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Contemporary Challenges in Assimilation and Integration: The Continuing Relevance of Jane Addams

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Abstract

In the United States, Jane Addams' work in the settlement houses is taught in social work courses and is considered the foundation of our profession. Her work has inspired community social work ever since. It also reinforces the perspective that foreigners should assimilate, a perspective still strong in our present-day resettlement process with refugees and other forced migrants.

Xxxxxx analysis and findings

This paper reflects on the experiences of social workers working with forced migrants. Different distant host countries are included to provide a context for how social workers internationally are managing forced migration. This study examines how social workers from different countries address the needs and issues involved in resettling forced migrants, and how these differences in approach exemplify the complications involved in resettlement best practices. While the strength of Addams' work prevails, the ethnic-centric view of who deserves help and what kind of help they should receive also prevails. How do we embrace her work while also moving beyond it?

Our assumptions and expectations for new arrivals have changed over the years. What makes sense in our current times? This paper explores the implications of resettlement policies and suggests an alternative approach to assimilation and integration.

Keywords: Resettlement, Migrants, Social Work, Jane Addams, Assimilation

Introduction

The history of social work as a profession in the United States is intertwined with our history of immigration. To understand the United States social work profession's roots is to understand how social work partly rose into a profession during a time of high immigration and great economic disparity in the United States, similar to today's high immigration and economic disparity.

President Trump, elected for his second term in 2025, has set a policy agenda to decrease the undocumented population in the United States and to increase restrictions on entry for certain populations. His policy agenda is also focused on economic and legal benefits for the highest-income citizens. This is an interesting time for us to revisit how our profession worked with immigrants then, at the beginning of our profession, and now 150 years later. This paper looks at social work's role and perspective on immigration as we developed and how that might inform social works role today. Jane Addams is a founding mother of social work in the United States and worked extensively in poor immigrant communities, developing early social work perspectives and interventions. Looking at her work with immigrant communities can help us understand where we began, and suggest ways for us to continue working with immigrant populations.

The literature review begins with a brief history of United States' immigration experience, first as an opportunity for anyone who was willing to make the journey to the country, then later enacted laws to prevent entry of specific populations. The review then looks at Jane Addams. She emerged as an advocate, community organizer, and crusader of core social work values. She was also a social worker who faced many of the prejudices, racism, and xenophobia we have today. It is hoped that revisiting her work and challenges will shed light on how we can best manage today's struggles with immigration, and specifically if our social work job is to help immigrants assimilate, integrate, or co-live in diverse communities; an important question given our current political clashes over immigration rights and services.

Literature

In 1776 Tomas Paine wrote, "Europe, and not England, is the parent country of America. This new world hath been the asylum for the persecuted lovers of civil and religious liberty from every part of Europe,". However, the Naturalization Act of 1790 limited citizenship to white people of 'good character'. That same year, the first US census recorded 3.9 million people, with the majority identifying as Anglo-Saxon Protestants from England. During this time, those who supported open borders felt confident that Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture and values would persevere as new groups arrived [1].

However, by 1849, the demographics of the nation had changed.

German and Irish immigrant communities grew, causing the rise of an anti-immigration party. The party was not against immigration, but against immigration for non-Anglo-Saxon Protestants [1]. Anti-immigration policies focsed on excluding specific groups, as in the exclusion act of 1882 against Chinese immigrants. This marked a profound shift in our nation's view of new arrivals and how we manage immigration.

During the Progressive era (1880-1920) more than 20 million immigrants arrived, mostly from Eastern, Central, and Southern Europe. No longer were Anglo-Saxon Protestants the main identified group of the nation. Catholics, Jews, and to a much smaller extent Buddhism and Hinduism, defined urban areas [2]. Contemporary challenges in assim and integration (think trump).

Jane Addams

During this period, the profession of social work was born in the United States. Jane Addams' work at Hull House is often taught to social work students as the beginning of our history. The word *radical* means *root*. Radical social work addresses root causes of social ills, poverty, and inequality [3]. Radical social work focuses on poverty and inequality when working with forced migrants. Jane Addams, although the term radical social work didn't become prominent until the 1970s, approached her work with immigrants by encouraging them to rise out of poverty and mitigate inequality. Addams addressed poverty and inequality through several programs including literacy programs for English, employment assistance, healthcare, and socializing. Throughout her life, she fought for social justice by standing up to the war and fighting poverty, inequality, and discrimination.

