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Pedagogy of the protest: teaching social workers about collective action and the social policy context

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1   Introduction

Global disruptions such as COVID-19 have led to mass unemployment and service overload in social welfare systems. Service users and marginalized communities have responded with collective protest in several countries to affect social policies, which also affects social work education (Bright, 2021). Simultaneously, the pandemic threatens to further erode the solidarity needed to address the tension between equality and autonomy central to social work (Pentini & Lorenz, 2020). Although there are subfields of community development and social policy in social work whereby collective action and resistance is discussed, we argue that social workers are ill prepared when responding to collective protests. In turn, social movements have been pointed to as important for future social work education (Ferguson, 2017), but social work education remains dominated by case management and clinical practice focused on social problems of individuals, groups, and families as well as an emphasis in serving the interest of a social welfare state (Asakura et al., 2020). Conversely, social work education is less focused on addressing social problems at the community and national level and teaching collective protest against a social welfare state. Where there is discussion about social problems at the community and national level, social workers are seldom taught about collective protests by marginalized groups against social welfare systems (Aaslund & Woll, 2021; Noble, 2018), especially the dilemmas and complexity when it is a system in which a social worker is employed (Aaslund & Chear, 2020).

Using a conceptual framework (Figure 1) for comparative analysis of Norway and US, with Black Lives Matter as a case example, we critically examine the political contexts of social welfare and the dilemmas social workers in political engagement may encounter in order to offer suggestions for social workers' response to collective action. For the purposes of this paper, we use the term 'respond' as a way to suggest the contribution and/or participation in protest. This includes the variation of practices within protest engagement.

2   A brief history of social work and welfare policy in Norway and the USA

Norway is often described as a social democratic regime or Nordic welfare model, characterized by relatively high and redistributive income taxation, large public sector and active labor market policy. Social work as a profession did not appear until the building of the welfare state in the 1950s and 60s and has been closely linked with public sector administering benefits and services of the welfare state (Sønneland, 2020). Contrary to many other countries, social work in Norway is not a licensed profession, although there is an ethics board and a system of specialty approval administered by the National Social Worker's Association [Fellesorganisasjonen]. Historically, social workers have organized with worker's unions rather than other professional organizations. More recently, an increasing number of

association members support advocating for a license and rank professionalization as the most important focus for change, surpassing wage issues, working conditions and social policy (Rød, 2014).

The welfare system in Norway is highly decentralized, with social workers often working on a local level (Lyngstad, 2015). The state administers rights-based and often standardized benefits, linked with achievements in labor. The municipalities are responsible for social assistance and social care. Local governments and welfare organizations will therefore often be the most natural targets for protest. Rising unemployment and dependence on social assistance gave rise to new groups of client organizations, unemployed and poor people's movements in the 1990s demanding social justice (Lødemel & Trickey, 2001). While Norway has a strong public welfare state, there is also a wide range of voluntary organizations providing social work and care. Nongovernmental organizations have played an important role as a platform for social workers to address injustice and inequality, although a movement towards more marketization and charity has resulted in less room for protest (Selle, Strømsnes, & Loga, 2018).

Comparatively, social welfare systems within the United States have evolved from informal systems of aiding families in need to more formal structures governed by written policies and programs, both on a national and state level (Reisch, 2018). Unlike the Western industrialized social welfare states, the United States' welfare system has evolved in a different manner, with reliance on state and local governments and the private sector as opposed to the federal government. The United States has been typologized as a liberal welfare regime characterized by relatively low levels of social spending, means-tested welfare programs, and a preference for market-based solutions to social welfare. The market is the primary vehicle for welfare, leaving the state only minimally involved. Wage inequality remains relatively high, whereas public expenditures remain relatively low, and the benefit structure favors the middle class, which has resulted in severe income disparities (Dodson, 2016).

Social workers play a major role in this social service system and are regulated through the affiliation and ethical guidelines of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), a nationwide and global professional association established in 1955 that focuses on maintaining professional standards and advancing social policies (NASW, 2021). Most states in the US now have regulating agencies and licensing boards, and there are numerous specialty practice areas with credentialing opportunity (Pawar & Thomas, 2017). The history of social work as a profession and education in the US is thus longer and stronger than in Norway. Social work achieved professional status in the 1930s, and although public welfare was emerging, most professional social workers practiced in voluntary agencies. This period also marked the emergence of several professional organizations (Stuart, 2013).

