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"Unless we are Native, we are all immigrants to Canada": Tensions between multicultural inclusion and settler-colonial consciousness among Canadian social workers

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a discourse analysis of how social work values, knowledge, and attitudes toward immigrants are represented in 173 open-ended responses to a national survey ($n = 1125$) of Canadian social workers attitudes toward immigrants. Through discourse analysis of social workers' commentary, we discuss notable tensions between social workers' affinity for multicultural inclusion and their critiques of Canadian settler-colonialism. While respondents broadly emphasize "respect for diversity" and the need to advocate for immigrants as expressions of their Canadian and social work identity, some suggest that inequalities facing Indigenous communities should be addressed before Canada continues to increase its investment in immigration. We consider how dichotomizing concerns for Indigenous and immigrant communities reflect the limits of multicultural inclusion and the need to further decolonize social work education and practice. Paper to be submitted to Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Diversity in Social Work

KEYWORDS

Migration; social work values; diversity; immigrants; social work education; multiculturalism

Introduction

Ranked "the most accepting [country] in the world for migrants" in the 2019 Gallup World Poll, Canada is recognized as a nation that is welcoming to newcomers from around the world (Esipova et al., 2020, para. 1). Additionally, Canadians' positive views toward immigrants are linked to a widespread embrace of multiculturalism as a national identity where "diverse ethnic groups can coexist and contribute to the Canadian society" (Park, 2021, para. 1). Alongside Canada's cohesive appearance, however, Indigenous and anti-racist scholars have long argued that Canada's multicultural reputation masks the persistence of white supremacy through continued "dispossession of Indigenous peoples and their lands and self-determining authority" (Coulthard, 2014, pp. 6–7) and dominance of tEnglish and French language and cultural values (Razack, 2002). Colonial violence and systemic racism continue to be enacted through laws that subordinate Indigenous communities and territorial claims (e.g., the Indian Act of 1876), while immigration policies uphold capitalist exploitation and the institutionalization of whiteness as a norm in Canadian society (Dua et al., 2005; Walia, 2021).

Canada's complex relationship with multicultural inclusion resurfaced with the spread of the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic in 2020, which rekindled longstanding racist violence toward East and Southeast Asian-presenting Canadians, who reported a sharp increase in hate crimes (Chinese Canadian National Council Toronto Chapter, 2021; Toronto Police Service, 2020). Simultaneously, Black, Indigenous, and racialized Canadians have faced the highest infection rates and loss of life through out the Coronavirus pandemic

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due to preexisting economic inequality and systemic racism (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2021). Police shootings of unarmed Black and racialized individuals and the "discovery" of unmarked graves of Indigenous children on the grounds of former residential schools contributed further to public outcrys for institutional reforms to address the root causes of systemic racism (Bensadoun, 2021; Cotter, 2022). Considering the substantial impact systemic racism has on collective wellbeing, these societal issues have fostered critical efforts to address settler colonialism and systemic racism in social work in education and practice.

In 2013, the Canadian Association of Social Work Education (CASWE) updated the accreditation requirements for social work education "to challenge the injustice of Canada's colonial history and continuing colonization efforts as they relate to the role of social work education in Canada and the self-determination of the Indigenous peoples" (2014, p. 3). CASWE subsequently recognized the profession's complicity in the cultural genocide of Indigenous communities (Canadian Association for Social Work Education, 2017), anti-Black racism (Canadian Association for Social Work Education, 2020a), and condemned anti-Asian racist incidents during the pandemic (Canadian Association for Social Work Education, 2020b). Although "immigration status" was listed as one of several diversity "characteristics" the 2014 CASWE educational standards, the 2021 standards offer no guidance on education for social work with immigrants.

Since its inception as a profession, social workers' views toward immigrants in North America have mirrored prevailing public opinions (Park & Kemp, 2006). While early 20th century social workers covered the political spectrum from British imperialists to radical socialists, they shared investment in "white civility" when urging newly arrived immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe to adopt a Protestant work ethic, the English language, and respect for British common law (Johnstone, 2016). Although civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s spurred the development of anti-oppressive, structural, and cultural competency approaches that challenge racial, gender and class-based discrimination (Jennissen & Lundy, 2011), social work practice with immigrants has continued to construct "cultural" differences as problems to be managed (Park, 2005; Razack, 1998; Yan & Chan, 2010). Dua et al. (2005), furthermore, have argued that equity-based anti-racist activism has often failed to advocate for Indigenous self-determination and land repatriation.