Addams worked and lived within the community she wanted to enhance, implementing change on micro, mezzo, and macro levels [4]. These levels of intervention are now accepted approaches in social work and are reflected in our Ecological Theory [5]. Mary Richmond worked concurrently with Addams and developed her work on casework, focusing on micro and mezzo system levels [16]. These two social work approaches are the basis of community social work (Addams) and direct practice/case management social work (Richmond). While Richmond's legacy has been re-examined through social justice, anti-racist lens, Addams' legacy is often considered to be less overtly classist and racist [6]. However, a closer look at her work within the context of immigration resettlement reveals her limitations due to the context of her time, positionality, and where she thought she could get support for the causes she cared about. Addams' involvement with the eugenics movement, for example, is difficult to acknowledge and understand, especially when many long to have leaders and heroes to look up to. Examining our founders through an anti-racist and social justice lens is important because our foundation built our current perspectives and theoretical underpinnings [7-9].

While Jane Addams' settlement houses were community-based and addressed many of the causes of poverty, they also perpetuated a separation of 'those who were needy' from those who were not. To obtain services, immigrants needed to seek out and attend activities at the settlement house, and conform to that institution's rules and cultural norms, thereby creating a power-over dynamic where those in need seek help from those considered to have resources, citizenship, and exemplary standing in society. This had unintended consequences that were exacerbated by poverty.

Woven into the fabric of poverty and inequality are capitalism and discrimination [10, 11]. This can create a challenge for social workers as some social work roles serve to enable capitalism. When a social worker assists in job placement but doesn't question the discriminatory aspects of the job, or when a social worker develops a discharge plan for an individual leaving the hospital due to asthma but doesn't address the causes of asthma (poor air quality) she may be providing helpful interventions, but she is not focusing on the root causes of the problem. Addams pushed against some of these negative outcomes. She accepted different cultures and cultural knowledge and incorporated these into her settlement houses. She sought to help immigrants thrive through learning English, getting work, accessing healthcare, and acculturation classes [4].

Chapman and Withers [12] warn social workers that we can never be immune to oppressive forms of social work, and that through self-reflection of our profession's history, present, and future we can more authentically strive toward social justice. Jane Addams, while an activist for poor immigrant communities, worked within the social construct of white as normative and the structural oppressions of capitalism [12]. She also operated at a time when social work was fighting to be considered a profession [13]. Influenced by the nascent American Medical Association (AMA) and a growing infatuation with the 'scientific method', social work sought to prove its value by touting interventions and the ability to diagnose [14]. Parallel to these social forces was the growing development of public health policies. During this period, sanitation was hailed as a great advance against illness and disease [15]. Public health officials tried to identify and find unsanitary conditions [16]. This contributed to a fear of others who were perceived to be filthy and spreaders of disease. Public health measures relied on the separation of those living in squalid conditions. When that approach was inadequate to keep wealthier groups healthy, social conditions which led to unsanitary situations gained attention [17]. The AMA tried to convince people to see medical doctors instead of community healers by stating that they provided sanitized methods of care while community healers in immigrant communities were categorized as dirty and spreaders of disease [18]. The eugenics movement tapped into this fear and lobbied for population control among groups deemed undesirable to society [19].

Addams witnessed illness and the spread of disease, as well as the devastating effect of poverty on children, mothers, and families [12]. As seen within the Temperance movement, social workers supported short-sighted policies seeking larger-scale societal change that would decrease current social ills. For example, many in the Temperance movement were motivated to limit the abuse of alcohol as a way of protecting women from domestic violence. Women did not have the right to vote, to own property, the means to limit pregnancy, or the ability to financially support their children. Stopping their husbands from 'drinking their paycheck' became a means of protecting women [18]. Similarly, Addams and others who fought for reforms aligned themselves with the eugenics movement and social control actions, such as the institutionalization of those perceived to be unfit for society [12, 18].