Several theories signify political opportunities an important factor in understanding the emergence of protest (Benford & Snow, 2000), but literature regarding the relation between welfare regime and protest is scarce (Dodson, 2016). Compared to Norway, social policy in the US is characterized by more complex relationships between federal, state-wide and local governments and institutions, which have also been characterized as a fragmented welfare state (Pierson, 1995). The disparities between states, and between urban and rural communities also offer a wide range of differences in opportunities for political participation and protest. The amount, scope and influence of protests and social movements from marginalized communities have been significant in the US from the civil rights movement to protests by welfare recipients, unemployed, poor and the homeless population, to name a few

(Cress & Snow, 2000; Piven & Cloward, 1979). Some evidence suggests that economic uncertainty is a stronger factor in mobilizing protest in a liberal welfare regime compared to other political environments (Dodson, 2016). Others suggest that increased political rights have led to society tolerating more contentious expressions of conflict (Piven & Cloward, 1992), and that the receptiveness of political systems vary (McAdam, Tarrow, et al., 1996). Scandinavian scholars have also suggested that social democratic regimes encourage cooperative strategies, thus avoiding more contentious, conflict-oriented efforts (Eriksson, 2018). These are important considerations for social workers to take into account when considering political engagement.

3   Social workers and political engagement

Social work and social protest have arguably been an under-researched field (Grodofsky & Makaros, 2016). Social work, being a state-mediated profession located in a bureaucratic framework, has been argued to challenge the potential connection between social work and social movements (Thompson, 2002). This can pose as a dilemma when considering social workers' professional views and responsibilities in upholding social justice and human rights (Ife & Fiske, 2006). When examining the role social workers may play in collective action and political engagement, there are many contradicting studies detailing the complexities, as well as the internal and external barriers they may face (Rocha et al., 2010). Single case examples have reported social workers playing important roles in forcing policy changes, and even argue that social work *is* protest (Bird, 2016; Shokane & Masoga, 2019; Valentich et al., 2020). Social workers have the unique role of serving as the bridge between vulnerable populations and the governing system within versatile fields, such as healthcare, social services and the justice system. This allows social workers to act as intermediaries for social movement and change. At the same time, the level of political activism and protest among social workers is debated. Studies suggest that social workers are more politically active compared to the general population, but mainly in non-contentious activities (Hamilton & Fauri, 2001; Ritter, 2007; Rome & Hoechstetter, 2010). Other studies suggest there is decreased political participation among social workers. A national study in the United States conducted by Ritter (2008) surveyed 396 social workers across 11 states to determine their political participation levels, which resulted in a majority of social workers reporting feelings of inadequacy in their political advocacy skills, unlike their skills in clinical or direct service work. The study pointed toward social work education as being a deciding factor in building social work students' confidence within advocacy and political engagement. Norwegian social workers also expressed alienated attitudes towards social policy, despite being intermediaries between welfare users and social services (Grønningsæter & Kiik, 2012).

The impact of social work education on political participation also differs. A recent study in Taiwan found 39 percent of the students surveyed had participated in social or political protest. Years of work experience, human rights training and past participation were moderating factors for advocating for social justice (Chen & Tang, 2021), while a study in the US reported far smaller rates of activism (Swank & Fahs, 2013, 2014). Earlier findings in the US found 44 percent of students studying any major had participated in social justice activities (Torres-Harding et al., 2014). This suggests that the political participation among social work students is a complex topic rather than a linear process. Such findings suggest that cultural and political context are important, and challenges the significance of the relationship between education and collective action.

