PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL WORK
AS A WESTERN INVENTION IN
GHANAIAN CONTEXTS

A Minor Field Study Examining Ghanaian Professional Social Workers Experiences of Legitimacy

ALEXANDER BJÖRCK

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Faculty of Health and Society
Malmö University
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ABSTRACT

Author: Alexander Björck
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Supervisor: Pernilla Ouis
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The aim of the study is to examine professional social workers experiences of legitimacy in conducting social work in Ghana’s capital Accra and to discuss possible sources of legitimacy. The idea is to problematize social work as a profession developed and constructed in Western contexts and exported to Ghana during the British colonization. The issue of legitimacy is examined from Ghanaian professional social workers subjective experiences of their meetings with clients and traditional authorities that historically been conducting social work in Ghana. The study is structured around three broad themes intending to explore the Ghanaian social workers experienced legitimacy as professionals in different sequences of the social work; the social workers experiences of legitimacy to (1) classify social problems, (2) to reason about social problems and (3) to take action on social problems. These themes are also basis for the fourth theme that provides a more explanatory discussion of the social workers experiences; (4) possible sources of legitimacy. The analysis conclude that the social workers experiences of legitimacy differ between whether the social work is conducted on an individual level or a community level, towards nuclear families or extended families and whether it is conducted in a social domain or institution that historically and traditionally been in the jurisdiction of traditional authorities or if it is a domain or institution that is recently introduced in the Ghanaian contexts due to modernization.

Keywords
International social work, legitimacy, professionalism, localization, post-colonialism, Ghana, Accra, Minor Field Study
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1. BACKGROUND

In 2011, I was studying social work at University of Ghana in Legon, just outside Ghana’s capital Accra, as a part of the Linnaeus-Palme\(^1\) exchange program between Malmö University and University of Ghana. As an exchange student in social work in Ghana, I had expected to get a new perspective on social work as a profession and practice. Ghana is located in West Africa, was colonized by the United Kingdom until 1957, has a population of 25 million people consisting of between 50 and 100 ethnic groups that are speaking many different languages (though English is the official language)\(^2\), have a lot of different cultures and another level of development and material living standards than we have in Sweden and the Western world. With this background in mind, I expected a different society with different contexts and social problems and thus a different social work education and practice compared to the one in Sweden. But I was puzzled when I got the course outlines, containing a majority of course literature written by American and British authors. I had expected my time in Ghana would give me a new view on social work as a profession and practice. The literature references could have been literature in the social work education back in Sweden. Most of the lectures I attended had a starting point and focus on social problems in Ghanaian communities and I learned a lot about the Ghanaian society. But still a large majority of the methodologies, practices and theories that were taught to us students on how to deal with these social problems, derived from North America and Europe. Thus, they have been developed through research by North Americans or Europeans in a Western modernistic context. This raised the question in me whether social work can be seen as a universal profession, suitable and applicable regardless of the level of development, modernism and traditionalism in the society and context in where it is practiced.

The social work profession is a product of the modern society (Payne & Askeland, 2008). As the Western world became industrialized in the late 19th century social work emerged from an idealist belief that the state could use science and knowledge to overcome social problems. Because of its commitment to science, this knowledge was assumed to be universal and applicable to everyone in whatever culture or society they lived in (Ibid). Striving for wealth and modernization, many less developed countries replicated industrial nation’s institutions hoping it would transform them into modern industrial states (Midgley, 1990). Advocates of this modernization approach believed that less developed countries could develop their economies rapidly by importing Western technology and Western attitudes and they regarded indigenous culture as an obstacle to progress and rapid social change (Ibid). In the 1960s when the nationalist’s sentiments had led to the revolt of colonial rule in many less developed countries around the world, political leaders started to question the appropriateness of replicating foreign economic, political and social institutions. Similar attitudes were expressed within the area of social work. Social workers in less developed countries criticized the adoption of western theories and practice approaches, arguing that these approaches were of limited relevance to the needs

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1 Linnaeus-Palme is a SIDA financed international exchange program that aims to stimulate collaboration between Swedish universities and universities in developing countries. <http://www.programkontoret.se/Global/program/linnaeuspalme/faktablad_Linnaeus-Palme_eng121017.pdf> <2012-12-01>

2 http://www.landguiden.se/Lander/Afrika/Ghana/Befolkning-Sprak <2012-12-01>
of the people in their society (Midgley, 1990). Today there is a widespread acknowledgement in the social work literature, from both the Western and Non-Western worlds, that culture and context plays a critical part in the construction of social work. This has led to a reawakening of the questioning about the relevance of Western models of social work practice to Non-Western contexts (Grey et al, 2008).

