ORIGINAL ARTICLE
THEORETICAL RESEARCH

Fighting for women's rights and promoting choice: Implications for critical social work education

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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION: In this article we focus on two women's movements, Abortion Rights in Australia and the Iranian women's protests, that have resisted dominant oppressive discourses and systems. These movements have pushed back on the regulation of women's bodies, choice, and reproductive rights, and are demanding social justice against violence, key areas of concern for critical social work (CSW).

METHODS: The theoretical lenses of feminist transnationalism and intersectionality will inform critical analysis based on our case studies describing activism on reproductive justice (RJ) and social justice.

FINDINGS: Both movements centre women's choice and control over their bodies—in one case, the removal of access to abortion in the USA (United States of America) has incited protests to protect women's reproductive right to choose, and in the other, Iranian women have taken to the streets to demand their rights to gender equality and protest the systematic violence against women and their bodies. Consideration of the contribution of women's activism to social work education is presented.

CONCLUSION: While these movements are not equivalent, they demonstrate political and collective activism to fight for women's right to choose. The article concludes with how social movements can help us develop strategies of hope and collective action. The pedagogy of solidarity and community of practice can amplify social work education to both reflect and encourage activism.

Keywords: Social movement; activism; feminism; transnational; intersectionality; critical social work

Gender inequality is an international issue with wide-reaching individual, political, social, and economic ramifications (Dominelli, 2002). The focus on gender equality has been the remit of international social workers for decades. Social work has highlighted how women face challenges in relation to employment and gender wage gaps, violence at both intimate and structural levels, and denial of basic education and health care, among other issues. Women's movements transcend national borders and show that collective feminist solidarity is required to promote long-lasting change. The achievements by women and feminists have informed policy and practice and are manifest across a range of disciplines including health, education, economics,

AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND SOCIAL WORK *35(4)*, 59–72.

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politics, social work, law, and international relations.

As social work educators, we challenge key dominant discourses in society that continue to impact women including patriarchy, theocracy, and neoliberalism, among others. These narratives have shaped social work practice, policy, and research in recent decades. Much of the language used in neoliberalism refers to individualism and dominant political and economic discourses to justify the changes to facilitate efficacy and standardisation in micro-level establishment social work (Garrett, 2018). However, we believe that consideration of the macro lens is vital, in addition to the micro and meso levels, to critical social work (CSW) pedagogy. Social justice is a central principle of social work as evidenced in the International Federation of Social Work (IFSW) definition, and CSW challenges gender and structural inequality and addresses human rights through collective social movements and action at all levels.

This article presents two current social movements initiated by women to defend women's freedom of choice over their bodies and lives to achieve gender justice. We draw on feminist frameworks to examine the long-standing social activism to protect Abortion Rights in Australia, and the Iranian women's movement (September 2022–present). We want to acknowledge the participation of transgender people and people with fluid gender identities to the women's and other social movements and policy advocacy; however, including this history is beyond the scope of this paper.

The key three pillars of reproductive justice (RJ) include the right to have a child, to not have a child, and to parent a child in a safe and healthy environment (Beddoe, 2022; Hyatt et al., 2022; Lavalette et al., 2022; Ross, 2006). These conditions are framed as both structural and personal conditions, impacting women's ability to choose, and to counter oppression and neoliberal assaults on women's agency in relation to surveillance and control of them and their communities. We highlight and reflect on our lived experiences in the case studies of working in abortion services, advocacy for women's rights and choice, and supporting the women of Iran to exercise choice and freedom over their bodies.

We outline the conceptual frameworks we have drawn on that inform CSW and feminist practice including transnational and intersectional approaches, RJ, and women's rights. We then apply these to the two case studies of social movements noted above, both of which have pushed back on the regulation of women's bodies, reproductive rights and demands for social justice against violence, which are key areas of concern for CSW.