According to Asakura et al. (2020), most social work students in the United States choose clinical social work and individual practice as opposed to macro practice, which can leave

little room for political involvement. Similarly, Fisher's (1995) examination of social work curriculum and its consequential debates surrounding politicized social work education points toward a more individualistic approach stemming from the Darwinist politics of the 1980s, which emphasizes social work private practice, individual counseling, and a turn toward administration and management within the field. For students in general, time, values, access, knowledge and religiosity have been suggested to predict attitudes towards social justice (Johnson-Hakim et al., 2013, Torres-Harding et al., 2013). Such individual features are likely to affect social work students as well, which is partly suggested by some studies (Swank & Fahs, 2013, 2014). This is in line with studies of collective action suggesting that both instrumental rewards and identification play an important role in mobilizing to collective action (Sturmer & Simon, 2004; van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013).

This de-emphasis on public sector work aligns with Finn and Jacobson's (2003) point toward clinical social work's lack of emphasis on power differences, thus enabling social workers to focus on the more immediate, clinical needs of their clients rather than the role the client plays in society as a whole. This tackles an integral and core social work concept of "person in environment", yet the "environment" is what is at question when it comes to political engagement within the society and the marginalized client and/or community within the environment. Asakura et al. (2020) also point out the ambiguity of social justice within the clinical social work curriculum, thus creating a barrier on the institutional level when it comes to cohesive comprehension among social work students. Despite the strong emphasis on social justice in social work ethics, this application can still be elusive in daily clinical work.

Coinciding with this emphasis on clinical social work among social work education programs is the evolving nature of the social work profession, which in many clinical settings adapts the medical model for client care (Asakura et al., 2020). This professionalization of social work, however, can make concepts such as social justice and the social worker's responsibility for political advocacy a complex concept to tackle. Professionalism of social work can also be seen as in opposition to the interest of oppressed communities and advocacy (Collins, 2007). The ambiguity of social justice and social workers' political engagement can also be attributed to the evolving nature of social work and its continued changes within the professional practice contexts (Asakura et al., 2020). This professionalization and the dilemma social workers face in establishing their professionality within competing healthcare settings aligns social workers' focus with a more administrative approach rather than adhering to their social work perspective. This can be incongruous with social work ethics when it comes to overlooking social justice concepts. The stated obligation within the National Association of Social Workers [NASW] Code of Ethics (2021) emphasizes the need for social workers to engage in social and political action, thus forcing them to "quiet" this responsibility in lieu of employer pressure.

As mentioned, place of employment may also influence social workers' ability or interest in collective action participation. Social workers partaking in social protest can experience loyalty conflicts on multiple levels: personal, collegial administrative and ideological (Makaros & Grodofsky, 2016). Expectations from directors can be ambiguous (Makaros et al., 2020), they can experience sanctions, and even get a criminal record that could jeopardize their registration or deem them unfit for practice (Williams, 2019). Varying degrees of encouragement from employing agencies can affect social workers' participation in such movements. The field of collective action offers little ethical guidance (Collins, 2007; Hardina et al., 2015; Mendes, 2002), while managerialism and marketization can encourage social workers to resist acting accordingly with their ethical obligations (Carey & Foster,

2011; Strier & Bershtling, 2016; Weinberg & Banks, 2019). Karger and Hernandez's (2004) research points toward how social service agencies often discourage their employees from political activities and therefore put social workers and other social service professionals in a bind as this might conflict with their political views and professional values. This could be understood as a type of neoliberal governance directed at the social worker's self and identity, rather than at his or her behavior (Foucault, 1988; Herz & Lalander, 2018). In this way, the social worker might discipline both her clients and herself, rather than wait for formal sanctions from a supervisor or employee (Lipsky, 1980).

A qualitative study conducted by Grodofsky and Makaros (2016) exploring the involvement of 12 social workers who participated in the Israeli Social Protest Movement in the summer of 2011 showed that a majority of social workers participated in the protest as private citizens, rather than within their professional scope. A partial explanation for this experience of role conflict was due to the overall lack of support from their employer, as well as a feeling of lack of competency to engage in macro level social protest and organization. Social workers thereby felt more comfortable protesting on a personal level rather than as professionals. Despite social work ethics' emphasis on promoting social justice, social workers may feel like they must hide their political views in the workplace.