It is important to understand the social forces at play at each juncture of our profession. These social forces shape our understanding of our times. What we believe to be the problem informs our belief in the solution. When immigration populations shifted toward fewer Anglo-Saxon countries of origin, immigrants were seen as the problem, and anti-immigrant policies became the solution. When illness is the concern, isolating potential carriers of the disease becomes the solution. Racists beliefs escalate discrimination and target groups that have been associated with the conditions, instead of the social and environmental causes of unsanitary conditions [20]. There is a danger in developing policies as a reaction to a social condition. As seen then, as now, we are likely to create near-sighted assessments and solutions which ignore societal forces and biases, deepening divides and inequality that can last for generations to come. Assimilation of immigrants from non-Anglo-Saxon Protestant countries meant indoctrinating others to look, speak, and act within recognizable dominant norms. Learning English, striving toward the middle class, integrating into the larger community were all methods of assimilation promoted by Addams. As seen then, as now, we are likely to create near-sighted assessments and solutions which ignore

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Background

Today, people immigrate to the United States for the same reasons as at other times in our nation's history. For this paper, forced migration will be used to describe groups who feel forced out of their home countries due to civil unrest, economic struggles, violence, personal persecution, and climate changes. This contrasts to immigration by groups who have chosen to relocate and have the resources to freely live in either country but choose to live in the United States. This paper examines current social work practices in working with forced migrants and uses a radical social work perspective to assess if these practices address the causes of forced migration and the hardships in resettlement.

Assimilation and Integration

Assimilation has been criticized for its "whitewashing" the culture and identity of immigrating groups [21]. Integration is a term used most recently [22]. Integration implies a mixture of cultures that co-exist separately but enhancing of each other [23]. The exact operational definition of integration varies per country and worker [24]. This is problematic as the stated goal of resettlement for many agencies that work with forced migrants is integration [25]. Without clear distinctions between assimilation and integration, social workers develop their own understanding of the difference, and that understanding of what constitutes integration shapes the interventions that are prioritized.

Assimilation

A concern of many developing nations then, as well as now, is losing their national identity [16]. Assimilation has been an approach used by nations to welcome immigrants while preserving the nation's identity. How does one define a nation's identity? In the United States, is it speaking English? Knowing the US constitution? Being Protestant? Have certain hues of skin color?

Nations vary in what makes a nation's identity [16]. Many nations require a command of the nation's primary language. Some require an acceptance of the nation's stated values, the ability to earn an income, and other tests to demonstrate their desire to adopt the traditions and ways of being of the country [26]. One can imagine that at a time when a nation struggles to form, assimilation must have felt necessary to guard against the threat to its formation. In our current time, in nations that are securely formed, is assimilation necessary? Was it ever necessary? We have seen the negative aspects of expecting assimilation. It can create an atmosphere of mistrust, exclusions to institutions and resources, repression of others' cultural values, and discriminatory actions [26-29]. As nations become more comfortable with being diverse, assimilation may no longer be the goal.

Integration

Integration, at times, is used synonymously with assimilation, but more often as a more enlightened view of immigration. It, therefore, implies that integration considers the culture of the migrant as well as the host country [30]. However, integration doesn't have one conceptual meaning when it refers to immigration [31]. Studies have sought to measure and evaluate migrant integration, assess policies and their impact on integration, and critique its ethnocentric position [27-30, 32-34]. Embedded in the concept of integration is the concept of society. Immigration integration connotes the host country welcoming the new arrivals with the expectation that the new arrivals will adopt the core values of the host country [35-37]. If we are to examine immigration integration through a radical social work perspective, then we must also define the society. In this example, society refers to the host country that welcomes the immigrant. Therefore, integration into society reflects the perspective of the host country, placing the immigrant as an outsider, the one in need, the one required to meet specific criteria to be allowed in, and the one without power. Our global society may one day reveal solutions that allow citizens of the world to move freely among nations with less discrimination and chauvinism.

Methods

In the following section, the voices of social workers who have worked with forced migrants reflect on their work, their struggle to define integration, and their perspective on the needs of forced migrants. From 2011 to 2019 the principal investigator (PI) conducted qualitative interviews with social workers, administrators, policymakers, educators, and forced migrants. The overall focus of the studies has been on "what is a culturally effective health and behavioral health interventions when working with forced migrants?"

The quoted material in this section is from studies conducted in the following countries, Germany, Iceland, Switzerland, and the United States. Institutional Review Board approval was obtained before the start of the studies. The results and discussion of the data from these studies have been presented previously in peer-reviewed published articles. For this article, the quotes serve to flesh out the lived experiences of those who are grappling with assimilation, integration, and resettlement.