Recognizing the multiplicity of views within the profession, the current article presents a critical discourse analysis of 181 written responses from social workers who took part in a national survey (n = 1125) of social workers' attitudes toward immigrants in Canada. In previous studies with social work students and practitioners in the United States, Sweden, and Israel, social workers reported favorable attitudes toward immigrants overall. Social workers are, however, are more likely to express negative attitudes toward undocumented immigrants if they have less contact with immigrants in their daily life or if they identify as politically conservative (Park et al., 2011; Schütze, 2020). Social workers who report negative attitudes are also more likely to deny that immigrants face a disproportionate degree of structural inequality compared to citizens (Park et al., 2021). While there is robust literature on anti-racist practice with immigrants in Canada, attention to social work with immigrants who have a precarious status remains scant (Hanley et al., 2020).

Toward contextualizing how Canadian social workers represent their views toward immigrants, we begin with an overview of immigration and settler colonialism in Canada. We then discuss conceptualizations of critical multicultural and anti-racist approaches to social work practice with immigrants. Following a discussion of our research methods, we analyze four themes within the written commentary related to a) the centrality of multiculturalism and respect for diversity to Canadian social work identity; b) representations of social workers' responsibility to Indigenous communities relative to their support for immigrants; c) perceptions of immigrant threat and anti-immigrant sentiment expressed by social workers, and d) value conflicts surrounding social work practice with immigrants. We conclude with implications for social work education and practice.

Background & theoretical framework

Constructing Canada as an immigrant, white settler nation

Canada was formed as a "nation" in 1867 through the union of British colonies, cessation of French colonies, broken Treaties with 97 Indigenous communities, and unlawful claims to unceded lands that have been continually inhabited by Indigenous peoples for thousands of years (Greer, 2018). While Canada remains a top destination for international migrants, racial disparities persist for Indigenous and nonwhite communities who face higher rates of poverty (Block & Galabuzi, 2011; Campaign 2000, 2022), overrepresentation in the criminal justice and child welfare systems (Blackstock, 2016; Maynard, 2017; Sinclair, 2019) and poorer physical and mental health (Gagnon et al., 2021; Magalhaes et al., 2010).

Throughout Canada's history, exclusionary immigration policies have maintained a steady supply of migrant labor while restricting the inclusion of non-White migrants (Sharma, 2006). During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, racial, heteropatriarchal, class, and religious preferences in Canada's immigration laws facilitated the entry of "preferred" Christian immigrants from Western and Northern Europe and "acceptable" immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe who displaced and repossessed Indigenous territories through capitalist "development" (e.g., industrial logging and agriculture) (Razack, 2002). While "undesirable" migrants from Japan, China, British India, and the Caribbean were at times admitted for their labor, their inclusion into Canadian society was directly and indirectly restricted through racist policies (e.g., the internment of people of Japanese descent during World War II) and de facto racial and religious segregation within health care, housing, education, and the labor market (Maynard, 2017). Explicit forms of racism were removed from Canadian immigration policies in the 1960s under the pressure of the civil rights movement. As part of the global shift toward neoliberal globalization, Canada's immigration system was then restructured in the 1970s to recruit both "high-skilled" permanent immigrants and "low-skilled" nonpermanent residents to meet short-term economic interests while restricting temporary migrants' access to social, political, and economic rights associated with Canadian citizenship (Sharma, 2006; Villegas, 2013).

To date, immigration remains the primary driver of population growth and ethnocultural diversity. In the 2016 Census, one in five people in Canada identified as foreign-born (i.e., immigrated to Canada during their lifetime), with the same proportion of Canadians identifying as a "visible minority" (officially defined as people who are neither Indigenous nor Caucasian; Statistics Canada, 2023). While not all "visible minorities" are immigrants, nine of the top ten source countries for new permanent residents in 2020 were located in Asia or Africa. As Canada has steadily increased the number of new permanent residents over time (reaching a high of 401,000 in 2021), the number of temporary residents has grown at twice the rate since 2009, and an estimated 1.3 million migrants resided in Canada with precarious status in 2019. While there are no official numbers of undocumented residents in Canada, this population is also presumed to be growing, especially in the wake of the global pandemic (Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2020). Migrants who have a precarious immigration status are denied many social, economic and political rights associated with citizenship and face significant barriers to accessing housing, health, and social services as a result of exclusionary eligibility, lack of financial resources, or fear that seeking services could lead to deportation (Goldring & Landolt, 2013). Precarious immigration is also associated with long-term family separation, economic insecurity, poor education outcomes for children, and declining health (Magalhaes et al., 2010).

