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The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare

Volume 26
Issue 4 *December*

Article 4

December 1999

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Cetingok, Muammer (1999) "Contributions of Foreign-Based Authors to Selected Social Work Journals in the United States," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 26 : Iss. 4 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol26/iss4/4>

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Contributions of Foreign-Based Authors to Selected Social Work Journals in the United States

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This study examines the contributions of foreign-based authors to thirty-three social work journals in the US between 1977–1996. Analysis indicates that authors based in Canada, Israel, Australia and Great Britain are the highest contributors to primarily nine journals. Findings have implications for global social work education and practice.

INTRODUCTION

As social work academics and practitioners in the United States (US) and abroad strive for a “global century” (Estes, 1992, p. 2), hard and soft technology and knowledge exchange among all countries has become a major concern (Abrahams and Chandrasekere, 1990; Cetingok and Hirayama, 1990; Chatterjee and Ireys, 1979; Ramanathan, 1991; Van-Pagee et al., 1991). Of these, knowledge exchange through social work journals warrants special research attention for the major reason that dimensions of such an exchange have not heretofore been explored in the social work field. “Journals . . . are footprints by which the development of knowledge in a discipline or profession can be followed” (Bush, Epstein, and Sainz, 1997, p. 46). Journal articles are the immediate and tangible reflections of conceptual and empirical work for the prompt consumption of academicians and practitioners. International exchange of articles contributes to the development of global knowledge in a relatively expedient manner and helps academics and practitioners communicate with

Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare, December, 1999, Volume XXVI, Number 4

common theoretical and practical concepts and frameworks in their teaching, research, and practice.

Exchanges take place whenever articles written by educators or practitioners and published in domestic or foreign journals are accessed globally by postal and /or electronic means. Importation and exportation of knowledge are the subconcepts of exchange. Importation to the United States (US), i.e., articles by foreign-based authors, takes two forms: (1) articles published in US journals, and (2) articles published in foreign journals available in the US. Exportation from the US to other countries also takes two forms: (1) articles published in foreign journals, and (2) US journals available abroad. Thus, a complete understanding of global knowledge exchange can take place only when all four of these forms of importation and exportation are systematically studied.

The purpose of this study was to address the first importation question (i.e., articles by foreign-based authors published in US journals). This question was deemed as top priority for the following reasons: As conveyed to this researcher while abroad and on other occasions, foreign-based colleagues perceive that: (1) the US social work community tends to transfer knowledge unilaterally (i.e. it does not take in from the outside world as much as it sends out), and (2) there is indifference to knowledge produced outside the US and that understanding of globalization on the US's part is influenced by parochialism. Midgley (1990) supported this observation by reporting that exchanges have been primarily unidirectional with information flowing from the West to Third World countries. Thus, it seemed that studying first the existence and the extent of article publications in the US contributed by foreign-based authors would be a logical place to start examining the knowledge exchange. The study would thus partially serve the purpose of informing the US social work community about the nature and amount of its imports and enabling it to examine its contributions to the knowledge distribution efforts for globalization through importation.

STUDY QUESTION AND VARIABLES

The study question was two-fold: (1) What articles by foreign-based authors are published in a selected set of US social work

journals in terms of the base country, journal of publication, methods (macro, i.e. management, community, and policy practice, or micro, i.e. clinical/treatment), publication period, classification of article as per the Social Work Abstracts (SWA) (1996) scheme, and the population targeted? (2) What are the relationships between the base country of authors and the remaining variables listed above? Classifications used by the SWA closely resembled the fields of social work practice and thus were adopted as such for the purposes of this study.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted as content analysis of the abstracts of articles by foreign-based authors published in the selected US journals. Use of content analysis in similar research efforts has been well documented in the social work literature (Bush, Epstein, and Sainz, 1997) and thus was deemed the most appropriate methodology for this study. The SWA database from 1977 to and including 1996 was used to extract and review all articles contributed by foreign-based authors to the thirty-three core US social work journals as designated by SWA (Note 1). Determination of whether the authors were based in a foreign country was made on the basis of the addresses cited in the abstracts. A few abstracts without addresses were excluded from review. Univariate/descriptive and bivariate/chi-square analyses were employed to examine distributions and relationships. For some variables, grouped intervals were created for meaningful bivariate data analysis when ungrouped frequencies were small. Therefore, some journals, countries, and classifications were collapsed into a single category of "others." Years of publication were grouped into four 5-year periods. The study covered a 20-year span, deemed reasonable to allow for the accumulation of a solid retrospective database. The SWA database provided for the review of 12860 abstracts.