Social work as a profession may have emerged in the Western world, but all cultures have historically had traditional social support systems for taking care of those in need (Kreitzer et al 2009). In pre-colonial West Africa the kinship constituted this system. The kinship consisted of clans and lineages that included extended families which assured the social security of their members (Nukunya, 1992). In Ghana traditional authorities called Chiefs and Queen Mothers governed these kinship support systems. But as western influences gained strength the traditional system and the power of the Chiefs got weakened and British colonialists brought in “social work” to solve the problems due to the changes (Kreitzer et al 2009). Ghanaians were trained in the UK and returned to Ghana to work in social support systems that were replicated from what was already in place in England. Through this and similar processes, a Western social work training model was imported and implemented in Ghana and other African countries (Ibid).

1.2 Problem Statement

Professional social workers in Ghana have a focus in helping people that are considered to be in need, as do social workers all over the world. Even if the profession of social work emphasizes rationalization and scientific knowledge as a foundation for its methods and practices, we cannot avoid the fact that social work also is based on a normative foundation. The one who intend to help is the one who decides how and who to help, as well as what change that is needed. Social work is a profession based on a Western training model, developed in Western contexts and thus a profession based on Western norms and beliefs. This raises questions of the professions legitimacy in Non-Western contexts. The problem examined in this thesis is how professional social workers in Ghana experience the legitimacy of the profession in a Ghanaian context, how this legitimacy manifests itself and how the professional social workers experience the meetings with traditional authorities that historically been conducting social work in Ghana.

1.3 Purpose and Research Questions

The overall purpose of this thesis is to examine professional social workers experiences of legitimacy as professionals and practitioners of social work in Ghana’s capital Accra. The issue of legitimacy will be examined from the professional social workers subjective experiences of their meetings with clients as well as community leaders and traditional authorities that historically been conducting social work. In order to address this purpose I will investigate the following questions:

1. How do professional social workers in Accra experience their legitimacy to conduct social work?
2. When do they experience to have, respectively not have, legitimacy to conduct social work?

3. What is the basis for legitimacy?

4. How do they experience the meeting with traditional authorities that historically been conducting social work in Ghana?

1.4 Material and delimitation

Since social work is a wide-ranging profession, that addresses many different kinds of problems in order to support people in different aspects of their lives, this study has been delimited to examine the professional social workers working in Social Welfare Offices in Accra.

Through my contacts at University of Ghana in Accra I got introduced to several authorities and agencies that where working with professional social work in Accra. Among these agencies where children’s home, remand homes, domestic violence and victim support units and Social Welfare Offices. The social workers in the Social Welfare Offices turned out to be the most suitable respondents in relation to the purpose of this thesis (a non-probability purposive sampling – see method, chapter 4), because they are first-line social workers working both individually with clients, as well as with community care where they get in contact with traditional authorities.

The Social Welfare Offices are governed by The Department of Social Welfare. These offices have legislative obligations that include the following tasks: “(i.) The promotion and protection of the rights of the children. (ii.) Justice and administration of child related issues. (iii.) Community care (for disabled and needy adults)”3 This means that the social workers working in the Social Welfare Offices have legislated legitimacy to address these different tasks. This legitimacy from the legislature will not be investigated in this thesis. This thesis focus on professional social workers perceived experience of legitimacy from clients and/and in relation to traditional authorities that historically been conducting social work in Ghana.

1.5 Concepts and Definitions

This section provides explanations and descriptions of some of the concepts used in this study. Some of these concepts occur in the literature and other have emerged in the interviews. The concepts and definitions are all chosen by me for clarifying the study.

Post-colonialism

It is relevant to give a brief description of the wide-ranging academic discipline of post-colonialism since some of the theories used in this study can be seen as post-colonial theories or at least be considerably influenced by post-colonialist critique.

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3 2012 ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN CARE REFORM INITIATIVE, GHANA (CRI). >http://www.ovcghana.org/about_dsw.html >2012-12-01
Post-colonialism should not only be seen as a historical moment or a political status in a country or continent that is post-colonial in terms of formal independence from their colonizers (Loomba, 2005), but more critically it should also be seen as a theoretical frame that examines the impact and heritage of colonialism and its construction of knowledge and identities. Post-colonial theory critically focuses on binary constructions such as East/West, traditional/modern and natural/cultural (Nalbautogulu & Wong, 1997) and it involves a critique of the universalism of Western knowledge systems (Loomba, 2005). Since social work is a profession exported to Ghana from the West during the colonization of the United Kingdom, and today is a well-established academic field that is the professional basis for many institutions in Ghana, social work itself may be seen as a post-colonial profession in Ghana.