Critical multiculturalism and anti-racist approaches to social work with immigrants

Social work's foundations in Western Liberal traditions inform the profession's commitment to respect for the "inherent worth and dignity of persons" and the "pursuit of social justice" (Canadian Association of Social Workers, 2005). While multicultural practice promotes self-

awareness and adapting assessments and interventions to "better suit the defined cultural group" (Williams, 2006), these approaches often ignore how colonial, racial, and heteropatriarchal relations of power direct social workers to essentialize "racial" and "cultural" differences among white, Indigenous, and racialized (nonwhite) Canadians (Razack & Jeffery, 2002). As Chatterjee (2018) argues, capitalist exploitation – as a colonial ideology – "enact[s] racialized precarity" (pp. 648) through "simultaneous dispossession of Indigenous peoples and precarious incorporation/resettlement of immigrants" (pp. 644). A more radical approach to social work would include "naming and undoing the practices of colonization and racism [which] require an acknowledgement and critique of power" and paying attention to interlocking forms of oppression that operate through social work's entanglement with the settler-colonial state (Simpson et al. (2011). Thus, we aim to consider how social workers' representations of immigrants – as distinct from Indigenous communities – reifies the legitimacy of the Canadian state to determine who belongs.

Methodology

This paper presents an analysis of textual data collected through an exploratory, cross-sectional online survey that aimed to explore Canadian social workers' attitudes toward immigrants (See Bhuyan et al, 2023). Between May and August 2020, a convenience sample of 1,110 post-BSW and MSW social workers were recruited to complete an online survey, after responding to a recruitment e-mail sent to 21 regional and national social work organizations across Canada.

The survey instrument was administered through Qualtrics, a widely recognized survey platform. The survey queried respondents on their perception of immigrants who have different immigration statuses (e.g., permanent residents, refugees, temporary residents, and undocumented immigrants), respondents' personal and professional contact with immigrants, their social work education, and work experiences. The attitude scale, originally developed in the United States by (Park et al., 2011) mirrored questions from sociological research on public perceptions of immigrants as a symbolic threat (i.e. to multicultural, democratic values), an economic threat (i.e. they take away jobs), a security threat (e.g. as criminals or terrorists), or as a burden on the welfare state (See Bhuyan et al., In Press for more detals on the survey instrument). Upon completion of the survey, participants were presented with an open-ended question: "Do you have any additional comments on immigration and social work?" This prompted responses from 181 self-selected participants, which we analyze in this paper. Our analysis approach drew from feminist and critical theories of language and meaning-making to examine the participants' comments in depth.

Sample

Following the study eligibility criteria, all respondents ($n = 181$) who submitted a written comment identified as practicing social workers who had completed a BSW, MSW, or DSW. Of the 173 respondents who completed demographic questions, 61% identified as white/European, 33% as nonwhite (e.g., Asian, Black, Arab, Latin American), and 6% Indigenous; with 1% preferring not to answer. The largest proportion of respondents also identified as 74% female, and 70% held "progressive" political views. Most of the sample reportedly lived in Ontario (46%), Quebec (14%), and British Columbia (9%) (Canada's most populated provinces). There were no respondents from Canada's Northern provinces and territories. Over half (57%) of the respondents lived in an urban area, followed by 31% in suburban and 12% in rural settings. More than half (57%) worked as mental health counselors. While almost all respondents identified as Canadian citizens (93%), almost one-third (30%) identified as immigrants, and almost two-thirds of respondents (61%) had at least one immediate family member who immigrated to Canada (e.g., parent, spouse/partner).

Data analysis methods

Feminist and critical theories of language and meaning-making (Sandoval, 2000; Wahab et al., 2012) informed our analysis of how social workers represent their personal and professional values, knowledge about immigration, and attitudes toward immigrants. After repeated reading of the textual data, we generated theoretical (e.g., multiculturalism, immigrant threat) and *in vivo* analytic codes (i.e., topics raised by respondents, e.g., settler colonialism) to organize the data. Toward considering the limitations of this survey's data, it is important to acknowledge that our analysis of textual data from one open-ended question does not represent how *all* Canadian social workers view immigrants. This data, however, provides insights into the use of discourse by social workers who are making sense of their understandings of and relationship to immigration and settler colonialism in Canada.

