

Educating the Next Generation of Human Rights Advocates and Defenders: An Interprofessional Partnership

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***Abstract:** Defending human rights requires professionals to be unrelenting in the pursuit of systemic change. It requires the collaboration of varied professions bringing together their expertise to challenge the system of domination that has led to subjugation. Interprofessional education and collaborative practice (IPE) is a powerful tool where human rights defenders and advocates from different disciplines can learn from each other and advocate for change. This is an overview of an innovative collaboration between Robert F. Kennedy (RFK) Human Rights and Stony Brook University School of Social Welfare (SBUSSW) BSW Program. It will illustrate the way the RFK Human Rights' human rights education program, *Speak Truth To Power (STTP)* is being adapted to baccalaureate social work education. Included is the method that the SBUSSW incorporates the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) and Interprofessional Education Collaborative (IPEC) competencies in a human rights context through the partnership with RFK Human Rights.*

***Keywords:** Human Rights, social work education, interprofessional partnership, social work & law, rights-based practice*

Social Work and Human Rights

Recent sociopolitical changes have made it an imperative for social workers to advocate for human rights and advance a human rights agenda as a core competency of U.S. social work education. The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE; 2015) requires that social work students achieve competence in Advancing Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice. Human rights have become a significant part of the social work mission as social work broadens its reach in a cross-national perspective (McPherson & Abell, 2012). To address the need for educating future practitioners to contribute to a human rights agenda, there are concerted efforts to formalize the incorporation of human rights approaches into social work education (Allensworth Hawkins & Knox, 2014; Healy & Wairier, 2014).

The “three generations” or “waves” of human rights practice provide context for addressing social issues. Civil rights have been identified as the first wave, economic, social, and cultural rights, social justice and freedom in the second wave, and collective rights for positive development and a universal stand against oppression in the third (Ife, 2012; Lombard & Twikirize, 2014). While the profession of social work has addressed all three generations of human rights, the second-generation rights of special populations have

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received particular attention by practitioners. However, it is concerted efforts of the third-generation of rights, namely opposing universal oppression, building positive social and economic systems, and fostering healthy environments that social workers should engage in that may yield the most noticeable results for creating sustainable change. “Social Work can become a significant role player in promoting social and economic equality through its commitment to social justice and human rights” (Lombard & Twikirize, 2014, p. 313). Supporting the universality of the third-generation human rights is a particular imperative for our interconnected global society.

The history of human rights parallels social work’s efforts to promote social justice within a human rights context. In the 1994 United Nations document, *Human Rights and Social Work*, the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) acknowledged that from “inception social work has been a human rights profession” (UN Centre for Human Rights, International Federation of Social Workers & International Association of Schools of Social Work, 1994, p. 13). The relationship between social work and human rights can be seen in two ways: with social workers joining broader human rights campaigns, as well as their achieving human rights through social work practice (Ife, 2016).

There exists a strong connection between fighting for human rights and social justice (Burke, 2017; Grant & Gibson, 2013; Reichert, 2003, 2011). According to the Social Work Dictionary, social justice is “an ideal condition in which all members of a society have the same rights, protections, opportunities, obligations, and social benefits...” (Barker, 2014, p. 398), while Healy (2008) recognizes that “At the most basic level, human rights are those rights that belong to all just because we are human” (p. 736). As we strive to strengthen human rights, social work’s focus must integrate proactive responses while simultaneously addressing active violations. Addressing social justice, as a subcategory of human rights, requires varied skills that necessitate interprofessional collaboration. Social workers and human rights defenders lead allied lives, both working for equality, and against oppression.

Social Workers and Lawyers Coming Together as Human Rights Defenders

Current violations of human rights, occurring on both the domestic and global fronts and associated with tumultuous political climates, have underscored the importance for social workers to work interprofessionally against these abuses. The treatment of migrant and immigrant, LGBTQ+, and indigenous populations among others, ignite a need to unite the various professions, such as law and social work, in order to stand against the myriad of injustices prevalent today. Social workers alongside other professionals must remain vigilant, advocating for change in the face of human rights violations, never losing sight of the international abuses, reinforcing the need for collaborative, and transformational change. For this reason, it is an opportune time to further the discussion of the importance of professional collaboration to address human rights violations and to change how we educate social work students.

The World Health Organization (WHO; 2010) defines interprofessional education (IPE) as the process in which varied professions “learn about, from and with each other” and work collaboratively to “deliver the highest quality of care across settings” (p. 13). The WHO (2010) documented that IPE can be a powerful tool to help rectify the challenges of

the healthcare system, reducing costs and improving patient satisfaction and outcomes. CSWE became an institutional member of the Interprofessional Education Collaborative (IPEC) in 2016, committing to teaching social work students about the importance of collaboration to increase positive results in health care (CSWE, 2016). IPE between social workers and health care providers has been well documented (Blacker et al.; 2016; Charles et al., 2011; de Saxe Zerden et al., 2018; Jones & Phillips, 2016). This article is a call to further the scholarship of interprofessional education and practice between social work and law.