**Traditional society, traditional authorities and community leaders in Ghana**

In *Tradition and change in Ghana – An Introduction to Sociology* professor G.K. Nukunya (1992) define the pre-colonial Ghanaian societies as traditional because it is societies that are built on the notion that the authority in the traditional society always have existed. Those who have authority in these societies, have it because they have inherited it from their ancestors. Nukunya stresses that this notion is based on Webers definition of the traditional authority (Ibid), as one of three ideal types of legitimate authority (see for example Ritzer, 2009).

Being one of the most enduring traditional institutions and authorities in Ghana, the chieftaincy system has endured from pre-colonial times through colonial and post-colonial times in Ghana (Odotei and Awedoba, 2006). The chieftaincy in Ghana consists of a Chief and/or a Queen Mother and their main role have been in maintaining customary law and order and actively working for the growth of the community and the community members. In doing so, the chieftaincy have been passing laws based on traditional values and the community worldview, interpreting them and implementing them (Ibid). Their position in the Ghanaian society is today constitutionally guaranteed: “The institution of chieftaincy, together with its traditional councils as established law and usage, is hereby guaranteed.” (The Constitution of the Republic of Ghana 1992, Article 270 (1)).

The interviewees included both the chieftaincy and elders close to the chieftaincy (that performs traditional duties in collaboration with the chieftaincy) in their definition of traditional authorities and community leaders. I have chosen to refer to these authorities with the generic term traditional authorities but in the interviews the terms traditional authorities, community leaders, elders, chieftaincy and chiefs were used interchangeably.

Important to note is that Ghana consists of between 50 and 100 different ethnic groups living in different contexts, having different customs, religions and ways of living. These nuances affect the social environment in which both the professional social worker and the traditional authorities operate, but these issues will not be considered in greater detail in this study.

**Extended family**

The extended family can be described as a collection of nuclear families that often reside together or live close to each other and are built around either patrilineal or matrilineal descent lines (Nukunya, 1992). In the patrilineal family, the male line
of descent is emphasized and in the matrilineal family, the female line of descent is emphasized. In the patrilineal extended family, for example, a child can refer to his paternal aunt as “mother”, and thus what we living in nuclear families refer to as cousins they may refer to as “brothers” and “sisters”. In Ghana there are both matrilineal and patrilineal extended family systems. Nukunya (1992) states that the extended family is a social arrangement where the individuals have widespread responsibilities and duties that goes beyond the nuclear family.

**Western and Non-Western**

Countries with a European and North American culture that are economically developed will be referred to as Western countries. But the term Western is not only representing particular countries in this study, but also a way of thinking that is rooted in a history of philosophy where the individual subject, enlightenment and ‘rational’ thought are strongly emphasized. A ‘Western context’ can be understood as a context of secular humanism where the assumptions of rational and freely choosing individuals are highly valued (Yellow Bird, 2008). Since this is a social and cultural constructivist study, examining social work as a profession deriving from knowledge, assumptions and circumstances in the Western context, it will be based on the term ‘Western’ when defining what is not ‘Western’. This is the reason why the term Non-Western will be used. Non-Western countries are thus countries that have less developed economies and do not have a European or North American culture. A Non-Western way of thinking doesn’t necessarily derive from the same roots as Western way of thinking and Non-Western contexts are not necessarily built on the same notions and values as the Western contexts. Another reason the concept ‘Non-Western’ will be used is because it is the term used in most of the literature I have been reading in gathering information to this study.

**2. PREVIOUS RESEARCH**

In order to examine the experienced legitimacy of professional social workers in Ghana, it is necessary and relevant to look at how social problems and social work as a profession is described and examined in Ghanaian research. Therefore, this chapter presents research that examines different aspects that have influenced social work as a profession in Ghana, as well as social problems in Ghana from the viewpoint of Ghanaian scholars.

**2.1 Ghanaian Social Work In the Light of Colonization, Modernization, Globalization and the Importation of Western Social Work Knowledge**

In *Social Work in Ghana: A Participatory Action Research Project Looking at Culturally Appropriate Training and Practice* Linda Kreitzer, Ziblim Abukari, Patience Antonia, Johanna Mensah and Afram Kwaku (2009) highlights issues concerning culturally appropriate social work education and training in Ghana. The article is based on a Participatory Action Research project during 2002 and 2003 at University of Ghana in Accra, with the purpose to provide an empowering environment so that the participants in the research; the faculty, students, social workers and traditional authorities could examine social work through an analysis
of colonization, modernization, globalization and the importation of Western
social work knowledge (Kreitzer et al 2009).