Background

CSW education, social movements and activism, and neoliberalism

CSW emerged in the 1970s, particularly in the United Kingdom (UK) and North America. The radical social work critique of social work and welfare, predominantly about social control of working classes and women, was built on previous activism by union members, suffragettes, civil rights activists and others throughout history (Bailey & Brake, 1975). In Australia, these same issues and debates on women's rights, workers' rights and conditions, and challenges to authority were emerging. The emergence of activism and radical social work in Australia can be traced to the introduction of progressive social policy and widespread social movements addressing health, education, and housing in the 1970s (Mendes, 2017).

CSW has the remit to offer resistance, lead, and promote social movements at all levels (micro, meso and macro), and critical pedagogy can prepare future social workers to highlight the extent and breadth of change required in activism within their

organisations and social structures. Social movements and activism can play a critical role in organising and amplifying collective action for people's emancipation on a macro level (Garrett, 2018). Historically, social workers were strongly involved with activism internationally. For example, Noble et al. (2017) presented a collection of stories tracing the historical development of CSW education and activism in Australia. Their experiences indicated collective action and innovative approaches to social work were built on the social movements against racism (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander activism), feminist movements (women's activism on childcare, equal pay, violence, sexual assault, reproductive rights among others), ecological/Green movements (campaigns against deforestation and dams, protection of all species and animals), international development (support for refugees, independence movements across the world), and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, Plus (LGBTQI+) activism for equal rights (marriage equality, rights and visibility). In addition, Zaleski et al. (2020) provided many examples of activism in social spaces in the international context. The central principles underpinning these social movements are human rights and social justice, the re-distribution of wealth and the promotion of peace and climate justice, which are aligned with CSW values.

As noted above, collective action is not new in CSW, which inherently has a progressive role that acts against inequality, injustice and oppression (Afrouz, 2022; Noble, 2007). Yet there is debate about social workers role in engaging with social movements and radical community development (Westoby et al., 2019). Neoliberal approaches dominate and underpin many mainstream and government-funded organisations with their emphasis on individualism and micro level modes of service delivery (Morley et al., 2019). We argue that neoliberalism results in significant challenges for collective action and social workers' activism which entails a shift from focusing on individual pathology to social reform within (or against) social structures and promoting egalitarian practices.

Noble et al. (2017) argued that increased social inequality and instability require social workers' radical activism. Noble (2007) identified four levels of action: substructural levels (dominant ideology); social systems and social arrangements level; social relations and everyday activities; and transnational relations. Social movements are located in personal, local and transnational contexts and are framed within "contemporary citizenship" (Noble, 2007, p. 98). This is intertwined with social media, particularly with increased global connectivity and opportunities for solidarity.

The inclusion of feminist principles into organisations and the achievements of women's health centres, centres against sexual assault, and family violence agencies all have a legacy of activist and collective action taken by those women forging new approaches to social work (Noble et al., 2017). Dominelli (2002) elaborated on the origins of feminist social work including liberal, radical, socialist, Black, anti-racist and post-modernist feminisms which form the basis of CSW. Her key messages are about promoting hope, transformative change, social justice, and human rights. The goal of CSW is emancipation from all forms of oppression, marginalisation, and exploitation. The fourth wave of feminism in the 1990s has been strongly associated with intersectionality and addressing issues of exclusion felt by many, including women of colour, younger women, and the LGBTQI+ communities (see Collins, 2019; Crenshaw, 1991; Phillips, 2022).