4   Case example of Black Lives Matter

Beginning in North America and now globally, the Black Lives Matter movement addresses historical and current racial injustices and anti-Blackness (Harris, 2018; Watson, et al., 2020). Such anti-Black racism has led to health disparities, police brutality, mass incarceration, intergenerational trauma, and overall dehumanization and prejudice, all of which was brought to greater attention during the COVID-19 pandemic (Starks, 2021). National attention within the United States was highlighted by recent years' media documentation and coverage showing the brutal and inhumane treatment Black people have suffered due to anti-Black ideology, which is a woven part of the social and justice systems of the country. These media documentations include accounts of Black people facing racial bias from fellow community members, police violence, and inhumane killings (Kelly et al., 2020). In May 2020, recordings were released of George Floyd, an unarmed African American man, who was brutally arrested and killed by police in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This event led to nearly half a million people in over 500 locations to protest throughout the United States (Buchanan et al., 2020). This call for action would spread on an international scale, with similar protests occurring in Europe, Australia and Africa.

Movements for BLM also took place in Oslo, Norway (Croseotomaps, 2021). Although records of police brutality against Black people and people of color is not as common in Norway as opposed to the US, the BLM movement still brought a spotlight on the "widespread police profiling of people of color" and other racial injustices marginalized communities suffer from (Nallu, 2020). What began as an examination of discriminatory policing in the States, soon developed into effective dialogue of systemic racism present in other countries, such as Norway. Collective action took place in Norway with several organized protests, with global calls for solidarity for BLM. One protest occurred in front of Norway's Parliament, which spurred criticism from public health officials, although there were no reported new cases of infection after the demonstration (Olsson et al., 2020). This illuminates the differences of the constituents involved and how protests and demonstrations are perceived. Despite this critique, the BLM protests and dialogue have furthered awareness throughout the country, going so far as resulting in the Norwegian MP Petter Eide to nominate the Black Lives Matter movement for the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize (Belam, 2021).

When examining the role of social workers both in the United States and Norway in response to BLM, there is limited research and political coverage illustrating social workers' involvement. Nonetheless, professional and academic associations within these countries addressed BLM by issuing formal statements. For example, the NASW in the United States along with majority of universities responded to the BLM protests and recorded videos of police brutality by conveying their support of BLM and taking formal stances against racism and injustice. These statements included guidelines for activism and advocacy for social justice and antiracism. Additionally, many agencies worked toward policy examination of current practices and the dismantling of structural and institutionalized racism present within the agencies (NASW, 2021).

With collective action occurring on a global scale, it brings forth the question of what role social workers may play during the case of BLM. On a clinical level, there have been many calls for action for social workers that are in individual and family therapy to incorporate awareness of the BLM movement with greater focus on cultural sensitivity, intergenerational racial trauma, validation of the Black and racial experience, strengthening racial identity, and identifying the real experience of parenting when it comes to teaching children how to handle police encounters (Kelly et al., 2020; Watson et al., 2020). The organized protests that have occurred nationally and globally, however, bring forth the need for change on all levels, from individual, family and community to governmental and policy change. As emphasized in social work curricula, social workers have an in-depth knowledge and account of individual and community needs, thus making them an asset when it comes to policy making and change.

5   Collective Action and Framing

Theory about collective action can shed light on the challenges social movements like BLM pose for social workers. Several scholars have linked social work to social movements (Ferguson, 2017; Lorenz, 2005), but theories of social movements - like resource mobilization theory, political process theory or new social movement theory - have had scarce impact on social work research (Noble, 2018). A social movement can be understood as a result of collective actions where the actors fight for rights, recognition or resources. However, collective action is a complex term to define and has been used to encompass as different phenomenon as people crying together in cinemas, participation in football games or terrorist groups, demonstrations, interest groups, peer support or revolutions (Melucci, 1989:17). Used this way, collective action as a concept assumes that these phenomena share certain common features, but these features can only be understood as a very vague "collective character", of relatively similar behavior, not even necessary in the same place and time (Melucci, 1989; Seim, 2006). As a social movement, BLM occurred through numerous different forms of protests, simultaneously, but also across different times and spaces. This was not entirely spontaneous, or by happenstance. It was connected to a specific purpose, aim and strategy.