When the British colonialized Ghana they introduced systems of social welfare
from their own society instead of strengthening traditional social structures that
was already in place. Introducing these welfare systems of course influenced how
social work was to be taught (Kreitzer et al. 2009). One aspect the participants
stressed was a loss of identity. By defining Western education, knowledge and
social welfare systems as civilized and African knowledge and traditional social
structures as primitive, the African identity has become undesirable (Ibid).
Another negative effect of colonialism they expressed was that the breakdown of
traditional family institutions and the individualization of family life had led to a
loss of a communal society that advocated oral teaching (Ibid).

When it comes to the process of modernization the participants in Kreitzer’s study
addressed issues concerning adaptation processes combining African and Western
culture. In the urban settings of Ghana people are living more Western lifestyles,
but at the same time different traditions and lifestyles also exists due to the many
ethnic groups within Ghana (Ibid). Kreitzer et al. states that these different beliefs
and bases for knowledge are important to identify in the social work education in
order to develop a practice that meet these different needs. Questions that arose in
the research project were:

“How do we deal with these beliefs and how do we decide what
cultural practices are appropriate and what practices need changing
through education? Should we even be changing these beliefs or
create new social service systems that are more acceptable and
conducive to these beliefs? /.../ What Western social systems are
appropriate in Ghana? Who is the dominant group that decides what
cultural practices are or are not relevant and important?” (Kreitzer et

One suggestion to address these issues was to read indigenous writings to a
greater extent and to consult traditional leaders (Ibid). At the same time the
participants expressed the lack of availability of African writings to students as a
primary problem in the social work education.

Globalization was an issue that ran through the whole participatory research
process (Ibid). The present neo-liberal economic policies rely on the market for
social and economic growth. The IMF’s structural adjustment programs promote
cuts in government spending. Education, health and welfare services have
suffered as a result (Ibid). The staff at the Department of Social Work has not
increased in many years and resources including library books and classroom
equipment have suffered. Kreitzer et al (Ibid) argues that the social work
curriculum only can be expanded with more staff available to teach a larger
variety of different courses.

Most participants in the research project acknowledged that the hegemony of
Western knowledge have had a great impact on the Ghanaian society and social
work education and practice (Ibid). The dependency on Western knowledge,
resources and development has continued. To be enlightened had always been
synonymous with acquiring Western knowledge and many participants
reminded learning more about the Western world than the African continent and their own country throughout their education (Kreitzer et al, 2009). Kreitzer et al notes that Ghanaian writings were missing from social work course outlines and that the social work library consisted of 99 % Western books “…and students were still adapting social work practice from urban Chicago to rural Ghana.” (Kreitzer et al. 2009 p. 156).

2.2 Social Work in Ghana: Looking at Ghanaian Perspectives

The anthology Contempoary Social Problems in Ghana edited by Steve Tonah (2009) is an exception when it comes to literature written by Ghanaian scholars concerning domestic social problems. It’s not only one of few books available concerning social problems in Ghana and written by Ghanaian scholars, but it is also problematizing Western influenced solutions to social problems as well as it provides insights in local perspectives on social problems.

In the article Earth Shrines: Prison or Sanctuary? Ghanaian “witch camps” and the dawn of the rights of culture Jon P. Kirby (2009) examine the practice with women accused of witchcraft. These women are banished to settlements that are commonly referred to as “witch camps” and can be found throughout the whole of Ghana but particularly in the impoverished northern parts of the country (Ibid). Kirby stresses that the settlements have been around since pre-colonial times but it is first in the recent years they have been considered to be a social problem. The settlements offer sanctuary to persons, mostly elderly women, which are accused of witchcraft. This has aroused anger among NGO’s and civil society groups and has led to a massive coverage from the mass media. Kirby (Ibid) argues that this is a part of a growing awareness in Ghana and states that “the culture of rights has indeed dawned in Ghana” (p. 50). But Kirby also argues that there are two sides of this issue, and stresses that on one side it is true that the women in the “witch camps” are impoverished and marginalized from the rest of the society, but on the other side the NGO’s and the media rarely examines the underlying cultural, historical and systemic issues that he means are crucial to find solutions that are sustainable. He argues that the NGO’s, civil society groups and the media provides a simplified and somewhat false view of the problem when they are describing the camps as “prison camps” with unfortunate women that are being kept against their will. Kirby (Ibid) states that the settlements have a function and that the women living there are free to go whenever they want. He stresses that the women living there have no other choice, because of the risk of being killed if they return to their old homes, so they are staying for their own safety. Further he argues that the NGO’s and civil society groups campaigning for the closure of these camps often rely on support and funding from human rights organizations in the West, and they therefore take a Western approach to these issues. An approach he means ignore the fact that a majority of the people in Ghana believes in witchcraft, which is simply considered irrational to the Western mind (Ibid).