Findings

Germany, Iceland, Switzerland, and the United States have had different responses to refugees and forced migrants. Their narratives suggest the many elements that inform a social worker's expectations in working with forced migrants. Each of these countries is considered part of the global north. The global north is a conceptual term that groups wealthy nations together, distinguishing them from the global south countries that are considered less wealthy and often share a history of colonization by the global north [38]. Even though the helpfulness of these terms is limited, it does highlight geopolitical and economic inequality among the countries. Each of the countries in this study is geographically removed from the home countries of the forced migrants they receive. By being far removed from the borders of the originating countries, these countries have a certain amount of choice in the number of forced migrants they receive. This contrasts with countries that neighbor originating countries. Neighboring countries are often the default destination for those fleeing and receive considerably more forced migrants. This creates an imbalance in which countries are expected to carry the costs and responsibility for resettling the migrants. Often these neighboring countries share similar economic struggles as the originating countries, making resettlement even more challenging. While the culture and language of neighboring countries may be similar to the forced migrant, there may also be historical conflicts that affect the safety and acceptance of the migrants.

At the beginning of Syria's civil war, there was wide news coverage on the exodus of millions of Syrians. Most Syrians who fled their homeland for safety arrived in neighboring countries. Others made long and dangerous journeys to Europe. Germany was one of the first countries to openly welcome the forced migrants from Syria. The study participants from Germany theorized why Germany was more responsive than many other European countries. As one participant explained, "It's guilt. I don't think we can ever do enough internationally to be forgiven for Hitler."

Germany has become a major country on the world stage. A German social worker in his 60's reflected, "We all wear this cloak of shame about our past. We teach our children in school about what happened. It is really difficult to raise our children with pride for our country."

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Interestingly, the younger German social workers interviewed identified more as global citizens than Germans. This identity influenced their work with forced migrants.

> I see us all as residents on this planet. With the EU (European Union) it's like we don't have borders. I think that is good. I think it makes Germans feel less scared about people resettling here. Like, I don't see this as my country but as a region where I live. If people want to move here, that is fine (German social worker in her 30's).

Germany accepted over one million refugees [39], many times more than did other global north countries. However, as time passed and the refugee crisis was not improving, some Germans felt threatened, worried that the refugees would take jobs, cause public health problems, and increase crime. "You see that old fear come back up for Germans. We have felt persecuted for hundreds of years, that other countries were to blame for our economy. That ugly side is still in us. 'Who next is going to take our country from us?' That's when you see the protests that you have now. To be German means living with both sides, the scared victim and the perpetrator who is trying to redeem."

Germany's welcome of forced migrants at first seems based on national ethics. As time passed and migrant families moved into communities, community members perceived the new arrivals as 'the other' and the cause of whatever economic, social, or political tension was occurring at the time. "When they first arrive, I like many others, felt a certain pride in being able to care for them. But then suddenly it was like they became scapegoats. People started to blame them for their problems." (German social worker, female). Another social worker described the national change in tone,

> It was weird. They didn't look any different from other Germans. We are a very international country. We have people from all over living here. But after they arrived, maybe a year later, anyone who looked Syrian suddenly became a target…pointing to them like they caused our recession. It wasn't them. But they were so much easier to blame than the banks." (German social worker, male).

Social Workers in Germany responded to the ethical call for social justice in advocating for the reception of a million forced migrants. Once the migrants moved into communities, social workers found them housing and healthcare. As social workers, they were in the communities working with the migrant families while also supporting long-term residents who sought help from the social workers. The worker was placed at the intersection of providing services and resources for the new arrivals while addressing the residents' fear that there were not enough resources to go around. This is a familiar intersection for social workers internationally; they are expected to address the needs of an individual, family, or group while also determining who is deserving of the limited resources that the government provides. The values and ethics of our profession motivate us to help, but the hierarchical capitalistic structure of our social and economic systems turn our work into an accounting system of who has earned the right to receive those resources. We become the parser of benefits that are too meager to help an individual thrive. We are placed so often in this role that some workers feel as if the person in need in front of them is asking for money out of the worker's pocket. As one social worker from the United States stated,

> I see my co-workers. They roll their eyes when a family comes in asking for more financial assistance. Then they ask the family all these questions to prove they need this. I swear, if you didn't know that one was a social worker, you would think it was a stranger asking another for money for their wallet.