There are substantial opportunities for social workers to enact their commitment to the profession's core values and competencies alongside other advocates, such as lawyers. This becomes essential in the current political climate. The Trump Administration's withdrawal from the UN Human Rights Council demonstrates continued lack of commitment and leadership around human rights promotion of the U.S. government (Mapp & Gatenio Gabel, 2019). The Administration's policies are clear violations of human rights, namely in the areas of immigration, healthcare, and the criminal justice system, which are discussed in detail in the next sections. These examples are used as an inspirational call to action for social workers alongside lawyers to fill the gap where the government has fallen short. It is an appeal for a coalition of professionals to be human rights advocates and defenders.

Immigration

Current U.S. immigration policies have led to practices resulting in a humanitarian crisis and evident violations of human rights. The practices demonstrated in the detention facilities on the US-Mexico border illustrate this:

According to the AP [Associated Press], there's not adequate food, water or sanitation inside. The report describes teen mothers and other younger kids being asked to care for infants and toddlers on their own, with little or no help from any adults.... Short-term holding facilities were not designed to hold vulnerable populations and we urgently need additional humanitarian funding to manage this crisis. (Public Broadcasting Service, *Newshour*, 2019, transcript para. 3)

Article I of the Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees puts forth the rights of individuals who are fleeing their country "owing to [well-founded] fear of persecution" (UN General Assembly, 1951). The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) delineates the special conditions under which children, as a protected class, should be treated (UN General Assembly, 1989). The Protocol and the CRC both can be used as tools for social workers who denounce harmful immigration practices, such as separating children from their caregivers. The School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA) has done so in their 2019 statement, *School Social Workers Stand Up for Migrant Children's Human Rights: A Call to Action*. The SSWAA quoted the CRC noting, "UNCRC states that migrant children should receive "appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance" (Villarreal Sosa et al., 2019, p. 2). In the Call to Action, school social workers are urged to use materials from the National Immigration Law Center to help students and communities know their rights, ensuring that immigrants know what to

do if there is an encounter with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (Villarreal Sosa et al., 2019). The SSWAA encouraged school social workers to work with lawyers and organizations to defend immigrant human rights and lobby for American Dream and Promise Act (H.R. 6), Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA), and Temporary Protected Status (TPS; Villarreal Sosa et al., 2019).

All social workers have been called upon to denounce recent immigration policy with the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) stating, “NASW encourages social workers to regularly contact their lawmakers to express their concerns about harmful and unjust immigration policies and to provide the much-needed social work perspective in state- and local-level immigrant advocacy coalitions and related justice efforts” (NASW, 2019, para. 4). IPEC’s (2016) second competency, Roles and Responsibilities, underscores the importance of understanding the roles and responsibilities of each profession to increase positive outcomes of individuals and larger populations. In the case of social work and immigration law fulfilling IPEC’s second competency, social workers should understand the role and responsibilities of lawyers to provide legal advice and representation at court proceedings to immigrants. Conversely, lawyers need to understand the social worker’s role and responsibilities to advocate for immigrant rights and attend to and support access and fulfillment of these rights. Achievement of IPEC’s sub-competencies could be accomplished by working collaboratively on a project, such as immigration reform, with deliberate team meetings that set, distinguish, and communicate the boundaries and responsibilities of each of the professions involved in the effort. In this instance, the NASW suggested working closely with law and policy agencies, such as the Center for Law and Social Policy and National Immigration Law Center, and “helping individuals and families understand or access resources that explain their legal options and when to speak with an attorney” (NASW, 2019, para. 10).

Healthcare

The United States continues to be reluctant in providing universal health care. The 2010 passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), although progress towards offering access to medical care, continues to sustain a health insurance system rather than a health care system (Gerisch, 2018). The decision about health care as a universal right remains on the forefront of policy debate, as the number of uninsured has begun to increase. According to Tolbert et al. (2019), “The number of uninsured nonelderly Americans decreased from over 46.5 million in 2010 (the year the ACA was enacted) to just below 27 million in 2016” (p.1). However, between 2017 and 2018, the number of uninsured people increased by nearly 500,000 people (Tolbert et al., 2019).

Conceptualizing healthcare as a privilege instead of a right justifies the capitalistic response that values profit above human well-being. The Trump Administration’s objective to completely dismantle the ACA advances a neoliberal agenda and conservative ideology that benefits the top quintile of the U.S. population at the detriment of the bottom quintile. The disenfranchised are most affected as the absence of health care or the ability to pay for it literally costs them their lives. COVID-19 has brought this structural inequality to the forefront. Marginalized communities, historically segregated by income and race,

are suffering from higher mortality rates during the pandemic (Artiga et al., 2020; Human Rights Watch, 2020).

Social workers and students alike share the profession's core values and essential role in challenging the modus operandi of the country's approach to providing medical services based on a system of insurance and pharmaceutical company profit. Social workers are essential in challenging prevailing hegemony and questioning the status quo of corporate profit over human rights, using human rights and treaties as the basis of a campaign (DeLuca-Acconi, 2017). For example, advocates must challenge the status quo of denying medical insurance by companies to the poorest Americans due to their inability to pay, citing Article 25 of the United Nations (UN, 1948), *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)* that does not place conditions on access to health care and identifies it as a human right.