Kirby (ibid) states that the case of the “witch camps” offers a unique opportunity to examine a clash in culture-based expectations regarding human rights and human development. He argues that the agendas of the interest groups in this case are affected by the flows of money, power and information between Africa and the Western world. Further he argues that when determining what to change and how to change it, those interested in promoting human rights need to start where the people are, from their world. He concludes: “The real “rights” question is:
can Western solutions adapt to African issues – and not, can African problems adapt to Western solutions” (Kirby, 2009 p. 70).

The article The Legal Versus the Domestic Treatment of Child Sexual Defilement Cases in Ghana by Kodzovi Akpabl-Honu (2009) provides an insight concerning families affected by sexual abuse and their feelings of legitimacy towards the current legislation regarding sexual abuse of children. In pre-colonial Ghana sexual abuse was considered as criminal by nature. Offenders where often punished with death or perpetual banishments by the traditional authorities (Ibid). Due to the colonialism and a law from 1883, the colonial administration restricted the judicial powers of the traditional authorities and they became forbidden to rule in cases of sexual abuse. Since then, all such cases must be reported to the modern law enforcement agencies for prosecution in public law courts in Ghana (Ibid). But Akpabli-Honus states that still today cases of sexual abuse are often handled at home between the offender’s and the victim’s families and he examines the questions “Why has the question of domiciliary management of child sexual defilement remained despite its prohibition by law?” (p. 232).

Based on a research in Asamankese in the Eastern Region of Ghana he points at several factors why affected people prefer to handle these cases without including the public law enforcement (Ibid). Some of the reasons includes: to ensure compensation for the victim, the desire to avoid shame and disgrace to the victim and the family, to avoid drawn out court cases and the victims and the offender lived in the same house and the parents could not allow the incident to stigmatize them (Ibid). Akpabl-Honu concludes that the respondents in his research see the state and the law as an imaginary and distant institution that ignores the welfare and dignity of the victim and the victim’s family. So for the sake of the victims, they prefer to solve it on a domestic level where they can be compensated for the physical and psychological damage they suffered in a way that is more consistent with their view of appropriate compensation (Ibid). To resolve this problem Akpabli-Honu suggests that the state should consult traditional authorities in finding a new legislation against sexual abuse, a legislation that is acceptable by both the state and the people (Ibid).

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework will focus on how social work can be understood as a profession and how a profession gets legitimacy and jurisdiction to conduct a specific type of work. There will also be theories investigating how social work, as a modernistic Western invention, can be understood in a Non-Western society.

3.1 Professional Work

In The system of Professions - An Essay on the Division of Expert Labor Andrew Abbott (1988) examines different roles professions may have in a society by investigating how occupational groups control expert knowledge.

Abbott (Ibid) separates subjective from objective qualities that are of relevance for an understanding of professional work. Objective foundations for a professional task could for example be natural objects like the body in the case of medicine or technological objects like computers in the case of professional
programmers. In the professions of education and social work, organizations are an objective foundation. These professions wouldn’t have their present features and functions without the mass welfare and educational systems. Abbott (1988) argues that if a change occurs in these objective foundations of a profession, it may change the whole profession as such and takes the profession of psychiatry as an example. From being a profession associated with supervision on mental hospitals and institutions to, after reorganization and closure of the mental institutions, become a medical discipline (Ibid).

Furthermore, Abbott (Ibid) states that there are three acts in all professional practice, and that is to diagnose (classifying a problem), to infer (reason about a problem) and to treat (to take action on a problem). These three acts constitute the subjective qualities of a profession and as Abbott (Ibid) puts it “embodies the essential cultural logic of professional practice” (p.40). Different professions make jurisdictional claims to perform each of these three acts, by emphasizing that their discipline, knowledge and way of thinking is the most suited to perform these acts.

The research questions examined in this thesis concerns how professional social workers experience their legitimacy and the meeting with traditional actors of social work. Abbotts theory about professional work, and in particular his theory about the subjective qualities of professional work; to diagnose, to infer, to treat and what legitimacy professional social workers experience to have in each of these professional acts, will be used to thematize the interview questions and in examining the research questions in this thesis. Therefore, the next paragraph will be a depth description of these subjective qualities of professional work.