This is the outcome of placing social workers as the gatekeeper of social service assistance. When social workers are expected to meet the needs of a group without having the resources to do so, we are forced to rely on ethnocentric criteria to control and manage those resources. We then become agents of social control rather than agents of social change. Instead of seeking societal structural changes that address the explicit inequity, social workers become conveyors of social control. The services we provide then reflect the norms and expectations of the larger society and government. Jane Addams' work helped define social work's role that valued and preserved the norms. Instead of examining the causes of displaced persons, we are busied with scrapping together leftover resources that will never be enough to support those we struggle to help. In this role, we assess everyone for their worthiness in getting the scraps and justify why so little is done for those with so much need. Social change is disruptive; assimilating forced migrants is more tangible and seemingly less disruptive: enroll the children in schools, expect everyone to speak the dominant language of the country, provide services that encourage mainstream values through entering the workforce, adopting cultural values of the host country, by presenting as 'less foreign' in how they dress, worship, and socialize. As one social worker from Switzerland stated, "We love foreigners. We love foreign food restaurants. But when you are out walking around with a veil covering your face or want to build a mosque in our town, then we don't like it."

National identity and language are commonly associated with each other. Learning the host country's language was a shared value among each of the participants. But does it need to be an assumed attribute to national identity? If nations supported multi-lingual citizenry, would we place learning the host's language as a funding and policy priority? There were a few participants that challenged this value as one worker from Germany stated,

> There aren't too many places that speak German. I don't see why we should expect immigrants to learn it. They can get by with Arabic. I'm not saying Arabic is spoken generally, but I think they can find other Arabic-speaking people and have a fine life here."

One worker in the United States said,

> You know, you can go to Minnesota and find people who are fluent in a Nordic language because their family came from there. In Texas, you are going to find Spanish-speaking people because their family was from Mexico. No one said English was our national language. It just happens to be now. In 50 years, will English be the only main language spoken?

Learning the host language is an expectation that resettlement agencies have. It is often included in the elements of integration. In each of the examined countries, the meaning of integration appeared similarly, a limited concept of multiculturalism that could be seamlessly folded into the dominant society while also not changing the look or feel of the country. When this is the standard for integration, then the worker is unable to perceive their role in preserving the values and structures that cause the very suffering they seek to relieve.

Integration is seen as the solution to the problem of immigration. Yet, integration is a difficult concept to define in behavioral terms. Dominant culture can appear invisible to those within the culture [40]. Values and norms seem like static truths when they are the only ones we see. When asked, participants in this study struggled to find what made them Germain, Swiss, Icelandic, or American. Some stated it was their language, the food, the national religion, a shared history, or as one Icelandic social worker pondered, "Our sweaters?". Definitions of who is foreign and who is a legitimate resident are concepts embedded in the meaning of integration [41]. When sameness is a criterion for national identity and expected for integration, then we have not only created insurmountable barriers for those who are not the same, we have also reinforced the invisibility of our national values, perceived cultural superiority, and our expectations for outsiders.

In Iceland, the workers gathered furniture and household items. They took time to set up homes for the arriving refugee families.

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They hung pictures on the walls and provided dining room tables, couches, and beds. The workers understood that the families would be tired and perhaps scared. They wanted to greet the families and show them their new homes. Within a few months, the workers noticed dining room tables were either removed from the home or used as desks and countertops. Where the table had been, the families laid a spread and sat on the floor to share meals. At first, some social workers felt hurt because it seemed the families were rejecting the workers' efforts. As time passed and they became closer to the families, they understood that they had made ethnocentric assumptions. Eventually, the social workers made changes to their program. When the next families arrived, they were given a voucher to pick out their furniture. This scenario is touching because of the care and empathy it demonstrates. It is also an example of the invisibility of ethnocentricity. Like Jane Addams' work, being flexible in their plans and pragmatic in their approach, they were better prepared to acknowledge and accept cultural differences with future immigrant families.

In Switzerland, the workers described integration as a major goal. Their approach differed from the other countries. They tried to place immigrants in communities that were primarily Swiss. "We place them places where they have to learn the language. We don't place them in, say, immigrant neighborhoods, and especially not the same neighborhoods." The participants from Switzerland described their priority on language acquisition and full employment. "We are a wealthy nation. Most of our workforce is well-educated. I feel we expect our new families to adapt to this. We expect them to work soon" (Switzerland, social worker).

