, we propose treating this moment as one full of transformative potential where we can learn from the successes of powerful collective movements that counter narratives of individualisation and responsabilisation.

---

## RÉSUMÉ :

*Former la prochaine génération de travailleuses et travailleurs sociaux à exercer leur métier conformément aux valeurs de la discipline est de plus en plus compliqué dans une ère de pratique façonnée par le néolibéralisme et les systèmes de nouvelle gestion publique. Basé sur des données tirées de conversations autoethnographiques collaboratives entre deux éducatrices en travail social, cet article répond à un sentiment de désillusion, d'anxiété et d'impuissance associé à l'entrée dans le terrain de la pratique actuelle dont témoignent nos salles de classe. Situé à l'intersection de deux domaines d'études – l'un soulignant l'importance d'accompagner les étudiant.e.s dans le développement de capacités à s'occuper des émotions dans la pratique du travail social avec des populations vulnérables et marginalisées, et l'autre identifiant l'éducation au travail social comme un site potentiel de résistance contre la dévalorisation du travail social évidente dans les systèmes influencés par les attitudes néolibérales dominantes – , cet article propose de considérer l'émotion en classe comme un moyen de confronter les sentiments de désenchantement et d'impuissance des étudiant.e.s (et des éducateurs.rices) et d'inspirer de l'espoir pour le (ré)établissement de valeurs du travail social dans la pratique contemporaine.*

143

## MOTS-CLÉS :

*Nouvelle gestion publique, néolibéralisme, valeurs du travail social, éducation en travail social, pédagogie critique*

---

## REFERENCES

- Ayala, J., Drolet, J., Fulton, A., Hewson, J., Letkemann, L., Baynton, M., Elliott, G., Judge-Stasiak, A., Blaug, C., Gérard Tétreault, A. & E. Schweizer (2018). "Field education in crisis: experiences of field education coordinators in Canada", *Social Work Education*, 37(3), 281–293.
- Baines, D. (2017) *Doing anti-oppressive practice: Social justice social work*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Halifax/Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing.
- Baines, D. & F. Waugh (2019). "Afterward: Resistance, white fragility and late neoliberalism": 247–260, in D. Baines, B. Bennett, S. Goodwin and M. Rawsthorne (Eds.), *Working Across Difference: Social Work, Social Policy and Social Justice*, London: Red Globe Press.
- Bellot, C., Bresson, M. & C. Jetté (2013). *Le travail social et la nouvelle gestion publique*. Québec: Presses de l'Université du Québec.
- Berg, M., & B. K. Seeber (2016). *The Slow Professor: Challenging the Culture of Speed in the Academy*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

- Boucher, L. (2018). "Radical Visions, Structural Constraints: Challenges to Anti-Oppressive Practice in Feminist Organizations", *Affilia*, 33(1), 24-38.
- Bozalek, V. (2020). "Propositions for Slow social work": 83-94, in V. Bozalek and B. Pease (Eds.), *Post-Anthropocentric Social Work: Critical Posthuman and New Materialist Perspectives (1<sup>st</sup> ed.)*. London/New York: Routledge.
- Brown, C., MacDonald, J. Y. Provencher, (2016). "The constraints of neo-liberal new managerialism in social work education", *Canadian Social Work Review*, 33(1), 115-123.
- Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) (2005). *Code of Ethics*.
- Canadian Association for Social Work Education (CASWE-ACFTS) (2018, February 23). CASWE-ACFTS – Nombres - étudiants et corps professoral / Numbers - Students and Faculty.
- Carello, J. & L. D. Butler (2015). "Practicing what we teach: Trauma-informed educational practice", *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*, 35(3), 262-278.
- Chang, H., Ngunjiri, F. & K.-A.C. Hernandez (2013). *Collaborative Autoethnography, 1<sup>st</sup> edition*. London/New York: Routledge.
- Dumbrill, G. C. & J. Y. Yee (2019). *Anti-Oppressive Social Work: Ways of Knowing, Talking, and Doing*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fenton, J. (2014). "Can social work education meet the neoliberal challenge head on?", *Critical and Radical Social Work*, 2(3): 321-35.
- Finn, J. L. (2021). *Just practice: A social justice approach to social work, 4<sup>th</sup> edition*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Freire, P. (1997). *Pedagogy of the Heart*, New York: Continuum Publishing.
- Garrett, P. M. (2010). "Examining the 'conservative revolution': Neoliberalism and social work education", *Social Work Education*, 29(4), 340-355.
- Geoffrion, S. & D. Collin-Vézina (February 2021). "Opinion: There is no protective gear to shield youth protection workers from compassion fatigue", *CTV News*. <https://montreal.ctvnews.ca/opinion-there-is-no-protective-gear-to-shield-youth-protection-workers-from-compassion-fatigue-1.5311457>.
- Golightly, M. & M. Holloway (2017). "Social work under neo-liberalism: Fellow sufferer or wounded healer?", *British Journal of Social Work*, 47(4), 965-972.
- Gouvernement du Québec (April 2021). *Rapport de la Commission spéciale sur les droits des enfants et la protection de la Jeunesse*.
- Grant, L., Kinman, G. & K. Alexander (2014). "What's all this talk about emotion? Developing emotional intelligence in social work students", *Social Work Education*, 33(7), 874-889.
- Hil, R., Lyons, K. & F. Thompsett (2022). *Transforming Universities in the Midst of Global Crisis: A University for the Common Good*, London/New York: Routledge.
- Homer-Dixon, T. (2020). *Commanding Hope: The Power We Have to Renew a World in Peril*, Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, Penguin Random House.
- hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, New York: Routledge.
- Ikebuchi, J. & B. M. Rasmussen (2014). "The use of emotions in social work education", *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*, 34(3), 285-30.
- Ingram, R. (2015). *Understanding Emotions in Social Work: Theory, Practice and Reflection*, New York: Open University Press.
- Jetté, C. & M. Goyette (2010). « Pratiques sociales et pratiques managériales : des convergences possibles? », *Nouvelles pratiques sociales*, 22(2), 25-34.
- Keinemans, S. (2015). "Be sensible: Emotions in social work ethics and education", *The British Journal of Social Work*, 45(7), 2176-2191.
- Krane, J. & R. Carlton (2008). "I stumble along with all of this: The challenges of translating anti-racism and cultural sensitivity in practice": 253-272, in S. Arcand, D. Damant, S. Gravel & E. Harper (Eds.), *Violences faites aux femmes*, Québec: Presses de l'Université du Québec.
- Lapadat, J.C. (2017). "Ethics in autoethnography and collaborative autoethnography", *Qualitative Inquiry*, 23(8), 589-603.
- Leibowitz, B. & V. Bozalek (2018). "Towards a Slow scholarship of teaching and learning in the South", *Teaching in Higher Education*, 23(8), 981-994.