FINDINGS

Between 1977 and 1996, a total of 826 articles (6.4% of 12 860) in sixty-seven SWA classifications were contributed to thirty-three major US social work journals by authors based in thirty seven countries (Note 2).

Descriptive analyses (see Table 1 for statistics) indicated the following: The majority of contributions were made by authors based in four countries, Canada, Israel, Australia, and Britain. Canada-based authors were by far the most published ones. Also, all authors primarily contributed to a narrow range of only nine journals with about two-thirds of the articles published in them. The remaining articles were shared by the other twenty-four journals. Furthermore, the micro method enjoyed more than twice as much popularity among the authors as did the macro. In addition, more than two-thirds of the articles were published during the last 10 years, the last five being the most active. At all times, child/family welfare classification was by far the most popular one, commending almost one-fifth of the articles. Finally, higher interests were shown in the "adults" and "general population" categories.

Bivariate analytic results (Table 2) demonstrated statistically significant relationships between the primary variable of the author's base country and all other variables of journal, method, period of publication, classification scheme, and target. (Australia and Britain were combined for analysis purposes.) Focusing on the top four countries, Canada-based authors published most in the journal of Child Welfare; Israel-based authors were highest in Administration in Social Work and Australia/Britain-based authors in Social Work with Groups. Authors in the remaining countries contributed most to Child Welfare. Also, Canada-based authors were more concentrated on the micro method and the authors of other countries on the macro. Furthermore, as the years progressed, contributions made by the authors of top four countries eventually progressed. On the other hand, contributions made by the authors based in the remaining thirty-three countries showed sharp fluctuations and an eventual decline. In addition, Canada-based authors made the highest contribution to child/family welfare; Israel-based authors to education/schools; and Australia/Britain-based authors to group work/group treatment. Authors based in the remaining countries were most active in child/family welfare. Finally, among the top four countries, Canada-based authors mostly targeted children; Israel focused on adults; and Australia/Britain concentrated on the general population. All other countries targeted children the most.

Table 1

Frequency distributions of the authors' base country, journal of publication, method, period of publication, classification of article, and target population

	N*	%
<i>Base Country</i>		
Canada	401	48.5
Israel	186	22.5
Australia	61	7.4
Britain	52	6.3
Others**	126	15.3
<i>Journal of Publication</i>		
Child Welfare	111	13.4
American Journal of Orthopsychiatry	99	12.0
Social Work with Groups	62	7.5
Social Work in Health Care	51	6.2
Administration in Social Work	47	5.7
Social Work	45	5.4
Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare	40	4.8
The Gerontologist	37	4.5
Health and Social Work	33	4.0
Others**	301	36.4
<i>Method</i>		
Micro	492	59.6
Macro	229	27.7
Mixed	105	12.7
<i>Period</i>		
1977-81	116	14.0
1982-86	124	15.0
1987-91	282	34.1
1992-96	304	36.8
<i>Classification</i>		
Child/Family Welfare	152	18.4
Group Work/Group Therapy	72	8.7
Casework/Clinical Practice/Psychotherapy	66	8.0

continued

Table 1

Continued

	<i>N</i> *	%
<i>Classification, continued</i>		
Research/Research Methodology	60	7.3
Health/Medical Care	54	6.5
Aging/The Aged	51	6.2
Education/Schools/Supervision/Training	45	5.4
Others**	326	39.5
<i>Target Population</i>		
Adults	248	30.0
Children	180	21.8
Family	92	11.1
Elderly	67	8.1
General Population	239	28.9

* Total N=826. ** List available from the author.

DISCUSSION

These findings suggest that three major points deserve attention: (1) contributions by foreign-based authors are in a limited number of journals and classification fields; (2) participation from the authors based in more diverse countries has drastically declined during the 1992–96 period; and (3) authors based in a very small number of countries account for most foreign contributions.