IPEC's (2016) competency three stresses the importance of interprofessional communication, supporting a team approach to the promotion of health and the prevention of disease. In this case, social workers would benefit from communicating with lawyers working toward the human right of healthcare so they both use human rights treaties and conventions as the basis of their campaign. Lawyers would benefit from recognizing social work's person-in-environment perspective and unique active listening and communication skills in their effort to defend healthcare as a human right. Subcompetency CC4 addresses the importance of listening and encouraging "the ideas of other team members" (IPEC, 2016, p. 13) while CC6 addresses the need for respectful language when dealing with conflict; all are skills that coincide with social work training and values. Social workers can work with agencies, such as the National Health Law Program, that "advocate, educate and litigate at the federal and state levels to advance health and civil rights in the U.S." (National Health Law Program, n.d., para.1). Strong communication between social work and law can advance the movement for health care as a human right, ensuring that both professions use a human rights frame when they are approaching policy change.

Criminal Justice System

The United Nations' Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UN General Assembly, 1984) was ratified to support rights deriving from the inherent dignity and worth of a person. This is the same language referenced in the *NASW Code of Ethics* (2017). The human rights language in the Convention mirrors that of social work in working to eradicate inhumane practices such as solitary confinement, which was previously referenced as psychological torture (McConaughy, 2012). Social Workers Against Solitary Confinement (SWASC), a coalition led by social workers and concerned allies, and the Vera Institute of Justice, who launched the Segregation Reduction Project, are examples of contemporary efforts of collaborations of social workers and lawyers who work to abolish or minimize solitary confinement. These efforts have led to a planned scholarship with the CSWE to teach about inhumane prison practices, which is to be introduced in social work education (SWASC, 2019). In January 2015, President Obama called for a Department of Justice investigation into the practice citing psychological harm. With the continued partnership with the law profession, several states have followed suit with statutes minimizing its use, as well as the

eradication of the practice for 16- and 17-year-olds (Garcia et al., 2016). Speaking to the need for continued interprofessional partnership between social workers and the legal profession from a human rights framework, efforts have also continued to address harsh criminal sentencing that results in disproportionate numbers of persons of color held under bail or disparately sentenced. Those working in an interprofessional model, are not “restricted to his or her traditional discipline but is woven together and enhanced by the other” (Jones & Phillips, 2016, p. 19).

Immigration, healthcare and criminal justice policy are substantive areas that a human rights framework within an interprofessional partnership can make the work of social workers more effective. Working with a coalition of human rights advocates is what is needed to challenge intractable problems and lead to lasting change (DeLuca-Acconi, 2017).

Interprofessional Education and Practice of Social Work and Law

Effective interprofessional practice (IPP) is predicated on effective interprofessional education (IPE). The social work and legal professions have benefited from the collaboration in both practice and education (Aiken & Wizner, 2003; Critelli et al., 2017; Madden & Wayne, 2003; Rand, 2018). This collaboration maximizes therapeutic results while maintaining due process and justice values. An interprofessional partnership provides each future professional valuable insight on how to effect change; for social workers, the legal system, and for lawyers, the implications of empowerment, self-determination, and the strengths perspective on client outcomes. Zajac (2011) cited “that social workers are ‘sensitized to identify at-risk issues’ and ‘address them upstream,’ providing an integrated delivery model that provides education and empowerment to liberate clients from poverty” (p. 8). IPEC (2016) competency four, Teams and Teamwork, highlights the need for interprofessional teams to work together to solve problems. As social work and law each has a commitment to eradicate human rights violations, they have a shared vision that can be realized by incorporating their respective knowledge and skills, such as engaging in policy advocacy that addresses implicit bias and institutional oppression that contributes to police brutality. It is essential to bring together respective professions to work effectively as a team to plan, deliver and evaluate how human rights are protected and promoted. IPEC’s (2016) Teams and Teamwork competency, sub competency TT10, discusses the need to use “available evidence to inform effective teamwork and team-based practices” (p.14). For example, when collaborating on a team that is working against a human rights violation, such as police brutality, lawyers and social workers should be sure to recognize their process of group development, specifically progress through the forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning stages (Tuckman, 1965; Tuckman & Jensen, 1977). As the group progresses, an evaluation of the impact of the partnership on individual and communal human rights would address IPEC’s (2016) Teams and Teamwork competency, sub competency TT9.

Evaluation of team processes may alleviate potential barriers that occur when varied professions come together through interprofessional education and practice (IPEC, 2016; Jones & Phillips, 2016). While many challenges exist to collaborative partnership, the NASW has incorporated a human rights perspective and legal jurisprudence within social

work practice to accomplish those goals and create a successful IPP team. The NASW has long partnered with lawyers to develop comprehensive social justice briefs, amicus briefs, and draft letters to local politicians supporting bills and measures to alleviate human rights abuses:

The [NASW Legal Defense Fund's] Amicus Brief Database contains downloadable copies of 300 *amicus curiae* (friend of the court) briefs filed by NASW or on behalf of NASW since 1973. Friend of the court briefs are accepted by courts as an aid to understanding aspects of issues that may not be fully addressed by the parties to the litigation, or where specialized knowledge may be helpful in reaching a conclusion in high profile cases. The goal of NASW and the Legal Defense Fund has been to ensure that a social work perspective is represented in cases of interest to the profession. (NASW, n.d., para. 2)