Intersectionality, transnationalism, and gender justice

Intersectionality "refers to the interaction between gender, race and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power"

(Davis, 2008, p. 68). The term was first coined by Black scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) and further developed by other Black feminist scholars (e.g., bell hooks) to challenge the conceptual limitation of a single-issue analysis and has since been embraced by scholars across disciplines to advance social justice (Moradi & Grzanka, 2017). Within new women-led movements, intersectionality can help us identify and acknowledge differences among individuals, groups and communities that impact their access to services and power. Goethals et al. (2015, p. 229) noted that intersectionality seeks to illuminate various interacting factors that affect human lives and to identify how these different systemic conditions vary in place, time, and circumstance and intersect to reproduce conditions of inequality. For instance, intersectionality underpins the RJ movement, which aims to remove health inequalities and promote reproductive freedom (Ross, 2006). Hyatt et al. (2022, p. 37) noted that the RJ framework is focused on access to health care and resources, and the centring of the collective experiences of Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC), LGBTQIA +, people with disabilities, and people who are marginalized and disenfranchised. There have, however, been critiques made by queer scholars that the RJ movement has not been inclusive enough of queer needs and rights (see George, 2019).

Increasingly, feminist scholars are highlighting the connection between countries and movements across time and place, as modes of communication become accessible via digital platforms and social media (Turley & Fisher, 2018). The transnational feminist theoretical framework can help feminist social work to enrich its active role in social movements. Within a transnational lens, those issues are now recognised as interconnected violations of women's rights, with gender as a key factor continuing to be at the root of women's oppression. This framework helps us address key areas of concern facing women internationally and how galvanising collective solidarity is motivating this activism. Transnational feminism, with a focus on intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), and the emphasis on differences and diverse experiences of women and resistance (Zerbe Enns et al., 2021), aims to promote collaboration and solidarity across borders. This approach has particularly been developed to move away from the narrow confines of nation-states and shift the Global North focus of international solidarity. Mohanty (2004) claimed that solidarity can involve mutuality, accountability, and empowerment in the international context. Yet, the challenge for activists in this context is to focus on the local issues affecting them and their communities while also seeing the broader connections to international structures, such as capitalism and patriarchy, as they affect *all* women.

Fighting for "choice" in two social movements

Challenges and backlash against women's rights and women's resistance and freedom of choice continue to impact gender equality and the 21st century's shape of interpersonal violence (Zaleski et al., 2020). While the substantive issues in the global context seem overwhelming, ranging from environmental degradation, forced marriage, torture and trauma, rape, and sexual assault as weapons of war, and various forms of misogyny in social media and public life, the message of activism is still hopeful and progressive.

The following section will illustrate two social movements in which the authors are actively involved in addressing gender injustice and the violation of women's rights and freedom of choice.

Case Study One: Women's bodies, freedom, and choice

Iranian women's movement (September 2022-present) Rojan Afrouz

I am a Kurdish-Iranian Australian woman and social work academic living in Australia

since 2015. Like many women activists, I have demanded a structural change in gender equality and gender justice in Iran since I was a social work student. Yet, the Iranian political system has shown no significant change or reform and has continued to implement discriminatory laws and systematic violence against women (Sadeghi, 2022; Sanasarian, 1982).

The women's movement in Iran has a long history, but the current unique women-led movement was sparked by the death in the so-called "morality police's" custody of a 22-year-old Kurdish woman, Jina (Mahsa) Amini, on 16 September 2022, after allegedly being assaulted due to wearing a loose hijab. Although protests began with people's anger against the morality police, the demands of protesters shifted to the broader issues relating to women's rights, women's autonomy, and freedom of choice. The feature of this movement is centring on women's rights and freedom of choice with the slogan "Woman, Life, Freedom." This slogan is from the Kurdish slogan "Jin, Jiyan, Azadi", popularised by Abdullah Öcalan, a Kurdish political leader, to centre women's rights and women's liberation at the forefront of people's liberation and systematic change (see Neven & Schäfers, 2017).

Historically, religious autocracy, political systems, and patriarchy have violated women's rights over their bodies in Iran. Some traditional and religious interpretations of women as sexually dangerous and seductive resulted in regulating women's bodies through clothing, veiling and gender segregation (Fathzadeh, 2022). Following the Iranian Constitutional Revolution (1905 and 1911), progressive activists, women's organisations, constitutionalist press, and poets have pioneered the discussion on women's rights and liberation (Amanat, 2017). However, in contemporary Iran and particularly within the last two political periods, veiling and unveiling have become a political decision, becoming tools of "a technology of power" to regulate women's bodies (Fathzadeh, 2022, p. 4).