Generally, all authors contributing mostly to just nine journals might be an interactive function of such factors as the journals' international availability, authors' familiarity with them, and journals' high degree of receptiveness of foreign-based authors. Studies of these factors as well as the ones like the characteristics of authors, journal characteristics, and the home country's professional and cultural orientations could provide a beginning as to ultimately why foreign-based authors select certain journals. Also, authors generally focusing on seven classification fields might also be the outcome of the interplay of many variables such as the cultural popularity, advanced nature, and availability

Table 2
Relationships between the authors' base country and journal of publication, method, period of publication, classification of article, and target population

	Country					Total N (%)
	Canada N (%)	Israel N (%)	Australia/Britain* N (%)	Others N (%)		
<i>Journal (1)</i>						
Child Welfare	66 (16.5)	5 (2.7)	6 (5.3)	34 (27.0)	111 (13.4)	
Am. J. of Ortho.	59 (14.7)	18 (9.7)	10 (8.8)	12 (9.5)	99 (12.0)	
Soc. Work w/Groups	32 (8.0)	11 (5.9)	13 (11.5)	6 (4.8)	62 (7.5)	
Soc. Work in H.Care	18 (4.5)	20 (10.8)	10 (8.8)	3 (2.4)	51 (6.2)	
Adm. in Soc. Work	8 (2.0)	29 (15.6)	8 (7.1)	2 (1.6)	47 (5.7)	
Social Work	25 (6.0)	9 (4.8)	6 (5.3)	5 (4.0)	45 (5.4)	
J. of Socio.and SW	8 (2.0)	12 (6.5)	6 (5.3)	14 (11.1)	40 (4.8)	
The Gerontologist	17 (4.2)	6 (3.2)	3 (2.7)	11 (8.7)	37 (4.5)	
Health and Soc.Work	21 (5.2)	8 (4.3)	3 (2.7)	1 (0.8)	33 (4.0)	
Others	47 (36.7)	68 (36.6)	48 (42.5)	38 (30.2)	301 (36.4)	
<i>Method (2)</i>						
Micro Social Work	281 (70.1)	91 (48.9)	59 (52.2)	61 (48.4)	492 (59.6)	
Macro Social Work	72 (18.0)	68 (36.6)	42 (37.2)	47 (37.3)	229 (27.7)	
Mixed	48 (12.0)	27 (14.5)	12 (10.6)	18 (14.3)	105 (12.7)	

Table 2
Continued

	Country					Total N (%)
	Canada N (%)	Israel N (%)	Australia/Britain* N (%)	Others N (%)		
<i>Period (3)</i>						
1977-81	66 (16.5)	29 (15.6)	18 (15.9)	3 (2.4)	116 (14.0)	
1982-86	60 (15.0)	35 (18.8)	13 (11.5)	16 (12.7)	124 (18.3)	
1987-91	122 (30.4)	57 (30.6)	31 (27.4)	72 (57.1)	282 (34.1)	
1992-96	153 (38.2)	65 (34.9)	51 (45.1)	35 (27.8)	304 (36.8)	
<i>Classification (4)</i>						
Child/Family Welf	93 (23.2)	12 (6.5)	10 (8.8)	37 (29.4)	152 (18.4)	
Group Work/Group Th	39 (9.7)	12 (6.5)	14 (12.4)	7 (5.6)	72 (8.7)	
Casework/Clinical	40 (10.0)	8 (4.3)	10 (8.8)	8 (6.3)	66 (8.0)	
Research/Method	28 (7.0)	16 (8.6)	12 (10.6)	4 (3.2)	60 (7.3)	
Health/Medical Care	32 (8.0)	14 (7.5)	3 (2.7)	5 (4.0)	54 (6.5)	
Aging/The Aged	22 (5.5)	12 (6.5)	3 (2.7)	14 (11.1)	51 (6.2)	
Education/Schools	16 (4.0)	17 (9.1)	8 (7.1)	4 (3.2)	45 (5.4)	
Others	131 (32.7)	95 (51.1)	53 (46.9)	47 (37.3)	326 (39.5)	

continued

Table 2
Continued

	Country					Total N (%)
	Canada N (%)	Israel N (%)	Australia/Britain* N (%)	Others N (%)		
Target Population (5)						
Adults	125 (31.2)	71 (38.2)	34 (30.1)	18 (14.3)	248 (30.0)	
Children	100 (24.9)	24 (12.9)	13 (11.5)	43 (34.1)	180 (21.8)	
Family	57 (14.2)	8 (4.3)	10 (8.8)	17 (13.5)	92 (11.1)	
Elderly	27 (6.7)	18 (9.7)	4 (3.5)	18 (14.3)	67 (8.1)	
General Population	92 (22.9)	65 (34.9)	52 (46.0)	30 (23.8)	239 (28.9)	

* Australia and Britain are combined for analysis. (1)chi-square=142.50, df=27, p<.0001. Table 1 has the full names of journals. (2)chi-square=42.76, df=6, p<.0001. (3)chi-square=46.24, df= 9, p<.0001. (4)chi-square=82.60, df=21, p<.0001. Classifications are combined for analysis. Table 1 has the full names of combined classifications. (5)chi-square=80.08, df=12, p<.0001.

of resources for these fields in the base country. In addition, other variables such as the authors' academic, professional, and experiential characteristics grounded in the realities of their countries might also play roles.