Analysis

Multicultural and anti-racist identity among Canadian social workers

"Social workers in this survey framed their commitment to multicultural diversity and inclusion as an extension of both their Canadian and social work identity, as illustrated by the following, it is the duty of social workers to work for the betterment of all" (37) and "we [social workers] should strongly encourage diversity, inclusion and provide a safety net for all" (140). This commitment to liberal multiculturalism was further echoed in calls on the federal government to invest "more money, more resources" (104) in immigrant services. Paralleling what Weinberg and Fine (2020) have noted, it appears that social workers' value-based identity constructs an image of social work as inherently justice-oriented, despite the profession's previously admitted and presumably ongoing role in perpetuating systemic inequality.

Most references to social work's commitment to diversity and inclusion in this sample appeared closely tied to personal and familial stories that emphasize an imagined unity among Canadians (and social workers) who are "immigrants" (i.e., not Indigenous), regardless of when they or their ancestors came to Canada or where they originated, as illustrated in the following,

> From my understanding almost all people immigrated to Canada, either from Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia etc. . . Maybe I came here recently, or My grandparents or great grandparents or great-great Grandparents came long time ago. Regardless of what, we are Canadians now. So, respect each other and respect Canadian laws and values. All that we should do [is] follow the social work principles, and code of ethics.

This type of commentary reinforces an ideal that to be Canadian is to "respect each other" and "respect Canadian laws and values" (175) regardless of one's origins. Despite the good intentions, such comments obscure the historical and persistent inequalities racialized and religious minorities face while reinforcing assimilation to "Canadian laws and values" as a shared value.

In contrast to comments that imagine a unified professional value-base and national identity, some participants connected their commitment to "diversity" to their personal experiences with discrimination as a "person of color," as someone who had a temporary or undocumented status, or as having witnessed discrimination against immigrants. For instance, one respondent who acknowledged social work's value base also noted bias against immigrants in the field, stating:

> I embrace my ethical & professional responsibility to serve ALL clients to the best of my ability. As an immigrant (who recently acquired citizenship), I have witnessed bias against immigrants, but also resentment caused by a greater emphasis on accommodating immigrants' cultures & preferences, than on immigrants' responsibility to respect and adapt to their "adoptive" country". (emphasis in original)

Thus, while Canadian social workers consistently express unwavering commitment to diversity, comments that invoke multicultural values are multivocal (Bakhtin, 1981) (i.e. signaling multiple and at times contradictory meanings), with "diversity" sometimes referring to a) a matter-of-fact

descriptor of Canada's demographic make-up, b) a symbol of social work's value-based identity, or c) a normative ideal associated with assimilation and adherence to Canadian laws and values.

Anti-racist and anti-colonial critique of Canada as an immigrant-settler nation

While phrases like, "unless we are Native, we are all immigrants to Canada" were frequently used by participants to signify a unified national identity, some questioned why the survey instrument did not acknowledge Canada's settler-colonial context or asked why Indigenous communities were "left out of the conversation" (144). For added context, the survey was designed to mirror public opinion polls on attitudes toward immigrants (Wilkes & Corrigall-Brown, 2011). In one section, respondents were asked to agree or disagree with characteristics they believe are "important for someone to be Canadian" (e.g., "To respect Canadian multicultural values" or "To follow Canadian culture and traditions"). While some respondents endorsed a belief that immigrants should uphold "Canadian laws and values", others found questions referring to "Canadian values" to be "Eurocentric" (144), "racist and offensive" (47), or reinforcing "a conservative bias" (85). Some critiqued the survey for not acknowledging Canada's history of settler colonialism nor the ongoing marginalization of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples. One respondent, who identified as Indigenous, shared they "struggled with some of the questions as [they] come from a dominant world view" (146). As anti-racist migration scholars, we agree with these critiques of survey items that reflected mainstream constructions of Canadian values without including decolonizing and anti-racist perspectives. As one participant aptly wrote,

> I think the question of "endangering Canadian customs" is over-simplified and loaded. Perhaps challenging a culture that has killed 80–90% of Indigenous Peoples, enslaved racialized people, and continues to contribute to bombing brown people in their homes is not necessarily a bad thing. Interesting research though.

These comments illustrate that anti-colonial resistance to the dominant narrative of Canadian multiculturalism among some social workers co-exists with social workers' affinity with Canadian multiculturalism described above.