3.1.2 To Diagnose, to Infer and to Treat

Diagnosis seeks the appropriate professional category for a client and according to Abbott (1988) diagnosis is built upon two parts: colligation and classification. Colligation refers to the process of bringing different facts together by an explanation that is relevant to them all, and it is the first step in which the professional knowledge system starts to structure the observed problems (ibid). This process removes redundant information about the client and questions of what is relevant and irrelevant is central. For example, the orthopedic doctor does not find it relevant to talk about a patient’s dysfunctional love life when treating the patient for a broken leg; but it could be an area of interest for a counselor or a therapist. Information and evidence passing this process of exclusion can be assembled into a consistent picture that can be classified (Ibid). Abbot stresses that the diagnostic classification system is determined by two external factors: professional knowledge and the treatment system. The professional knowledge derives normally (in the West) from academic education and knowledge that aims to provide logical explanations in order to classify the observed problems. The treatment system, on the other hand, classifies problems by linking them with other types of problems that share similar treatments (Ibid). This process give subjective qualities to the problems with which professions work, and the logic of these subjective qualities of the problem makes it open for different professions to claim their jurisdiction and legitimacy to deal with a particular problem (Ibid).

Abbott (Ibid) states that inference is the middle act of professional practice. Professional inference is used when the connection between the first step,
diagnosis, and the last step, treatment, is unclear. The process of inference can be made by either exclusion or construction. Inference by exclusion is only possible if you have a second chance. Then it is possible to try different treatments and see if it has any effect on the diagnosed problem (Abbott, 1988). Inference by construction is for professions that only have one chance per task, and is made upon a chain of conclusions that leads to a possible treatment that maximizes chances of success. Abbott states that it is important for professions to have neither too much nor too little of inference in working with their tasks if they want legitimacy and jurisdiction to handle it. Too little inference in a task makes the connection between diagnose and treatment an act of routine, and thus not worth professionalizing. Too much inference in a task makes it too complex to legitimize (Ibid).

The aim of professional work is of course to find a treatment that offers solutions to diagnosed problems. Abbott (Ibid) stresses that treatment is the last step of professional practice. Professional treatment is organized around two parts: classifying and prescribing. As mentioned earlier, the treatment classification consists of lumping together different problems that share similar treatments (ibid). This is an aspect it shares with the process of diagnosing. When it comes to the prescribing part of treatment, it aims to give results to the client, and then it is important that the client use the treatment in a way that makes the treatment efficient. Who the client is and how the clients’ life looks like is important for the prescribing part of the treatment. For example, it is not very wise for a doctor to give sleeping pills to a client and prescribe to the client to take them in the morning. But it could be, if the client is working night shifts and have to sleep during daytime.

Abbott’s theory of professional work is rather instrumental, and breaking down professional work in three basic qualities does not provide a comprehensive picture about social work as a profession and practice. Professional social work practice is often process-oriented and each of the subjective qualities Abbott is mentioning includes multiple levels of processes that depend on several different circumstances. But this study does not aim to give a comprehensive description of professional social work practice in Ghana but to explore, and to some extent explain, the experienced legitimacy among professional Ghanaian social workers. Like all theoretical models, Abbott’s theory of the subjective qualities in professional work aims to simplify a course of events and complex processes in order to make it more easily understandable and thus easier to study. Abbott’s theory should therefore be considered as a lens, used to structure this study in order to explore the experienced legitimacy in different sequences of the professional social work practice. The following theories presented in this chapter aim to provide a framework for explaining the professional social workers experienced legitimacy.

### 3.2 Localization and Indigenous Social Work

The professional acts of diagnosing, inferring and treating must be based on some kind of foundation of knowledge and values, they cannot occur from a vacuum. There is a bulk of literature concerning the universality and transferability of social work from one context to another (see for example Gray et al 2008, Osei-Hwedie, 1993 and Yunong, H. and Z. Xiong 2008). This literature questions the relevance of Western models of social work practice to Non-Western contexts
In this literature, the concepts of *indigenization* and *localization* often occur. These concepts emphasize that in order to be relevant to the needs of local contexts, the methods and practices of social work have to take into account local factors such as socio-economy, environment, culture, and politics (Osei-Hwedie & Rankopo, 2011). Since the concepts of localization and indigenization are built on the notion that the values, beliefs, cultures, and norms that social work is based on should derive from the local and indigenous people in the society where it is practiced (Gray et al., 2008), they will be relevant and useful when examining the professional social workers’ experienced legitimacy as well as possible sources of legitimacy.