The Modernisation and Westernisation project by Reza Shah enforced the Kashf-e hijab (unveiling) in 1936–1941 and introduced a compulsory unveiling policy to remove any symbol of the veil and hijab in public (Amanat, 2017). As a result, some groups of women, particularly those from more religious backgrounds, chose (or were forced to by their families) to stay home until the rules were eased in 1941. Following the Islamic Revolution in 1979, compulsory hijab was imposed, and new restrictions were introduced against women's activities (for example banning singing, dancing, cycling) and accessing abortion. In particular, women's veiling has become a part of the national identity imposed by the authoritarian regime (Chen, 2022). Currently, in addition to mandatory hijab in Iran, women's word in court is worth half that of a male counterpart, and they might be in an arranged marriage as young as 13 (Mohammadi, 2022). There are also other discriminatory laws against women, such as Marriage Guardianship, as a "virgin" girl or woman requires the permission of the father (or paternal grandfather) to get married, and a wife must obey a husband under Tamkin (sexual obedience). Following the Islamic Revolution, Iran recognised Sharia law as a base for Iran's jurisdiction system as a mechanism of control by the government and religious systems to impose power and suppress women's agency, gender equality and full participation in society. While the central focus of the women's movement is freedom of choice and control over the body, the discussion about the bigger picture of women's rights is yet to be fully embraced by the leadership.

The women-led movement has also prompted a backlash against the centrality of gender equality and women's rights, with some claiming that demands are more than gender equality now. While the centrality of women's voices and demands looked promising, there is uncertainty

within this movement as the narrative of regime change in Iran is increasingly overshadowing women's voices and centrality within the movement. Although the slogan "woman, life, freedom" is still loud and clear and is widely accepted, some groups and opposition leaders, particularly monarchists (Reza Shah's grandson's supporters), have actively tried to remove gender centrality from the movement. Bhattacharjya et al. (2013) argued that, even if women are active in mobilising a social movement, gender justice and women's rights might not be recognised as priorities within the movement. Iranian women now face significant challenges to maintaining activism and advocating for women's rights to maintain the centrality of women's voices and their demands in this movement. In addition, women's contribution to leading this movement has been significantly impacted by the patriarchal domination of, and the brutal response by, the regime, as women have been subjected to torture, sexual assaults, and rape while in custody (Qiblawi et al., 2022). At the same time, women, including myself, have been subjected to online bullying and harassment in online environments from regime and anti-regime supporters due to advocacy for women's rights.

Thus, 10 months after the beginning of the movement, we face challenges and uncertainties about this social movement moving forward. Indeed, social justice within social movements can be long and difficult, and backlash is real, even though the movement identifies itself with the slogan "Woman, Life, Freedom".

Case Study Two

Women's bodies, freedom, and choice Abortion Rights Kim Robinson

As a newly graduated social worker in the late 1980s, I was excited to work in a Women's Hospital in central Melbourne, in the State of Victoria, Australia, providing support to women who requested a termination of pregnancy in the public health care system. The Pregnancy Advisory Service (PAS) was available to women via referral from their General Practitioner (GP) and they could see the doctor and/or a social worker if they wanted to discuss any issues related to their health and decision. There was a diverse range of older women, young women, and everyone in between, from all levels of society. Many of their stories stay with me, and their decision-making processes were often influenced by religion, economics, and their personal relationships. Invariably, women knew what they wanted to do, and our role was to provide them with a non-judgemental space to reflect on their decision. The women's health movement has a long history of promoting social equality and justice, and I felt proud to be a member, having regularly attended protests and worked as a volunteer in a support service for women leaving violent partners.