The United States, Germany, and Iceland also expected employment within one year of arriving. The meaning of work varied. Some participants had worked with forced migrants and witnessed them struggling to find work. "I didn't expect so many of them would be professionals with advanced skills. They were self-made people who had degrees. But when they came here, we couldn't take their degrees. Many of them had a hard time doing warehouse work" (the United States Social Worker). One worker from Iceland described a man she was working with.

> I knew he had skills and had a good job before the war. But I thought he could start in the warehouse and then see if he could take courses to get a better job. I never thought about the physical trauma he went through to get here. He was beaten and other stuff. He couldn't stand for more than an hour. He couldn't lift anything."

This is also an example of near-sighted interventions for larger social and global problems. The forced migrant does need to find work because their resettlement aid will end, usually after the first year has passed. But a job is more than a paycheck. It is an identity for some, security, a resource. For the worker, employing this man in a sector that needs workers makes sense and solves two problems, 1) getting him aid, and 2) helping the industry get workers. It does not, however, solve why the man had to flee Syria, how he is going to heal the emotional and physical wounds of him being displaced from his culture and homeland, how he will keep his culture in the new land, and how he will redefine who he is. Immediate remedy for the presenting problem doesn't solve the civil unrest that caused the war, the nations involved in destabilizing Syria, the patriarchal ideals that tied his job status to his social and familial status. These are the bandages social workers put over people wounded by classism, racism, sexism, ableism.

A participant from Switzerland said, "I think we have less tension here because we aren't expecting multi-culturalism here and we have money. So, if you can't fit yourself into our country, then we will buy our solution, like getting them housing" (Switzerland, Social Worker).

Germany's perspective of the resettlement of forced migrants is filtered through their identity on the world stage and their history. Switzerland's perspective is filtered through a relative isolationist lens. Iceland is a homogenized country that is slowly showing signs of heterogeneity. Their resettlement practices reflect this perspective. In the United States, immigration has had a complicated history, marked by great waves of immigration from which the non-indigenous society was built. It is also marked with strong anti-immigration laws and restrictions. In the 1800s, immigration was welcomed. Those in the United States believed the culture and values of Anglo-Saxon Protestants would be so prevalent and enticing, that new immigrants would assimilate. By the turn of the next century, immigrants from Italy, Greece, Ireland changed the demographics enough for mainstream America to feel threatened by further immigration. Since then, immigration policies have sought to limit new arrivals and control which groups were allowed to reside in the United States. This history shaped the US's perspective on immigration and its expectations of integration. The US was unable to eliminate immigration by all non-Anglo-Saxon Protestants. Over time, separate immigrant groups formed. Neighborhoods in large cities became 'little Italy', 'China town', 'Black' neighborhoods. Towns that were once synonymous with an immigrant group have changed as established groups move toward suburban towns and new groups arrive. A section of Boston that was once home to a strong Irish community, became a strong Polish community and is now a strong Spanish-speaking community.

Conclusion

The definitions of assimilation and integration vary among workers serving forced migrants. Nations differ on their expectations and how they operationalize these concepts. The internet has made us more interconnected with larger communities than our physical neighborhoods. It has made sending long-distance messages to others instantaneous. Families forced to flee their homeland can remain in daily contact with family members spread out throughout the globe. National boundaries are extended as commerce, collaborations, and relationships are not bound by physical restraints. Historically, when a family sought safety through migration, they were far from the family and country they left. Starting a new life in the new country meant losing contact with family in the country of origin. If a forced migrant wanted social support, they needed to reach out to other migrants who spoke the same language and had similar cultural backgrounds, or they needed to learn the predominant language and make new friends. Today, forced migrants can see their relatives every day through social media sites [42]. As one worker described it,

> Every time I do a home visit, the family is passing a phone around the room. They are talking to their friends and families. They get to speak their native tongue. I thought they would be making new friends here, but they don't. They don't need to. A client told me that it was like nothing was different like they were back home chatting with family.

Assimilation or integration are methods of managing the impact and needs of the forced migrants and the host country. Assimilation encourages new arrivals to subsume the dominant culture. As an isolated forced migrant, fitting in might feel like a requirement to remain in the new country.

Addams

Jane Addams broke away from many of the roles and expectations of her time and her identity as a middle-class woman. Her community work for social justice remains a model and inspiration. However, just as we do not notice the air we breathe because it is all around us, Addams could not see the cultural and class bias she held and perpetuated in her settlement house. Jane Addams provided many valuable services and challenged anti-immigrant sentiment. She also worked with the Eugenics movement and encouraged public health

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laws to institutionalized those deemed a threat to society: the sick, the mentally ill. Addams sought immediate remedies for problems enveloped within structural oppression. Such remedies cannot solve society-level problems.