Dual social work and law degrees can be invaluable for the advancement of human rights advocacy. For instance, MSW/JD dual degree programs prepare graduates to “actively pursue a more just society, and to initiate and implement viable systems change by applying their training in both professions” (Penn Social Policy and Practice, 2019, para. 4). In the past, there were very salient risks associated with social workers in legal practice where state laws and professional standards conflict with navigating confidentiality (for social workers) and privileged communication (for attorneys). Innovative solutions have been implemented to resolve this interprofessional conflict, such as making policy changes to allow an extension of attorney privilege to social workers working as part of the legal team (Zajac, 2011). That extension maintains the spirit of confidentiality and privacy and privileged communication, while also allowing social workers to adhere to their professional obligations in the event that disclosure is made in furtherance of a crime or fraud, or someone is at risk of abuse (American Bar Association, n.d.; New York Consolidated Laws Civil Practice Law & Rules, 2012). This is just an example of how two professions can resolve the need for interdependence to address identified issues preventing those served from realizing the values of respect, dignity and worth of a person, in a holistic way. It is critical for varied disciplines engaged in interprofessional practice and education to understand that they hold similar values (Jones & Phillips, 2016). The partnership between social work and law, both professions where advocacy for equity and human rights is paramount, underscores the need for collaborative work among professionals. IPE and IPP train practitioners to problem solve and think collaboratively (de Saxe Zerden et al., 2018) and apply values and principles as a team to perform effectively (IPEC, 2016).

Example of IPP and IPE with Social Work, Law, and Human Rights

Practicing both social work and law from a rights-based framework becomes essential in order to create systemic change. Thus, advancing the way we train social work and law students about human rights becomes an imperative. IPE teaches collaborating professions to understand the ethics and values of other occupations (Jones & Phillips, 2016). IPEC underscored the importance of mutual respect and shared values in their first competency, Values/Ethics (IPEC, 2016).

There is a precedent for the integration of social work practice into legal settings that are designed to defend human rights (Belenko, 1998; Butts & Roman, 2004; Cooper, 2007). Since the establishment of alternative court-based programs in 1989, criminal, family, and district courts have allowed the integration of social work practice to ground alternative case processing. Drug courts integrate clinical process and legal jurisprudence, using an interdisciplinary team model consisting of the judge, prosecutor, defense counsel, clinician, coordinator, parents (in the case of juveniles) and community-based agencies to advocate for rights and consider clinical consequences of legal actions. Family drug courts, juvenile drug courts, and mental health courts all acknowledge rights and the dynamics of addiction and trauma from an ecological (ecosystems) perspective (Green et al., 2009). Validated screening and assessment tools contribute to the utilization of biopsychosocial assessments to partner with community-based organizations utilizing evidence-based practices. Harm reduction efforts and medication-assisted treatment are now viable opportunities for alternative court processing to support the legal community's effort to guard against recidivism and support client's rights.

Combining the knowledge and skills of social work and law can have a powerful effect when challenging rights infractions to vulnerable and marginalized populations (Critelli et al., 2017). When both disciplines work toward common goals of creating systemic and sociopolitical change within a human rights framework, "a greater capacity to effect change" can occur (Critelli et al., 2017, p. 132). IPE has been successful in creating positive outcomes when students are educated from multiple disciplines (Charles et al., 2011; IPEC, 2016)

An interprofessional collaboration between the Stony Brook University School of Social Welfare's (SBUSSW) BSW Program and RFK Human Rights began in 2016, with the goals to:

- educate social work students about human rights,
- draw upon the expertise that lawyers and advocates bring to social work education, and,
- educate lawyers about the value of social work.

The partnership originated when a clinical social worker realized the power that human rights education could bring to social work students. The SBUSSW's BSW Program entered a contractual agreement with RFK Human Rights to form a working partnership that would connect social work students and educators with human rights defenders, advocates, law fellows, and students.

The partnership would also serve to adapt RFK Human Rights' existing Speak Truth To Power (STTP) curriculum to professional social work education. The adaptation of STTP makes specific linkages to the recommendations and competencies offered by CSWE (2015, 2016) and the Interprofessional Education Collaborative (2016). In addition, recommendations from the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, which are designed to strengthen students' civic learning and democratic engagement as a core component of college study, are highlighted in the program adaptation (American Association of Colleges & Universities [AAC&U] National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012; Council on Social Work

Education [CSWE], 2015). The partnership allows SBUSSW students and faculty, as well as staff from RFK Human Rights, several opportunities to integrate the defense and advocacy for human rights into their professional development, practice and research.

RFK Human Rights and Speak Truth To Power

RFK Human Rights is an organization led by Robert F. Kennedy's daughter, Kerry Kennedy, that advocates and educates for a more peaceful and just world. Their programs pursue justice through strategic litigation on key human rights issues, educate individuals about human rights advocacy, and foster a social good approach to business and investment (Robert F. Kennedy [RFK] Human Rights, n.d.a). Kerry Kennedy's books, *Speak Truth to Power: Human Rights Defenders Who Are Changing Our World* (Kennedy & Adams, 2005) and *Speak Truth to Power: A Guide to Defending Human Rights* (2017) serve as the basis for RFK Human Rights' education program, *Speak Truth to Power (STTP)*. The program is rooted in the UN's principles of human rights education and are based upon the stories of human rights defenders around the globe. The lessons are designed for students to learn to self-identify as a human rights defender and to give them the tools in the global fight for justice.