Alongside comments that critique the survey's lack of attention to Indigenous communities, some respondents who described themselves as "working *with*" (11, emphasis added) or as an "*ally to*" (82, emphasis added) First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities, reported that questions about immigrants were simply not relevant to their day-to-day work or "that challenges in my workplace related to immigration are very rare" (67). Social workers working with First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and/or Indigenous communities (the majority of whom in our survey did not identify as Indigenous) recognize distinct concerns facing Indigenous people including access to clean water, cultural genocide and related intergenerational trauma. Another participant who identified as Indigenous called for "more knowledge and understanding of culture, including our own Indigenous peoples" as a commitment that could encompass social work with Indigenous and/or immigrant groups. A few participants advocated for the needs of Indigenous communities to be prioritized by the government. As one respondent noted,

> Canada's identity is multicultural. That doesn't mean all peoples are treated equitably. I think it's important that Canada improve policy and legislation to support an equitable settlement for newcomers. Additionally, I think it's important that Canada allocate sufficient resources for supporting Canada's Indigenous populations while respecting their right to self-determination. Can Canada continue accepting the same number or more of refugees AND ensure all communities have clean drinking water?

In this comment, the lack of fundamental rights for Indigenous communities is tied to an understanding that Canada has had limited resources available to address pressing problems like "clean drinking water." While failure to ensure accessible, clean drinking water on First Nation's reserves contravenes Canada's international human rights and Treaty obligations (Human Rights Watch, 2016), framing structural inequalities as a result of "limited resources"

obscures political decisions that lead to lack of investment in water and waste water infrastructure, enforceable regulations, and shared responsibility to care for the land.

Perceiving immigrants as an economic threat and symbolic cultural threat

While most social workers in our sample expressed positive views toward immigrants, several represented immigrants as an economic threat, a public burden, or a potential danger to Canadian society. In one example, a respondent who acknowledged that "[i]mmigration is a cornerstone to the Canadian economy" called on the government to be more discerning about which and how many immigrants to admit (117). Highlighting their stance, they shared, "I do believe that some screening needs to take place and that an economy and country can only absorb a certain number of people at a time. Otherwise, our schools, hospitals, and opportunities for jobs are not sufficient" (117). Statements like these, endorsing the representation of immigrants and refugees as contributing to a scarcity of public resources, obscure the larger context of "mass migration [as] the *outcome* of the *actual* crisis of capitalism, conquest, and climate change" (Walia, 2021, p. 3, emphasis in original). Both permanent and temporary (im)migrants, furthermore, already undergo stringent "screening" to meet language, income, criminality, and employability standards (Walia, 2021), despite this social worker's comment that Canada is not doing enough to "screen" for the right immigrants. In line with this view, some social workers in the sample suggested a more protectionist stance is needed from the government to preserve Canada's economic and cultural integrity, as one respondent wrote,

> Canada should be protected from immigrants who come to Canada to manipulate the system to get free money and housing but refuse to work and on top of that are reluctant to learn English or French. Some of them remain in their "ghettos" rejecting the law and Canadian culture.

A few respondents specifically called attention to "Citizenship by birth" (i.e., referring to *jus soli* citizenship in Canada which confers citizenship to anyone born on Canadian "soil") as a set of policies that attract "tourist pregnancy," which according to one participant, "[not only unfairly burden[s] the health care and social service system, but encourages pregnant women to take unnecessary risks for themselves and the unborn babies" (68). Echoing previous research on Canadian public attitudes, it appears that some social workers perceive too many or the wrong immigrants as a symbolic threat to Canada's identity, language, and values (Gravelle, 2018).

A small number of respondents expressed concerns that Canada is admitting dangerous, risky, or amoral immigrants. While in most cases, social workers in the sample avoid using explicit references to racial or ethnic categories when framing immigrants as an economic or symbolic threat, it was noted that the instances where explicitly racist views were communicated were primarily directed to Muslims. One social worker wrote that Canada should,

> Stop allowing violent racist radical eastern people into our country. Get the bombers and [I]slamic sharia law people OUT. Remove them if they are jihadist, terrorists, as this is a crime against humanity not just Canadians. Stop allowing anybody to come here and drain our health and welfare system.