Many attempts have been made to form a common understanding of collective action, and subsequently social movements (Diani & Eyerman, 1992; McAdam, McCarthy et al, 1996; Melucci, 1996). Piven and Cloward criticize scholars for normalizing and rendering social movements harmless by including interest groups in regular political life. They claim the concept collective action should be reserved for protest movements with anti-institutional features representing resistance against the status quo (1979; 1992). This was later encompassed in the concept of contentious politics by McAdam, Tarrow et al. (1996), who argued that social movements contain a mixture of institutionalized and anti-institutional features, aims related to strategy and politics of identity, as well as rebellion and bureaucracy

(Diani & Eyerman, 1992; McAdam, Tarrow, et al., 1996). Contentious politics entail social movements, revolutions and collective actions characterized by the following criteria: "1) it involves contention: the making of interest-entailing claims on others; and 2) at least one party to the interaction (including third parties) is a government: an organization controlling the principal concentrated means of coercion within a defined territory" (McAdam, Tarrow, et al., 1996, p. 17). By this understanding, BLM could be considered contentious politics, making claims directed to both government and the means of coercion itself: the police. But this definition gives little understanding as to what the actual action is, and how it comes about.

By calling it an action, it implies that there are actors performing a process with a certain purpose. This collective process involves communication and therefore needs to be understood in a cultural and political context, which includes norms, conventions and values, as well as the actual situation in the society it takes place. For example, the posting of a black square for "Blackout Tuesday" on social media, which signified solidarity with BLM and protest against police brutality and racial inequality, was an internet campaign that was amplified by the music business to pause for a day in order to support the Black community (Jurgensen & Smith, 2020). This type of online campaign that linked different communities with BLM requires an understanding of a range of cultural conventions and norms among social media users, thus using a specific collective action method to further the social movement. This is also illustrated by other social justice movements that employ online campaigns, such as the recent trend of posting black and white pictures of women as a relevant example. Initiated to protest femicide in Turkey, the pictures became a global challenge related to women's empowerment in general (Abueish, 2021)[1]. The collective action needs to be perceived as such, not just as a random accumulation of people. Thereby the actors need to have motives, they cannot just accidentally partake in a demonstration, such as while crossing the street during a protest. Although motives change during time, the actors, the process and the purpose are paramount (Seim, 2006). BLM as a social movement encompasses a range of different types of protest: physical protests and marches, online and social media posts, front lawn posting signs and other demonstrations. Its participants also traversed generational and national boundaries. A purposeful understanding of this phenomenon needs to consider that the participants are aware of what they are participating in.

Melucci defines collective action:

> as a set of social practices (i) involving simultaneously a number of individuals or groups, (ii) exhibiting similar morphological characteristics in contiguity of time and space, (iii) implying a social field of relationships and (iv) the capacity of the people involved of making sense of what they are doing (Melucci, 1996, p. 20).

Melucci's definition of social movements also includes that the aim is breaching the system limits, though this is not included in the definition of collective action (Melucci, 1996). The importance of the actors' own sense-making and the social field of relationships are important additions, but simultaneously, this definition is too narrow to encompass collective actions not occurring in the same time and place – a phenomenon that has increased substantially the last

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[1] https://english.alarabiya.net/features/2020/08/01/Black-and-white-Instagram-selfie-challenge-sheds-light-on-femicide-in-Turkey-

25 years, for example through digital protests and online campaigns. Based on Diani and Eyerman's (1992) efforts to merge different definitions of social movements, Seim (2006) has constructed a definition of collective action distinguishing it from interest groups, political parties and singular protest events that is aptly described: "Collective action is practice where several actors are engaged in a political or cultural conflict or working to promote their own interests" (Seim, 2006, p. 98 (author's trans.)).

Collective action is also strongly tied with framing, referring to cultural tools or schemas that organize experiences and direct courses of action, strategies and emotions (Goffman, 1974; Hochschild, 1979). Similar to individual actions, collective actions are constructed in contexts depending on political opportunities, resources, allies, the framing of the action and discursive fields. A way to connect how personal identity and collective identity interchange is through the concept of collective action framing, which highlights how actors and organizations engage in meaning-making. Framing simplifies the world in a way intended on mobilizing followers, attracting bystanders and demobilizing opponents, thus inspiring and legitimizing certain activities (Benford & Snow, 2000). When collective actions disperse to different political environments, they may undergo framing in order to align with local grievances, opportunities for contentious politics or potential for mobilization. This was exemplified in the way the BLM movement took on different paths in the USA and Norway.