- Lupton, D. (2013). *Risk, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, London: Routledge.
- MacDonald, S.-A., Srikanthan, S., Ferrer, I., Lee, E.O., Lorenzetti, L. & A.-A. Parent (2020). "The potential of field education as transformative learning", *Intersectionalities: A Global Journal of Social Work Analysis, Research, Polity, and Practice*, 8(1), 1-18.
- MacDonald, J. & K. Nixon (2016). "Neo-liberal agenda and new managerialism's impact on social work education", *Canadian Social Work Review/Revue Canadienne de Service Social*, 33(1), 107-110.
- McConnell, S., Sammon, S. & N. Pike (2013). *Background document submitted to the CASWE Dean's and Director's meeting with field education committee*, Ottawa: Author.
- Marak, Q. (2015). Writing the 'Self': Introducing Autoethnography, *Man in India*, 95(1), 1-10.
- Mishna, F. & B. Rasmussen (2001). "The learning relationship: Working through disjunctions in the classroom", *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 29(4), 387-399.
- Morley, C., Ablett, P. & C. Noble (2020). "Introduction: the imperative of critical pedagogies for social work": 1-16 in Morley, C., Ablett, P., Noble, C. & Cowden, S. (Eds), *The Routledge Handbook of Critical Pedagogies for Social Work*, London/New York: Routledge.
- Morley, C., Macfarlane, S. & P. Ablett (2017). "The neoliberal colonisation of social work education: A critical analysis and practices for resistance", *Advances in Social Work and Welfare Education*, 19(2), 25-40.
- Ngomane, M. (2019). *Everyday Ubuntu: Living Better Together, the African Way*, Canada: Random House
- Ordre des travailleurs sociaux et des thérapeutes conjugaux et familiaux du Québec (OTSTCFQ). (2019). *Normes générales de l'exercice de la profession de travailleur social*, Montreal : OTSTCFQ.
- Petrini, C. (2007). *Slow Food Nation: Why Our Food Should Be Good, Clean, and Fair*, New York: Rizzoli Ex Libris.
- Philaretou, A. G. & K. R. Allen (2006). "Researching sensitive topics through autoethnographic means", *The Journal of Men's Studies*, 14(1), 65-78.
- Preston, S. & J. Aslett (2014). "Resisting neoliberalism from within the academy: Subversion through an activist pedagogy", *Social Work Education*, 33(4), 502-518.
- Preston, S., George, P. & S. Silver (2014). "Field education in social work: The need for reimagining", *Critical Social Work*, 15(1), 57-72.
- Regehr, C. (2013). "Trends in higher education in Canada and implications for social work education", *Social Work Education*, 32(6), 700-714.
- Rossiter, A. & B. Heron (2011). "Neoliberalism, competencies, and the devaluing of social work practice", *Canadian Social Work Review / Revue Canadienne de Service Social*, 28(2), 305-309.
- Roy, R. & S. Uekusa (2020). "Collaborative autoethnography: 'Self-reflection' as a timely alternative research approach during the global pandemic", *Qualitative Research Journal*, 20(4), 383-392.
- Sewell, K. M. (2020). "Examining the place of emotions, affect, and regulation in social work education", *Journal of Social Work Education*, 56(1), 5-16.
- Shepherd, S. (2018). "Managerialism: an ideal type", *Studies in Higher Education*, 43(9), 1668-1678.
- Swift, K., Gingrich, L. G. & M. Brown (2016). "Social work education: The challenge of neoliberalism": 382-393, in Taylor, I., Bogo, M., Lefevre, M. & Teater, B. (Eds.), *Routledge International Handbook of Social Work Education*, London: Routledge.
- Thorpe, C. (2018). *Social Work Theory for Social Work: Ideas and Applications*, New York: Routledge.
- van Breda, A. (2019). "Developing the notion of ubuntu as African theory for social work practice", *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk*, 55(4), 439-450.
- Varone, F. & J.-M. Bonvin (2004). « Regards croisés sur la nouvelle gestion publique », *Les politiques sociales*, no. 1 et 2, 4-17.
- Ward, S. C. (2011). "The machinations of managerialism: New Public Management and the diminishing power of professionals", *Journal of Cultural Economy*, 4(2), 205-215.
- Wehbi, S., & P. Turcotte (2007). "Social work education: Neoliberalism's willing victim?", *Critical Social Work*, 8(1), 1-9.
- Winkler, I. (2017). "Doing autoethnography: Facing challenges, taking choices, accepting responsibilities", *Qualitative Inquiry*, 24(4), 236-247.