Stony Brook University School of Social Welfare

One of the four university centers of the State University of New York (SUNY) system and a member of the Association of American Universities (AAU), located in suburban Long Island, Stony Brook University (SBU) is home to an exceptionally diverse student body of more than 25,200 high-achieving students from nearly all 50 states and more than 100 countries. The SBU School of Social Welfare offers three degree programs: a Bachelor of Science with a major in social work (BSW), a Master of Social Work (MSW) and a PhD. The MSW and BSW programs are accredited by the CSWE. The SBUSSW mission states:

We recognize that structural inequality exists in multiple and overlapping layers of discrimination including class, race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, religion, age and disability, among others. We therefore seek to remediate the impact of interpersonal and historical trauma, to foster human relationships that are grounded in social justice; human dignity and mutual respect; to develop new and just organizational forms; to transform already existing structures to reflect values that affirm and enhance human dignity and social diversity; and to identify new ways to influence social, economic and political systems to equitably distribute power, resources, rights and freedom. (Stony Brook University School of Social Welfare, n.d.)

When faculty and partnership staff examined both the mission statements from RFK Human Rights and SBUSSW, advocating for human rights, social justice and challenging existing structural inequality were common themes. The focus of the partnership became working toward the development and integration of STTP for social work students, anchoring the BSW program in a human rights-based approach to social work practice. The second phase of the program would be designed to educate law fellows, human rights

defenders and law students about social work and the importance of interprofessional work with social workers when advocating for human rights.

A University and Human Rights Organization Interprofessional Partnership

The fundamental desired outcome of the Stony Brook University School of Social Welfare/RFK Human Rights (SBUSSW/RFKHR) partnership is to pilot and co-brand a replicable STTP program at the university level, within a social work program, which advances interprofessional education and competency-based social work education by incorporating a human rights-based perspective and language as the foundation for generalist social work. Outcomes of the partnership are to map STTP content to professional competencies, and to develop replicable human rights education lesson plans appropriate for college and professional students and to strengthen IPE.

In order to form a global citizenry of human rights defenders, the partnership aims to impart knowledge of human rights, increase empathy for those experiencing rights violations and provide the skills needed to make much needed systemic change (Allensworth Hawkins & Knox, 2014). Additional goals include:

- Social work students will understand the need to create an interprofessional coalition toward a solution-focused path towards rights-based advocacy.
- Law students, fellows, and lawyers will understand the importance of working with social workers to best serve clients and society, thus increasing the visibility of social workers in other disciplines.

Overview of Partnership

Human rights education includes a three-stage process; First, knowledge acquisition about human rights conventions and treaties, second, awakening the consciousness to rights violations, and finally, providing the skills needed to be a human rights defender (Allensworth Hawkins & Knox, 2014; Gatenio et al., 2020; Mihr & Schmitz, 2007).

The SBUSSW/RFKHR curricular program follows this structure whereas students are educated about human standards, treaties and conventions in all classes through the narrative of the STTP defenders. Students are asked to identify human rights issues that are occurring locally and globally in order to educate students on the second emotional level with the goal of creating a “consciousness for human rights and its violations” (Mihr & Schmitz, 2007, p. 978). Upon acceptance to the BSW program, students are assigned a Common Reader that is specifically selected based on its human rights content. Students in the SBUSSW are introduced to STTP and human rights education during their new student orientation programming. An RFK Human Rights staff member and SBUSSW faculty give a brief overview of human rights and its application to social work. Students and faculty are given time to discuss the Common Reader and what it means to view social issues from a rights-based instead of a needs-based perspective. The BSW seniors present excerpts from *Speak Truth To Power: Voices from Beyond the Dark*, playwright Ariel Dorfman's adaptation of human rights Defenders' stories.

At the heart of the partnership's first phase of work, the lessons in STTP are being connected to the nine social work competencies (CSWE, 2015) and when appropriate, the four interprofessional education competencies (IPEC, 2016), then integrated into all core BSW courses at the SBUSSW. Each course syllabi includes the following statement regarding the partnership's fundamental underpinning of defending human rights and advocating for social, economic and environmental justice:

The Stony Brook University School of Social Welfare's BSW Program is partnered with RFK Human Rights to integrate human rights and social work education. The Speak Truth To Power (STTP) curriculum, developed by RFK Human Rights and based on the UN's principles of human rights, is a human rights education program that strives to create a global citizenry dedicated to the highest standards of justice and equality. We believe this is a natural fit to incorporate into undergraduate social work education. As a result of this agreement, Stony Brook University School of Social Welfare BSW Program serves as a pioneer for incorporating the United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights, access to knowledge about globally-renowned defenders of these rights, and skill development to advocate for human rights into foundational social work education. Students should become familiar with and refer to the UN Declaration of Human Rights for assignments and coursework across the BSW curriculum. (Stony Brook University School of Social Welfare, 2016, p. 7)

STTP Human Rights Defender lessons and assignments are integrated throughout the undergraduate social work curriculum. The STTP lessons and assignments allow students to develop all of the CSWE Competencies, well beyond the obvious Competency 3: Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice.