One of the most challenging parts of my job was walking through the lines of protestors at the hospital, bearing placards with blood, foetuses, proclamations of murderer, hell, and damnation, frightening all the women who entered. Women were often frightened when they came to see us, intimidated by the protestors, despite feeling confident about their decisions. In 1992, the Royal Women's Hospital successfully sought a permanent injunction against Right to Life Victoria, requiring them to protest across the road and not harass women and staff members. However, the fear of violence was always present in passing these anti-abortion protesters—and I do purposely not call them "right to lifers". In 2015, Victoria joined a range of States enacting Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Safe Access Zones) Act 2015 (Vic). Since this time, I have continued to be active in women's health, regularly going on marches and rallies to support abortion rights and women's right to live free of violence in "Reclaim the Night", a march for women's safety in public spaces (see Hinman, 2018), and other events, along with

being active in my social work roles. I have also contributed to research and policy-making on the issues of supporting women to live lives free from violence, and their right to choose.

Feminists have been advocating the issues relating to women's reproductive right to choose and access to safe abortion for decades. The landmark case in the USA in 1973, *Roe v. Wade*, supported the rights of women to gain access to a medical termination of pregnancy (abortion) was conferred by the US (United States) Supreme Court. This enabled women to exercise choice over their body and make independent reproductive decisions, albeit in the context of socioeconomic status and ethnic background. Australia looked towards the USA for inspiration in the women's health movement and historian Baird (2022) clearly documents the key role feminists have taken in promoting change and supporting the women's health movement in Australia. This is not without its challenges as the anti-abortion lobby has continued to be vociferous in their opposition to women's right to choose and, in 2011, killed a security officer guarding a clinic in Melbourne. Sifris et al. (2020) documented and analysed the legal and social implications of the safe access zones and legislative protection for women. They highlight the range of tactics used by those who confuse a foetus with a baby, and attack women who are terminating their pregnancy. The Victorian Act prohibits behaviour such as harassing or intimidating persons accessing a clinic; communicating in relation to abortions in a manner likely to cause distress or anxiety; interfering with access and recording a person accessing a clinic (See the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 ss 185B(1)(a)–(e) (definition of "prohibited behaviour") (Victoria Government, 2008).

Events in 2022 in the USA have highlighted the fragility of the gains won by the feminist movements over decades when *Roe v. Wade* was overturned (United Nations, 2022).

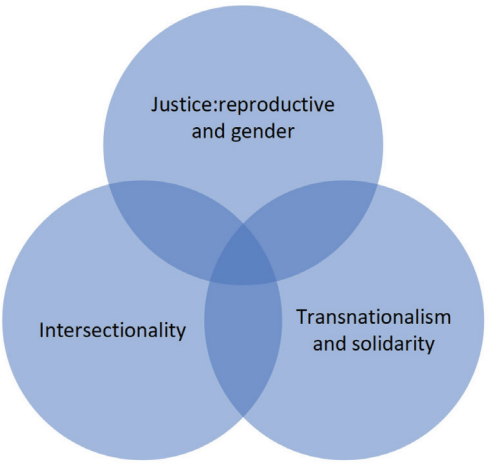

Figure 1: Three Dimensions of Feminist Analytical Frame

Women, allied health workers, counsellors including social workers, nurses and doctors face prison sentences for accessing and providing services, and women's health clinics have been forced to close (Lavalette et al., 2022). The United Nations denounced the decision as a "shocking and dangerous rollback of human rights that will jeopardize women's health and lives" (United Nations, 2022, para. 2). Recently, in Australia, there has been debate about the use of and access to non-surgical abortions, critical issues for women living in rural and remote communities. These are key concerns for CSW.

We draw on the three domains for the feminist analysis of the two social movements: justice: reproductive and gender; intersectionality; and transnationalism and solidarity, to assist us in analysing the similarities embedded in our case studies (see Figure 1). These dimensions provide lenses through which we can frame, interpret, and analyse the context of activism within the two social movements we have described. Moreover, they enable us to develop core values and principles of activism, through which we can articulate and provide recommendations for CSW education in the following section.