Declining periodic participation of authors based in more diverse countries would need to be a major concern. Factors such as the characteristics of the period as well as individual and country-related ones contributing to this declining trend would, at least, need to be studied retrospectively.

The observation that authors in Canada, Israel, Australia, and Britain form a camp and far surpass all others in their contributions to US journals while others have shown ambivalence and withdrawal in their contributions deserves the most attention. This suggests the expanding nature of their influence in the construction of US and global realities for social work research, education, and practice. It also implies that theoretical and experiential bases of social work in these countries might be similar to those in the US since these authors transfer the knowledge and experience generated in the U.S. to their countries in efforts to provide a literary basis for their academic, educational and practice efforts. It would be reasonable to conclude that there is a fairly intense level of knowledge exchange and integration between these countries and the US. Thus, for all intents and purposes, the general knowledge base that informs social work practice in these countries and the US could be considered as almost integrated, provided that certain cultural and regional adaptations are made (Rehr, Rosenberg, and Blumenfeld, 1993). Consequently, when social work colleagues in the rest of the world borrow knowledge and experience from the journals published in the US, they might find themselves importing from an amalgamated pool developed by a principal camp of five countries, the four above and the US.

With the limited or declining flow of information in a 20-year period into US journals from the remaining countries, and considering the fact that such information is produced by authors from only thirty-seven of all countries, it further appears that the rest of the world forms a second camp of its own, effectively resembling a two-tiered global community of social work. This second camp could be described as the remainder of 85 countries listed in the Directory of International Association of Schools of Social Work

(IASSW, 1995), as well as many other nonmember countries with social work education and practice, e.g., China (Jinchao, 1995) and Bulgaria (Freed, 1995). It appears that these countries supposedly teach and practice social work while disengaged in the knowledge exchange through the US journals. One plausible explanation could be the lack of facility in English by most of their authors. Another logical explanation, even if the language may not be an issue, could be that the authors in some of these second camp countries might be reluctant, consciously or otherwise, to engage in any exchanges with the Western or Westernized cultures in developing their own social work knowledge and practice base due to concerns about cultural assimilation and/or influences. This seems to be a concern, for example, when group-based value systems of many countries clash with the individual-based systems of the West. Although a conscious lack of exchange may appear as a narrow-minded worldview in this communications age indifferent to national boundaries, social and political forces from within some countries might still be rendering these countries impervious to the importation and exportation of knowledge from and to the Western or Westernized cultures.

CONCLUSION

Several research and action implications emerge from this study. As to research, new studies could be initiated by at least focusing on the factors already discussed. Furthermore, research could also be conducted into the other three knowledge exchange questions mentioned in the beginning of this paper. As for actions, the US social work journals with global goals would need to encourage authors based in all countries to submit articles. If the journals published in the US are perceived as the primary media informing the global community, then this suggestion gains added utility for it could, at the outset, accomplish four goals: (1) The perceived formation of camps could be prevented, (2) the academicians and practitioners in the primary camp could be exposed to a wide range of second camp knowledge bases and/or ways of understanding and practicing social work for integration into their academic and field practice efforts, (3) the second camp educators and practitioners could appreciate how their efforts are

not only influenced by but also impact the academic and practice aspects of social work in the primary camp, and (4) submissions of articles in languages other than English might be encouraged with translations provided as has been a practice of some journals outside the field of social work.

Ultimately, what is desired is a genuine global exchange (Midgley, 1990), through all journals in all countries, on a regular and timely basis to be assimilated into the scholarly and practice efforts of educators and practitioners worldwide.

NOTES

1. Karin Carchedi of Silver Platter Information (Norwood, Massachusetts) provided the list of major journals abstracted by Social Work Abstracts. There were 33 of them listed with the asterisks in the document provided. Due to space limitations, the list is available from the author.
2. Due to space limitations, the list of countries included in the study are available from the author. Classifications included in the study are listed as "CC" at the bottom of each abstract in the SWA database.

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