Social work practice-designated courses draw upon the STTP Defender stories as case studies and as a means for students to practice the application of theory and skills. Targeted competency development is particularly focused on students engaging diversity and difference in their practice (CSWE Competency 2), engaging, assessing, intervening, and evaluating their practice at all client levels (CSWE Competencies 6, 7, 8, and 9), whilst demonstrating ethical and professional behavior (CSWE Competency 1) in their advancement of human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice (CSWE Competency 3). Concurrently, when students of both professions engage in the lessons and activities, they are able to develop and strengthen the IPEC (2016) competencies: developing and maintaining a climate of mutual respect and shared values (Competency 1: Values and Ethics for IPP), use the knowledge of each profession's role in addressing client needs (Competency 2: Roles and Responsibilities), responsive and responsible communication (Competency 3: Interprofessional Communication), and working effectively as a team (Competency 4: Teams and Teamwork). For example, in a groupwork practice course, students learn about STTP Defender, Juliana Dogbadazi. They learn about the types of groups, both task and treatment, and how organizations, such as the NGO she talks about in her interview, could develop to address the human rights issue of modern slavery. Students then identify a human rights/justice issue that they are particularly passionate about, identify and interview an example of a human rights defender who is working locally in this area of practice, and plan a group intervention proposal. The story

of Frank Mugisha, a STTP Defender advocating for LGBTQ+ rights is used as a foundation for students to learn about social work with special populations and practice having rights-based conversations, particularly around potentially socially divisive topics. They are continually instructed about Human Rights Conventions and Covenants and are taught to view issues from a rights-based perspective. Students are asked to research appropriate laws that are applicable to the Defenders' narratives. Social work policy-designated courses draw upon the STTP Defender stories as a means to practice policy analysis and to understand the connection between practice and policy development, implementation and evaluation. For example, in a social political economy course, students learn about STTP Defenders, Kek Galabru and Muhhamud Yunus. The lessons of STTP Defender Kek Galabru, who helped to end the Cambodian Civil War and works against sexual tourism and child labor, teach students about negotiating and ending conflict, as well as standing up to those in power to advocate for the promotion of human rights. The story of STTP Defender Muhhamud Yunus and his approach to addressing poverty through the use of microlending is used in a lesson that allows students to compare and contrast economic systems and traditional practices and develop and propose alternative solutions towards economic justice through law and policy change. Students learn about the importance of political participation and struggles faced in the realization of UDHR Article 21: Right to Participate in Government and in Free Elections and are tasked to conduct a political-social action group project that increases their own civic engagement and allows them to develop competency in policy practice (CSWE Competency 5) and teamwork (IPEC Competency 4).

Long understood as social work's signature pedagogy, field education is where students are able to apply the lessons from the classroom into the field while developing and strengthening all nine professional competencies. In response to human rights abuses and violations, changing social work practice and education includes training social work interns how to be responsive to changing laws that perpetuate abuse and human rights violations. Prepared with the lessons of the STTP Defenders, students are better equipped to practice from a rights-based framework in their field placements. For instance, supervised internship experiences now include libraries from which services are provided to undocumented immigrants. Considered safe spaces to congregate, social work interns are providing case management to library patrons, which include referrals to community-based organizations for housing, job referrals, clinical services, and attorneys for immigration services. In our changing political climate, these efforts to provide a human rights framework to service provision also includes crisis intervention aimed at educating library staff how best to service immigrant or refugee populations in a dignified way, respectful of their orientation, experiences, and threats to liberty.

Coupling the SBUSSW's underpinning of research around the social determinants of health with the STTP curriculum, social work courses utilize the STTP Defender stories and lessons to develop students' competency in research-informed practice and practice-informed research (CSWE Competency 4). It has been documented that the U.S. views human rights infractions as global phenomena and does not acknowledge the abuses occurring on our own soil (McPherson & Abell, 2012). Social work educators must challenge the belief of U.S. exceptionalism and the notion that the U.S. is a leader in the

protection of human rights (Healy & Wairire, 2014; Libal & Harding, 2015). While discussing the examples of immigrant abuses as outlined above is important, it is also very powerful to educate about American human rights defenders in an effort to bring to life that human rights abuses happen within our own national borders; one of which is Marian Wright Edelman. In her STTP interview about her work in the defense of children's human rights, Defender Marian Wright Edelman, asserts,

It's shameful that we alone among wealthy, industrialized nations don't see that our children get a healthy start. We have much higher rates of infant mortality and low-birth-weight babies than our industrialized counterparts. We lag in preparing our children in science, math, and reading compared to many of our competitor industrialized countries that they are going to be up against in the new global village. And we lag the world most shamefully in protecting our children against violence. American children fifteen and under are twelve times more likely to die from gun violence than children in twenty-five other industrialized countries combined. (RFK Human Rights, n.d.b, Marian Wright Edelman, para. 3)