Justice: reproductive and gender

Gender justice can be achieved through transforming norms and legislation to maintain gender equality (Kabeer, 2012). Both movements discussed earlier aim to achieve gender justice via collective actions by centring on women's choice and autonomy about their bodies and their lives. However, we have elaborated on how patriarchal structures underpinning religious, cultural, and political institutions violated gender justice, freedom of choice, and access to reproductive health. In Iran, in addition to being forced to wear a hijab and the violation of women's rights to choose, women's contributions to social, economic, and political positions are controlled by the government through discriminatory laws and regulations and structural inequality. While the majority of university graduates are female in Iran, their labour force share is around 19% (Moghadam, 2018). Women who challenge the controls will be labelled deviant as a mechanism to suppress their voices (Sadeghi, 2022). As such, Iranian women are subjected to violence when they raise their voices against gender inequality and oppression. Those patriarchal constraints consistently target women's agency and decision-making in their everyday lives, making gender justice less achievable.

The violation of women's rights can be a serious obstacle to RJ. For example, The Turnaway Study (Foster, 2021) is a US-based prospective longitudinal study examining the effects of unwanted pregnancy on women's lives to describe the mental and physical health, and socioeconomic consequences of receiving an abortion compared to carrying an unwanted pregnancy to term. They found that receiving an abortion does not harm the health and well-being of women, but in fact, being denied an abortion results in worse financial, health and family outcomes for them (Foster, 2021, pp. 21–22). As such, women who were prevented or denied access to an abortion were also more likely to stay with a violent partner and it creates economic hardship and insecurity that lasts for years. The results of the study (Foster, 2021) may be applicable to the lived experience of women internationally.

Thus, both social movements' emphasis on women's control over their bodies demonstrates how upholding a gendered lens and RJ can contribute to ending discrimination against women.

Transnational solidarity

Feminists' solidarity is central to many women-led movements. hooks (2014) highlighted the importance of "sisterhood" in feminist movements as a united front that can sustain the power of solidarity. Women activists from international communities must overcome the "alienation" of differences and acknowledge various oppressive factors that impact women's lives worldwide. Drawn from hooks' (2014) ideas of solidarity, we need to continue to build an international community of practice, shared goals, and an inclusive agenda to build alliances in the international context.

Through international collaboration and the transnational feminist framework, we can develop active solidarity and allyship to support women's movements in different contexts and share our experiences in fighting against gender inequality. So, while there is a risk of polarising debates and backlash, there is considerable support for these feminist movements through public rallies and online activities. We have seen high levels of activism in response to the overturned decision of *Roe v. Wade* in the USA by the international community. Gynecology Centres Australia (2022), a major provider of abortion services across Australia, notes that only with a minority exception, Australians worldwide and at home are appalled by the *Roe v. Wade* overturned ruling by the US Supreme Court. They cite the Human Rights Law Centre (HRLC): "devastating … highlights need for vigilance … abortion is healthcare. Access to abortion is a human right…" (n.p.).

Figure 2: Abortion Placard
Note. Photograph by Kim Robinson (July 2022).

Figure 3: Protest Image: Rojan Afrouz
Note. Rojan Afrouz (Translation: woman, life, freedom, solidarity with Iranian women from Greek Australians, October 2022).

Iranian women's voices have been raised with international support and solidarity, although Iranian activists believe that more could be done to support them and take action against the regime. Importantly, promoting Iranian women's voices from a Global South or a non-Western society could be an opportunity to achieve transnational feminists' goals, through which we can shift our focus from Western, wealthy, and colonial dominance to developing allyship with seldom heard nations and women (Zerbe Enns et al., 2021). As such, developing solidarity needs a deep understanding of the unique features of each movement, as the Iranian women's movement has unique characteristics based on its context of a Muslim-majority country. However, while RJ and women's rights to control their bodies and gender justice are experienced differently within various nations and countries, sharing strategies, and building solidarity can equip the women's movement to be stronger in their fight against gender injustice. To this end, online platforms and social media activism can broadly facilitate sisterhood and solidarity.