Cautioning that Muslims do not "accept state secularism," another respondent suggested that "we [the Canadian government] should limit the arrival of Muslims . . . [because] women are very diminished in that culture" (161, translated from French). To remedy issues related to immigration, another respondent called upon the field to take a more proactive anti-immigrant stance, stating, "I think that social workers should participate in denouncing illegal immigrants," which arguably is in direct violation of the CASW code of ethics, "and support the adoption of Canadian values by immigrants" (160; translated from French).

Several participants commented on the broad spectrum of attitudes toward immigrants within the profession. Some attributed this range to regional differences, noting that "outside of urban areas with high concentrations of recent immigrants, there is inadequate attention paid to immigration-related

practices and concerns" (155). One respondent suggested that "social workers who are younger will likely be more open to immigrants and refugees, whereas the ones who may [have] seen immigrants/refugees as contributing to terrorism or crime would tend to be older (167)." A few respondents stressed that lack of exposure to immigrants, may contribute to "a lot of misconceptions about immigrant/refugee populations" (154) and that "you can't just read about immigration, you have to live it" (97).

Value conflicts surrounding social work practice with immigrants

Despite considerable growth in Canada's immigrant population, many respondents reported receiving insufficient training on immigration policies or working with immigrants with different status types. As one respondent wrote, "It's startling to realize how little my education focused on immigration laws and policies in Canada" (89). Those who reported having knowledge about immigration tended to have learned this from personal or workplace experience.

Social workers also expressed differing views regarding the profession's responsibility toward immigrants. While several respondents argue for practitioners in direct practice settings to have "a good understanding of immigration laws, policies, and procedures for all of the immigration categories covered in this survey, and how they have a direct impact on the lives and wellbeing of immigrant persons" (38), others saw practice with immigrants as a specialization: "I don't think immigration law needs to be part of the MSW/BSW. We can only teach so much in school and then specialize in our jobs" (99). In response to a survey question which asked if "social workers have an obligation to serve and advocate for non-status immigrants" one participant wrote that, "'obligation' to support immigration is a strong word" (108), while another commented, "I don't think social workers are obligated to advocate for immigrants unless they are working with immigrants" (77). Doubts regarding social workers' obligation to advocate for immigrants indicates that for some, the "pursuit of social justice" as a as a core professional value, is contingent on state-centric categories of belonging.

The lack of adequate education on immigration policy and social work practice with immigrants who have different statuses may contribute to the assumption that immigrants would be better served in ethnic-specific or immigrant-serving organizations, as suggested in the following comment: "I get the impression that if someone is an immigrant it's generally believed they should seek support from the organization that specifically works with immigrants. I do not believe most social workers have the knowledge to competently work with immigration-related issues" (42). Others noted that racialized social workers who immigrated to Canada also face systemic racism, especially if they are internationally educated. One respondent shared that "Being an immigrant (9 years) and now a Canadian Citizen who is still struggling to find a suitable employment, the culture of employing and retaining Internationally trained SWs [social workers] needs a major change in attitude" (142). Another noted that staff of immigrant-serving organizations, the majority of whom are racial minorities, are paid the "bare minimum" (26).

Considering the systemic challenges facing immigrants, including social workers who are racialized or are internationally trained, several respondents employed structural and anti-oppressive critiques of the immigration system to argue that social workers should fight injustices within existing social service agencies. As one respondent recounted, "[m]y employer's policy is that it requires a valid [provincial public health insurance] card, however, we find creative ways to treat clients if they do not have one" (5). Others called for expanding employment opportunities for social workers to work with immigrants:

> There needs to be way more trained and licensed social workers readily available to help and assist refugee claimants and refugees when they come. More jobs for this... An organized, supportive, therapeutic array of professional social work services. Otherwise, people can fall through the cracks in the current system."

On a promising note, a few respondents shared that the survey questions prompted further reflection on their own knowledge and experience with immigration. One respondent wrote that the survey "made me reflect on the prejudice I experienced being a minority person even though I am Canadian born" (75), while another respondent wrote,

> I have never thought about immigration policies at my current place of work as I live in a relatively rural area and I've never personally worked with any immigrant families on my caseload. After this survey, I am going to take a look through our policy manual and see what policies (if any) are in place around immigration status & my practice as a child welfare social worker.

These comments illustrate that increasing consciousness of precarious immigration could inform anti-oppressive policies and practice with immigrants while recognizing how systemic racism also impacts social work practitioners.