Collective action framing also focuses on the identities of the participants and differentiates this from others (Snow, 2013; Taylor, 2013). In this perspective, the decision to participate in a collective action becomes a negotiation between the collective action framing and personal identity. Participation becomes dependent on whether the collective action can satisfy elements of inner motivation like feeling important, social contact, self-realization, community or respect. On the other hand, the collective action needs to be perceived as effective, which is just as important to attract participants (Ganz, 2011; Klandermans, 2013). For social workers, this can be an even more complex process, as they are forced to reconcile personal and professional identity with the political and institutional environment.

6   Implications

When considering the complexity of social work and its relationship to collective action, in this case the BLM movement, it is important for social workers to remind themselves of their core social work values, which include advocating for human rights and social justice. It is also vital for social workers to acknowledge the challenges the social justice movement can elicit, such as contending with employer or institutional differences. Additionally, greater emphasis has been placed on anti-racist social work within social work pedagogy and education, as awareness and discussion of institutionalized and cultural racism within theory and practice has increased (Dominelli, 2017). Although it may be a challenging dilemma to contend with when in practice, it is important for social workers to remember their own human-rights focused mission and reconcile that with the institutional values. This requires a thorough understanding of the self, including identification of one's own individualism and the responsibility to bridge that with communal solidarity to address inequality. Lorenz (2017) argues that for such a process to occur, social work education will have to emphasize competencies of a psychological and political nature. Social workers can use a framework when critically engaging with collective action. We propose an amendment to an existing framework, previously presented by Aaslund and Chear (2020), to guide reflections on collective action response. The figure illustrates how critical reflection over protests and subsequent response is affected by national and institutional contexts, collective action framing, and the social worker's identity positions. For simplicity we deleted the overarching

themes in the model. To better suit the context of social work education, we also changed and simplified the language of the subcategories.

<u>Figure1: Framework for critical analysis of social workers' engagement with collective action</u>
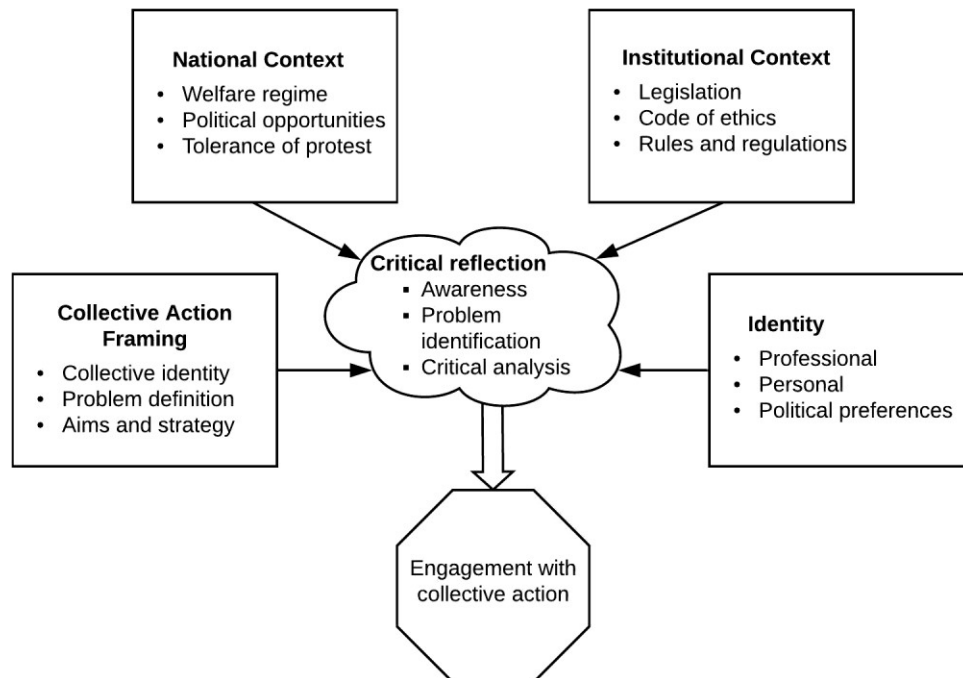
The framework guides social workers to consider collective action framing, national context, institutional context and identity to critically reflect on the social movement, which can result in stronger engagement in collective action. Such awareness of the contexts and framing should also be combined with social workers' existing skills of problem solving in community settings, along with critical analysis of the social issue at hand. Social workers are trained to approach clients and client systems with a methodological approach to problem identification and assessment. In community organization, social workers take on the community development model through assessment that includes determination of strengths, assets and awareness of the community's needs as a whole. This community model approach is often compared to clinical client engagement and assessment, as the interpersonal skills of building relationships and motivating clients in order to achieve social justice are similar in both individual and community practice (Hardina, 2012). This process-oriented approach, however, can often have its limitations, as community builders can face existing economic, social and political constraints when working toward capacity building or policy change (Vidal & Keating, 2004). It is therefore helpful to gain a stronger understanding of the national context, specifically the welfare regime the social movement is taking place under. Social workers can therefore benefit in community involvement and engagement by expanding on this approach through adapting a more critical perspective when examining the political issue at hand and how it is impacting the community. Minkler's (2012) process of problem identification and refinement expands on this by emphasizing the need to critically identify the shared problem and analyze the key constituents involved within the community. Social workers should therefore identify the constituents involved in a collective action and determine how those constituents are impacted by the actions involved. This should include