Social work students are asked to conduct further research about the human rights issues involved in each STTP Defender story, define action steps towards a solution, and develop an evaluation plan for assessing the change strategy. After reading the story of Marian Wright Edelman, they are presented with the *Statement on Visit to the USA, by Professor Philip Alston, United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights* (Alston, 2017). They are asked to conduct research on the statistics in the report, connect it to social determinants of health policy and the mechanisms in which defenders, such as Marian Wright Edelman, are fighting poverty in the United States

A key component of the partnership is to link a defender's work involving current advocacy initiatives to that of lawyers, social workers, and students. The connection between poverty, the *Special Rapporteur's* report and pre-trial detention in the U.S. is made in conversations with a RFK Human Rights lawyer as part of the interprofessional partnership. Students discuss the link between poverty and mass incarceration while examining the punishing policies and practices that lead to unconstitutional pretrial detention with a RFK Human Rights lawyer. One of the RFK Human Rights' organizational goals is to reinvest in communities most impacted by mass incarceration, using the funds that have been previously used to run a jail. RFK Human Rights benefits from the relationship with social work students as they discuss ideas for programs designed to help those who have been released from prison integrate back into the community.

Conversations between social workers and lawyers become important as both sides work toward solutions. Such conversations enhance the achievement of interprofessional communication competence (IPEC, 2016). The extent of rights violations can be overwhelming to students from all disciplines, creating a sense of despair. However, when solutions to social problems are presented and discussed, students become empowered and a sense of hope replaces that despair (Allensworth Hawkins & Knox, 2014). The power of this partnership has been that students and practitioners of both social work and law can see how working together in interprofessional collaboration challenges the status quo and

advances human rights globally. Lawyers and law students can begin to have an understanding from social work students about the way trauma may impact those who have undergone human rights abuses and a history of systemic oppression. A strength of IPE, particularly through IPEC's (2016) Values/Ethics subcompetency VE4 for interprofessional practice, is that other professions understand the value of social work, expanding and improving the reputation of social workers (Charles et al., 2011). One RFK Human Rights lawyer remarked how she benefitted from working with social workers as they were able to engage with clients from an empowerment perspective lens. She recently contacted the School when looking for social work research on the developmental rationale against trying juveniles as adults. Future goals include working with RFK Human Rights to integrate social work competencies into law practice and internships.

Practicing Social Work: Human Rights Framework

The research on human rights in social work education found that the emphasis lays in instruction of Human Rights instruments rather than on how to practice social work from a human rights framework (Gatenio Gabel & Mapp, 2020). As stated above, the SBUSSW/RFKHR partnership educates social work students about human rights instruments early in the first year of the program, and then purposely teaches about how to specifically practice social work from the human rights framework in the second year. STTP illustrates human rights issues through the stories of human rights defenders and the adaptation into the BSW curriculum includes the purposeful inclusion of how to translate the defender's work into social work practice, illustrating human rights issues through the stories of human rights defenders. By the end of the second year, students are taught the third level of human rights education, skills that are needed to be human rights advocates and defenders and to "effectively prevent and combat human rights violations" (Mihir & Schmitz, 2007, p. 978). The skills they cultivate include collaboration with lawyers to help advocate for the people and communities who have had their rights violated.

Allensworth Hawkins and Knox (2014) identify that it is not enough to teach about human rights infractions, but to help train students to identify solutions. The SBUSSW/RFKHR partnership is designed to help students identify the solutions to human rights infractions. The STTP defenders are working toward solutions to human rights problems and through the lessons social work students are able to begin to see the answers to what are complex issues.

For example, Librada Paz is a RFK Human Rights defender in the STTP curriculum. She immigrated from Mexico at the age of 15. Her works highlight the cruel treatment that she experienced on U.S. farms: "For more than a decade, I experienced inhuman conditions working in the fields of the United States. I learned that farmworkers do not matter. Our security doesn't matter. Our thoughts don't matter. Our dignity doesn't matter" (RFK Human Rights, n.d.c, Librada Paz, para. 3). As a part of the human rights programming, Librada presented to both BSW and MSW students, tracing her road from a farmworker to rights activist, passing the first laws in New York to protect farmworkers:

We have made promising advances in New York, including passing three new laws that protect farmworkers right to clean water facilities, sanitation facilities, and a

standardized minimum wage. These protections were the first farmworker-initiated laws in New York State's history. (RFK Human Rights, n.d.c, Librada Paz, para. 9)

Through conversation with Librada, social work students were able to conceptualize the process of problem identification to policy advocacy and change based on a human rights framework. Social work students are able to actively engage in the farmworker's rights campaign and translate such experience and skill development to all areas of practice.

Beyond the interviews and lessons from the *Speak Truth To Power* books, the partnership allows for live interaction between human rights defenders, lawyers, and students, such as the campus visits of defenders such as Librada Paz, and will strengthen the development of interprofessional education and relationships to work towards solutions.

Program Evaluation

Social work students are being taught the importance of advancing human rights through our partnership. The goals of the program are to increase knowledge, exposure and engagement with human rights and advocacy, so it is of interest to assess the outcomes of these goals. As this partnership is in the initial years of development and implementation, a program review is being conducted but the evaluation is not yet complete. After the program review is finished, a full board IRB application will be submitted for a full research study for publication.