Mel Grey and John Coates (2008) argue in *From ‘Indigenization’ to Cultural Relevance* that social work itself is a cultural construction. As a profession developed in industrializing Anglo-American contexts, it is a product of the modern Western society that emphasizes rational knowledge and universal values. They are criticizing the international definitions of social work that are aiming at defining international social work with a common core or a common essence that make it adaptable to different contexts. Instead they argue that: “*A profession serious about cultural relevance would surely want to highlight differences to reinforce its view of itself as culturally adaptable.*” (p. 13, Grey and Coates 2008)

Furthermore, they are stressing that Western social work’s modern foundation that focuses on individualism, materialism, and individualistic rights not adequately addresses the collective community identities, different relationship patterns and cultural traditions that is a fact in Non-Western contexts (ibid). Kwaku Osei-Hwedie is a Ghana-born Professor of Social Work at the University of Botswana. He argues in *The Challenge of Social Work in Africa: Starting the Indigenization Process* (1993) that the knowledge of social sciences in Africa is taken from a Western context that he stresses is different from that of Africa. Like Grey and Coates he argues that the base of the social science knowledge needs to occur from a similar environment as the one it intends to analyze. In *Developing Culturally Relevant Social Work Education in Africa* Osei-Hwedie (2008) states that the social reality of a context derives from values, norms, and social-relationships and processes. By investigating these aspects in a culture, it is possible to analyze what kind of life the people living in that reality is striving for. Thus, social workers need to have knowledge about these aspects in order to be able to work for a meaningful contribution to people’s lives. Furthermore he stresses that many African people are communalistic, which means that they find self-fulfillment in the context of the community they are living in. He argues that local communities and cultures determine the values, norms, and social processes that form the social reality in Africa (Ibid). This is a different social reality than the more individualistic and materialistic Western social reality, which is the basis of professional social work. Osei-Hwedie is therefore calling for processes that make the social work in Africa more culturally relevant (ibid).

### 3.3 Professional Imperialism

James Midgley (1981) is on the same track as Osei-Hwedie and argues in *Professional Imperialism – Social Work in the Third World* that adoption of the Western forms of social work in Non-Western contexts is inappropriate and unsuited to their cultural circumstances. Midgley states that social work students in less developed countries are trained to deal with social problems by applying
the methods of individualized intervention, as in the West. They are taught to establish meaningful relationships with their clients and to strengthen their clients’ inner capacities through the principles of individuation, self-determination and controlled emotional expression. Midgley (1981) argues that the cultural environment in which it evolved has influenced these methodologies considerably. Further, he argues that the principles and ethics of social work embody the values of Western industrial society, but not necessary the traditional values in Non-Western less developed societies (Ibid).

In the article Promoting Reciprocal International Social Work Exchanges: Professional Imperialism Revisited Midgley (2008) acknowledges that there is a higher consciousness concerning the exportation of Western social work to other parts of the world today compared to when he wrote Professional Imperialism – Social Work in the Third World. He states that the view of international social work have changed from being regarded as an exotic specialism to become an area aware of cultural and developmental suitability between different contexts. However, he stresses that universities all around the world show a tendency to copy or get influenced by the international prestige of European and North American schools of social work. This, together with new information technologies, leads to continued exportation of Western curriculum content to universities in Non-Western countries. Thus, Midgley states, the problem of professional imperialism is not yet resolved (Ibid).

4. METHOD

This chapter aims to describe and discuss the method used to conduct this thesis. In order to systematically describe and discuss the whole methodological process of the study, the epistemological basis for the study will first be presented followed by a description and discussion of the selected methods used to operationalize the field study. The last two sections present and discuss the ethical considerations and the used methodology in relation to the issues of validity and reliability.

4.1 A Phenomenological Approach and Social Constructionism

A phenomenological approach focuses how humans, the professional social workers in this study, view themselves and how they live their experiences (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008). The attempt to understand the subjective experience of a particular phenomenon is central in this approach. The meaning we attribute to different phenomena creates patterns that constitute our lifeworld. The lifeworld is something we subjectively construct and it constitutes the reality we take for granted (see for example Schutz 2002 and Husserl 1977). The attribution of meaning is a result of a socialization process in which we have learned to interpret different situations and phenomena in a certain way. Thus we learn the meanings out of different circumstances or events and these meanings are structured in what the phenomenologists call typifications. Typifications can be seen as a process where we try to understand our social environment, relying on generalized interpretations that we have learned through socialization. Since this study aims to explore experiences of legitimacy and the meeting with traditional authorities among professional social workers in Ghana, a phenomenological approach in the interviews has entailed that I, as the
interviewer coming from a different social context and another part of the world, have asked many follow-up questions of how they experience a certain phenomena in order to get a view of how they subjectively typifies this phenomena. In doing so, it is possible to examine their subjective experiences of their lived reality; how their experiences are and how the legitimacy can be understood from their own point of view, which they may otherwise been taken for granted and thus never expressed to me. In this process it has also been important for me to question my own lifeworld and typifications in order to be as open as possible in asking questions and understand their experiences.