considering the political environment that the collective action is taking place in, so as to respond in an optimal and effective way to bring change.

Lastly, the review of literature that suggests social workers facing feelings of inadequacy and being ill suited to politically engage point toward the strong need for social work education and curricula to address this relationship towards political engagement. Such changes can build greater confidence among students and positively impact social policy. Specifically, there should be greater discussion on collective action, directives given to students on how to critically interact with such movements and how best to respond to collective actions. Social work education should therefore help students identify personal political views and become aware of potential biases to help them reconcile personal and professional views, within the wider processing of collective action framing, national contexts and institutional affiliations.

With stronger political focus and emphasis in undergraduate and graduate social work programs, social workers will feel better equipped to serve marginalized communities. When applied to BLM and its global spread, this social movement can expand on framing by considering local and historical grievances as well as cultural and political circumstances. When critically engaging with the collective action at hand, it is vital for social workers to practically analyze the situation, rather than employ passive awareness. As social workers, we need to be aware of amorphous or populist movements that may not be the most beneficial for marginalized groups (Hawkins, et al., 2018). There may be aspects of a demonstration or collective action that can in fact harm the marginalized group. Certain collective actions might appeal to a social worker's personal identity, however, prove be ineffective or not serve the marginalized community. It is therefore important to understand the actions employed in collective action, such as the nature of the demonstration and the language used.

7   Conclusion

Earlier research claims that to prepare social workers for confronting social injustice and oppression, topics on oppression and diversity need to be integrated into all facets of the curriculum (Goode et al., 2020). In addition, our contribution shows that social work education needs to employ critical reflections about political context, identity, organizational expectations and collective action framing, and the interactions between these entities to help social workers meet the complex plethora of movements and protests in late modern welfare states. To critically examine the political issues at hand and build capacity to act ethically, a broad range of topics needs to be integrated to fully understand the implications of partaking in or opposing a protest movement. Partaking in community action or service learning during the course could possibly increase the possibilities for such reflection (Aaslund & Woll, 2021; Lim et al., 2017). Social workers' existing knowledge of community development and human rights thus makes them essential social justice and human rights' advocates.

In the case of Black Lives Matter, this a movement that calls upon every individual to re-evaluate the nature of the society and government that we reside in. The collective actions taking place for BLM are opportunities for social workers and other professionals to engage in and positively affect social and political change. It is only through such critical engagement and comprehension that social workers can successfully advocate for individuals and communities alike, thus working toward a more just and equal society.

Acknowledgements:

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