While Addams' Hull House was a community-based intervention to address the needs of new arrivals, it also perpetuated capitalistic and middle-class values. Addams demonstrated a deep respect for the immigrant groups she worked with. She extolled that the residents were close-knit and eager to help others. However, Addams also saw assimilation as an effective method to help immigrant families thrive. Assimilation became a way to welcome immigrant groups while also maintaining the culture and values of what the ruling class held as 'civilized' [12].

There are many ways that social work services encourage migrants to "fit in". Whereas in the late 1800s there were clubs and groups to teach migrants how to be American, today the pressure is more insidious. Here in the United States, mainstream entertainment, broadcast shows, and films are by and large ethnocentric. Information pertinent to all residents is rarely translated into languages other than English. In many countries, clothing and headdress can provoke scorn. Policies to encourage assimilation to ban certain clothing, determine where temples and mosques can be built and what work experience is transferable to the host country. Societal expectations are embedded in school curricula, requirements for state and federal aid, and language fluency requirements.

Integration implies the ability to maintain one's cultural identity while becoming acclimated to the dominant culture. In practice, the difference between assimilation and integration is unclear. A social worker in a country with a national religion said "Integration sounds good. But do I want a big Mosque in my town?" Another worker when asked about integration said, "Truthfully? I think we assume that everyone will think our country and culture is the best and become more like us."

Implications

One does not practice social work without our professional past influencing us. Social Workers are both advocates for others and products of our history. Jane Addams used a strength perspective nearly 100 years before the perspective was named. When she saw a group of migrants, she saw the beauty of their culture and the care they showed others. And, when she envisioned a future for them, it looked closer to the life she knew.

Today, we are living in a time like Addams'. There is devastating economic inequality. The United States is now more diverse than at any other time. Global corporations, the internet, more accessible travel, and climate change have all contributed to the concept of the global citizen. The focus of this concept is that we are individuals before we are citizens of a specific country.

It underscores what globalization is showing us, that we are more connected to each other than we realized. It is unlikely that our recent pandemic will transform our nationalism into a world with soft borders and global citizenship. While the coronavirus exposed our illusion of geographic borders, it might encourage us to rethink what defines one's national identity. And, how we define our national identity, determines what assimilation or integration looks like/sounds like/feels like. And the characteristics of assimilation or integration become the requirements to receive aid and eventually citizenship. For example, in the United States, immigrants are expected to be able to read, write, and speak English before they can become citizens. Aid given is brief and with the expectation that the person will work and be self-sufficient. The curricula in the schools the children attend to focus on national and regional history.

Jane Addams saw in the groups she worked with, the strength and value of each culture she was exposed to. She challenged Anglo-Saxon Protestants' fear of others and developed the building blocks of our current profession. However, she was a person of her time and culture and not immune to near-sightedness. She too saw the adoption of middle-class values as a path towards integration. Like Addams, present-day social work practice with immigrants assumes their country's values and the class structure of their systems as the norm. We imagine the solution to problems only as far as we can understand the problem. If much of the problem is hidden beneath what we consider to be the norm, the solutions we imagine can't address the roots of the problem.

For our profession to progress further than our history, we must be critical of even our foremothers. We must reflect on our founding assumptions, examine the inherent biases, and question social work practices so that we as a profession advance our skills, knowledge, and abilities. Jane Addams broke away from many of the roles and expectations of her time and her identity as a middle-class woman. Her community work for social justice remains a model and inspiration. However, just as we do not notice the air we breathe because it is all around us, Addams could not see the cultural and class bias she held and perpetuated in her settlement house.

Our world is constantly changing and becoming more diverse as technology brings people together from around the world. We as a world and as a nation are not where we were in Jane Addams' time. Our understanding of social problems has deepened; race is a social construct used to justify oppressive policies; we must re-evaluate what it means to be a citizen or an immigrant. We must re-examine immigration policies and the meaning of borders in our global age. We need to develop new concepts that better reflect our evolution and our current time. We are at a profound time in our discipline because current social movements demand all of us to re-examine history and identify oppressive elements that perpetuate present-day discrimination.

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