

Including Decolonization in Social Work Education and Practice

Andrea Tamburro

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Abstract

Social service providers must support the recovery of Indigenous peoples from the effects of colonization. Therefore, social work educators must help decolonize our profession. Indigenous North Americans, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians have experienced colonization and its multigenerational impact.

Without an understanding of the effects of colonization, social workers, many of whom will work with Indigenous clients, will be less prepared to encourage positive change. A description of decolonizing Social Work practice and education through the application of post-colonial theory and approaches is provided. This approach can also inform Social Work with African-American and Indigenous Hispanic peoples since these groups have also been negatively affected by the oppression of colonization. The focus of this discussion is the application of post-colonial approaches to Social Work. The decolonization of Social Work practice, through the incorporation of Indigenous worldviews into Social Work curriculum including knowledge, skills, and values, which are needed for effective provision of social services, is demonstrated through reforms to Indigenous child welfare services.

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