Discussion and conclusion

Given that nearly one in four Canadians are born outside the country (Statistics Canada, 2023), including an estimated 2.2 million non-permanent residents who have a precarious legal status , there is no doubt that immigration in general, and precarious immigration status in particular, represents a transveral concerns for social worker practice. While some social workers in this study called for greater attention to immigration in social work education, others viewed that practice to be a specialization, relevant only to those who work directly with immigrants. The reported absence of immigrant clients in some social work practices settings, however, may be more indicative of an unwelcoming environment (e.g., lack of cultural safety, stringent eligibility requirements, fees) as opposed to a lack of immigrant presence. Even stereotypically homogenous and remote regions in Canada have seen significant growth in the immigrant population, as employers turn to immigration to address short-term labor needs (Government of Canada, 2021).

Social workers' varied sense of responsibility toward immigrants who are deemed less deserving or "illegal" in public discourse, may reflect the lack of attention in social work to the colonial and racist roots of Canada's immigration system and the role Canada plays globally in displacement and migrant im/mobility (Chatterjee, 2018). Most of the social workers in this study reported receiving limited training on the Canadian immigration system or how precarious legal status is known to produce lifelong, intergenerational consequences for immigrants and their families (Goldring & Landolt, 2011; Saad, 2013). The structural invisbility of immigration and how colonial ideologies shape immigrant legal status, we argue, represents a significant gap in CASWE's accreditation standards and guidelines. Equally concerning, is the persistence of both covert and overtly racist views among some social workers in this study, who qualify their professional commitment to promote immigrant rights relative to the perceived threat immigrants pose to Canada's identity, including those who explicitly racist and Islamophobic views.

Though unexpected, we welcomed respondents' critique of the survey as failing to acknowledge Canada's settler-colonial context and social work's responsibility toward Indigenous communities. As the survey sought to elicit both positive and negative views toward immigrants, some questions were intentionally designed to reflect normative dimensions of whiteness as an unmarked Canadian norm. Respondents' critique of whiteness in the survey echoes commitments issued by social work professional organizations to disrupt settler colonialism within social work (Allan et al., 2019; Fortier & Hong-Sing Wong, 2018). Furthermore, this critique reflects emerging pedagogical and empirical scholarship in social work that promotes self-determination and healing within First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Indigenous communities, through Indigenous and decolonial practices (Allan et al., 2019; Baikie, 2009; Blackstock, 2016; Chatterjee, 2019).

We also note, however, that the common refrain that "unless we are Native, we are all immigrants to Canada," (144) continues to romanticize unity among Canadians while dichotomizing interlocking forms of injustices facing Indigenous and racialized immigrant

populations. Insisting "we are all immigrants" (144) inadvertently downplays the systemic oppressions experienced by racialized immigrants (including social workers). Additionally, suggesting that the needs of newcomers can only be addressed once those of Indigenous people are resolved reinforces a "scarcity of resources" mentality that ignores the accumulation of privatized wealth through neoliberal policies that have reduced public spending on education, housing, income assistance and health, while continuing to neglect Indigenous communities' basic needs and land claims. Settler Canadians ascribing to such talking points essentially communicate the desire to close the door of opportunity behind them under a disingenuous guise of altruism (i.e., conserve resources for Indigenous communities). Framing Indigenous and racialized immigrants as competing for limited resources, furthermore, ignores the potential for building relational solidarity between racialized immigrants and Indigenous communities.

This exploratory study suggests that while the social work profession has notably increased attention to the effects of colonialism and systemic racism in Canada, social work education and training do not adequately address how colonial ideologies within Canada's immigration system shapes social work practice. The apparent disconnect between social work education and knowledge of precarious immigration leaves social workers poorly prepared to understand Canada's role in producing racial inequality through global capitalism and migrant displacement, but also the dehumanization and inequality produced through Canada's immigration system.

The results of this study encourage further exploration of how settler colonial ideologies continue to shape social work practice with citizens and non-citizens alike, including social work's affinity for multicultural values of respecting diversity "regardless of race, ethnicity or cultural norms" (37). Following Elkchirid and colleagues' (2020, p. 301) call to "disrupt colonial relations, divisions, and separations" within social work, we encourage greater attention to global hegemonies that produce displacement and im/mobility for Indigenous and immigrant populations. Toward upholding calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, we suggest a concerted effort to reimagine social work's ethics to incorporate relational solidarity among Indigenous, white settler and racialized settler communities that enable resistance to exclusionary policies within capitalist nation-state structures, while fostering a resurgence of sovereignty and self-determination.

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