Data collection for program review and future research study includes students completing two self-report surveys at orientation before any exposure to the material and again immediately prior to graduation. The first instruments given to the students are the Human Rights Exposure in Social Work (HRXSW) and Human Rights Engagement in Social Work (HRESW), which are valid and reliable scales that assess the impact of human rights education for social work students (McPherson & Abell, 2012).

The HRXSW measures the extent that students have been exposed to human rights principles during their education. This measure was chosen since one of the program goals is to familiarize students with human rights principles. It is given to the students to assess prior knowledge and ascertain growth of knowledge. The authors are interested in the level of prior understanding of human rights entering the social work program and the increase in knowledge they incur upon completion of the interprofessional education and human rights instruction in the SBUSSW/RFKHR collaboration.

Defending human rights requires an energy and commitment to make much needed change. The HRESW is designed to discover the extent of a student's "passion for human rights and social work" (McPherson & Abell, 2012, p. 711). The HRESW is being utilized to discover the extent that the SBUSSW/RFKHR partnership ignites students' commitment to human rights in their social work practice. Across the curriculum, each assignment associated with a STTP lesson has the student practice self-reflection about the human rights issue and impact of the lesson. The goal is to help students envision themselves as human rights defenders in their future social work practice when they read and interact

with the stories of the defenders. Students are asked to make specific connections to the CSWE competencies they strengthen as a developing human rights advocate, and how they integrate a human rights framework into their social work practice. Faculty have reported a noticeable shift in the language used in class discussions, particularly as students advance through the two-year curriculum, incorporating a rights-based perspective.

Specific questions added to course evaluations also provide valuable student feedback about their experiences and the knowledge, values, and skills gained during each course across the social work curriculum as it relates to their development as a human rights advocate and social work practitioner. Additional course evaluation questions emphasizing IPEC competencies provide feedback about students' growth and understanding of the importance of interprofessional practice for social workers.

Future Goals

In addition to continual assessment of the partnership, a program evaluation of the partnership will be conducted to measure exposure and engagement of human rights principles and whether social workers see societal issues through a human rights lens (McPherson & Abell, 2012; McPherson et al., 2017).

Future plans include researching the way graduates of the partnership use human rights by utilizing the Human Rights Lens in Social Work (HRLSW) scale. The HRLSW's purpose is to assess the way that a practicing social worker interprets both individual and social issues as emanating from human rights infractions (McPherson et al., 2017). As one of the objectives of the partnership is to create a new generation of human rights defenders, it is of interest to the authors to see how graduates of the program practice from a rights-based perspective. The goal is to measure the way graduates employ a rights-based instead of needs-based social work practice, viewing problems from "sociopolitical and structural contexts" that are the target of intervention (Berthold, 2015, p.5). Using the rights-based lens empowers clients to see their issues from a violation of their rights instead of individual pathology (Berthold, 2015; McPherson, 2016). Future recommendations and goals include measuring the impact that the partnership has had on the lawyers, fellows and students at RFK Human Rights to ascertain their level of understanding of the social work profession and the need to work with social workers in the defense of human rights. Elevating social work in the eyes of other professions is an important outcome of IPE and IPP (Charles et al., 2011; de Saxe Zerden et al., 2018).

It is also important to evaluate the IPEC competencies to ascertain the strength of the educational partnership for lawyers, students and human rights defenders. Dow and colleagues (2014) created an assessment tool derived from the IPEC's competencies. The goals of the assessment tool are:

1. inform curriculum planning with valid and reliable information
2. track the effects of degree programs on interprofessional competency, and
3. provide data that can be used within and between institutions to compare programmatic outcomes. (p. 299)

Hasnain et al. (2017) validated a tool for self-efficacy for interprofessional competence. The plan for this project is to examine both Dow et al. (2014) and Hasnain et al. (2017) instruments and to conduct research as to which can be adapted and validated as a tool to evaluate the human rights educational partnership. An objective is to adapt these healthcare-specific measures to evaluate other interprofessional partnerships, particularly for human rights defenders, lawyers, and students.

Conclusion

As this interprofessional partnership continues to grow, conversations and opportunities for collaborative work between social work students, law students, fellows, and defenders will expand; thus, too, will their integrative learning. It is a reciprocal relationship. The goal is for non-social work partners to understand: the manners in which trauma impacts those who have undergone human rights abuses; the impact of systemic racism; and social work's person-in-environment perspective. Conversely, social work students learn about human rights law and agreements, and become better able to incorporate these into their practice while strengthening their advocacy efforts. This collaborative expertise demonstrates the power of interprofessional education and practice (IPEC, 2016).

The current geopolitical issues, human rights infractions throughout the globe and an unnerving rise in the number of demagogue leaders necessitates that advocacy networks from all professions band together. Social workers understand the deep pain of those who have been silenced and those who have been forsaken. Using a human rights framework helps those in interprofessional partnerships defend all who remain in the shadows, find their voice and amplify their cries for justice. The goal is to continue to grow this collaboration, working with human rights defenders and advocates around the world to join the fight against injustice. "And I believe that in this generation those with the courage to enter the moral conflict will find themselves with companions in every corner of the globe" (Kennedy, 1966, transcript para. 36).

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