Intersectionality

It is also crucial to highlight the intersection of different forms of oppression and discrimination, leading to unique experiences of gender inequality in both movements. The intersections of race, sexual orientation, disability, class, and religion, among women can shape women's different experiences and exacerbate their experiences of oppression (Crenshaw, 1991). As such, Iranian women are diverse given their

different social locations, socioeconomic status, and ethnic backgrounds and therefore experience oppression differently. Specifically, Baloch and Kurdish women's voices and lived experiences were not fully included in the major Persian media platforms outside Iran. At the same time, Kurdistan's major parties are mainly led by men and have not been inclusive to Kurdish women (see Boochani, 2023).

Likewise, women's experiences of RJ reflect the intersectionality of different experiences, as those from lower economic and social status and women from Black and ethnic minorities have limited access to health services and other social support. With the closure of abortion services, these women do not have the resources to travel interstate or abroad to have an abortion. This results in increasing numbers of "backstreet" abortions, including the deaths of women and often long-term injuries (Foster, 2021). While abortion is legal in Australia, the issue of accessibility and availability of abortion services, particularly for First Nations women, has remained an issue (Baird, 2022). Thus, extending access like other countries such as Sweden and Ireland where abortion is widely available at no cost, would mitigate these risks.

The intersectional analysis helps us contemplate a nuanced and inclusive approach to understand and address multiple forms of discrimination against women. The following will present recommendations to include social movements in CSW education to build on progressive, inclusive, and collective practices.

Including activism in CSW education

In this section, we argue that we can incorporate activism into the social work curriculum despite the demands and challenges we discussed within our case studies.

1. Educating for collective action in social work

Community development principles underpin much of social work in macro and meso settings to address structural inequality and gender discrimination, and promoting this in our teaching and learning, and fieldwork education is key. Social work education can utilise expertise and knowledge of previous social work colleagues in promoting collegial practice and research together. Social work has a long history of working in partnership across sectors and with communities, and with other disciplines, so developing strategies that support this practice is key to encouraging new graduates.

Creating a "community of practice" and connecting local practice to social movement strategies (Westoby et al., 2019) are ways of promoting collective action for women-led movements. Encouraging students to be more active in their communities and to focus on concerns key to them, such as gender equality and reproductive injustice, and being part of a larger voice are key to promoting change. Freire argued that critical pedagogy requires praxis, linking classroom activity with actual social movements (cited in Mayo, 1993), and we extend this argument to CSW activism and a focus on the analysis of power. Inviting students to engage in marches that we attend for International Women's Day, LGBTQI+ Pride events, and other movements are central to developing a community of practice. The following are a few examples of promoting activism in our teaching:

- adding and promoting information to digital teaching platforms and sites about events and collective actions;
- photos of SW academics and students together at events;
- creating relevant assessment tasks; for example, writing submissions to Royal Commissions/Briefing papers that advocate/align/and are in partnership with people with lived experience and on specific social issues (both authors use these assessment tasks in our teaching);
- online activism.

Nevertheless, we cannot advocate that activism is risk-free, and it is important to note that there are challenges for women being active, particularly in the online space (Afrouz, 2021). For instance, social media can increase our capacity to communicate, but it has also ushered in greater surveillance and backlash—as Ife (2017, p. 345) noted, "control of activism by the state and by other powerful coercive interests, globally, nationally and locally". Discussing safety and taking steps to protect the identity of activists is also crucial, as we (both authors) share how we maintain our safety in these two movements with students. Choudry (2020, p. 32) noted that all education, and human activity, is political and quoted British feminist educator Jane Thompson who argued, "Social change, liberation ... will be achieved only by collective as distinct to individual responses to oppression" (1983,170). Nevertheless, as educators we acknowledge the diverse views of students towards RJ, including transgender people, and the importance of developing respectful and safe social work practice in the future.

2. Pedagogy of solidarity

Creating a space for advocacy, allyship, and solidarity while looking at global women's movements is an important part of feminist social work. The goal of solidarity in social work education must be with an understanding of allyship and collaboration for social justice, relationships, ethical commitments and reciprocity, and transformative change (Gaztambide-Fernández et al., 2022). Gaztambide-Fernández et al. (2022) contended that our curriculum of solidarity should indicate that we are not alone; rather, our solidarity with people is relational. We can work alongside our social work students in seeking to transform the knowledge of solidarity and centre gender diversity and women based on our own experiences of being active in those movements. This will help social work students understand how to build a bridge between the academy and community and more importantly, that we as educators, should actively "dismantle the neoliberal, individualist, and competitive structures of academia" (Gaztambide-Fernández et al., 2022, p. 259).

3. Critical reflection and analysis

One strategy for teaching CSW is to use critical reflection to explore students' own position within international context of women's rights. Social work has key writers in this space of critical reflection across a range of areas of practice, and centres the need to unpack power, particularly as it relates to broad structural inequality (Béres & Fook, 2019; Mattsson, 2014; Morley & Macfarlane, 2014; Noble et al., 2016). Beddoe (2019, p. 106) argued that the importance of critical analysis is to equip "graduates with well-developed critical lenses to aid their thinking about the discourses of welfare that will impact on so much of their practice". Resistance and backlash are always a part of social change; they can be formal or informal and they can be diverse for all genders (Flood et al., 2021). Supporting students to "speak back to power" on these issues is part of our role as educators particularly in the RJ and women's rights space. As educators, it is central to our work to facilitate this process and support students both on placement and social work courses who confront right-wing, misogynist, and racist views.

4. Addressing neoliberalism

The neoliberal discourse of individual rights and action can play a significant role against collective action, particularly in the women's movement (Flood et al., 2021). Neoliberalism is one of the key challenges in CSW practice, policy, and research (Morley et al., 2019). It promotes individual responsibility over collective responsibility and tends to denigrate people on low incomes or living with disability (Garrett 2018), particularly women of

colour, and especially Indigenous women in Australia and Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand. Neoliberalism favours the exercise of power and freedom to gain profit for self instead of collective actions to achieve universal women's rights (Chen, 2013). Social work students in Australia need to understand the nuances of neoliberalism, and acknowledge the international impact of religious autocracy, totalitarian regimes, and of both dictatorial and unstable government on women.

We need to draw on the examples of others who have gone before us, and to learn the lessons about the gains, while also addressing neoliberalism within social work organisations. Activist critical social workers are listeners, facilitators, allies, and advocates and can promote the voices of grassroots movements through their advocacy and online activism (Morley et al., 2019).

Limitations

We acknowledge that this is a piece of critical reflection, and it is not a scoping review or a systematic review of the literature. In addition, these social movements are very fluid and constantly changing, so what has been written here may change and be different at time of publication.

Conclusion

Activism and engagement with social movements are central to CSW and action for social justice. We provided two case studies of women-led movements, which centre on gender justice, freedom of choice and women's agency to control their bodies. Although the contexts of the two movements differ, we have integrated transnationalism, gender and RJ and intersectionality into our feminist analysis to develop international solidarity, centring gender justice and making the movements inclusive to all women. CSW education can integrate collective action and the pedagogy of solidarity and challenge the neoliberal agenda of social work education and practice that leaves little room for activism and collective effort for change. Social work should maintain its critical legacy and continue allyship with social movements to achieve social justice and social change. To this end, social work education can reflect collective action in social movements and continue to build and develop confidence and skills in social work pedagogy.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank and acknowledge the constructive and critical reviewers' comments that assisted us in reflecting on our work and contributing to this paper.

Received: 17 March 2023.

Accepted: 30 June 2023

Published: 18 December 2023

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