With the phenomenological approach as a basis for understanding and exploring the experienced legitimacy among professional social workers, social constructionism have been the basis for the explanatory part of the study; to examine the basis for legitimacy. Social constructionism has its roots in phenomenology (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008) and it is a wide-ranging theory of knowledge that will only be briefly presented here. Social constructionism was introduced by Berger and Luckmann in Social Construction of Reality (1966) and it aims to emphasize the social nature of knowledge rather than objective and rational knowledge as a single truth. The social constructionism emphasizes that the human being is social by nature and the social “self” develops through interaction with other people (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008). In doing so, it has to be some kind of social order, and this social order consists of institutions. Berger and Luckmann (1966) state that institutionalization occurs whenever there is "a mutual typification of habitualized actions" (p.72). In other words, in every institution particular types of actions are expected to be performed by a particular type of actor, for the sake of the social order (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008). On this basis and theory of knowledge, professional social work should be seen as a particular institution and traditional authorities as another institution. By examining the experienced legitimacy among the professional social workers in different sequences of their social work, and how they experience the meeting with another institution also conducting a type of social work, underlying reasons for legitimacy can hopefully be detected and discussed.

4.2 Access to the Field and Selection of Interviewees

Ms. Florence Akosua Agyemang is an assistant lecturer at the Department of Social Work at University of Ghana in Legon, Accra and my contact person during this field study. She was my starting point in accessing the field of professional social work in Accra. After a couple of meetings with her, clarifying the purpose of my study and discussing how to get in contact with suitable interviewees, she referred me to Mr. P.K. Abrefah who is a senior lecturer and fieldwork coordinator at the Social Administration Unit at the same department. Mr. P.K Abrefah wrote a letter (see Appendix A) to The Regional Director at the Department of Social Welfare where he requested for me to meet with professional social workers. The Regional Director at the Department of Social Welfare in Accra then became a gatekeeper to the field. We discussed the purpose of my study and he wrote a letter (see Appendix B) giving me access to several different agencies conducting professional social work. Among these agencies where children’s home, remand homes, domestic violence and victim support units and Social Welfare Offices.
When conducting a qualitative interview-based field study, Jacobsen (2007) states that the selection of interviewees should be chosen based on who can give the most interesting information in relation to the purpose of the study. In order to fulfill the purpose of this study, I have chosen to interview professional social workers with formal academic knowledge and currently working on the field in Ghanaian communities, where they interact with the traditional authorities in carrying out their professional practice. Thus, the interviewees have been selected using a non-probability purposive sampling method, a sampling method that is based on the researcher’s judgment, which makes it possible to satisfy specific needs in relation to the specific research questions (Robson 2002). Social workers that met these requirements could be found at the Social Welfare Offices in the communities. The professional social workers in the Social Welfare Offices are first-line social workers working both individually with clients, as well as with community care where they get in contact with community leaders and traditional authorities.

4.3 Implementation of Interviews

Seven individual in-depth interviews have been conducted in order to give the interviewees possibilities to reflect and with their own words and opinions describe their experiences of legitimacy in their professional work and their meetings with traditional authorities. The interviews have been semi-structured and prepared through an interview guide (see Appendix C). The interview guide consisted of opening questions followed by a framework of themes, and key questions under each theme (Robson, 2011). The themes are taken from Andrew Abbott’s (1988) theory about professional work, thus the interviews have focused on how the interviewees experience the legitimacy to classify social problems (to diagnose), reason about social problems (to infer about) and take action on social problems (to treat) and how they experience the meeting with traditional authorities. In order to be easily understood and getting suitable questions that could be easily answered, the interview guide was developed through test interviews with two Ghanaian exchange students at Malmö University. The length of the interviews varied from 32 minutes to 54 minutes and all interviews were recorded with the consent from the interviewees.

Interview Setting

The interviews took place at the Social Welfare Offices where the interviewees worked. Seven interviews were conducted at three different Social Welfare Offices in Accra. Since all personnel at the Social Welfare Offices fulfilled the selection criteria, I presented the purpose of my thesis to all of them and asked to interview anyone who agreed to participate in an interview. Something that may have affected the interviews was the surrounding at the Social Welfare Offices, where the interviews took place. I asked the interviewees if we could meet after their working day to do the interview, but they all insisted to carry out the interview right away at the Social Welfare Offices. The Social Welfare Offices where often crowded and the social workers shared offices with several other social workers. In four of the interviews we got access to an empty office where we could sit undisturbed, but in the three other interviews we where supposed to conduct the interviews in a busy office. This made me insist to carry out these three interviews outside the offices, but since Accra is crowded and a bustling city it was hard to find an interview place where we could sit undisturbed. Often the
interviews took place with traffic around and with people passing by. I preferred this rather than to be in the Social Welfare Office where both clients and other social workers could overhear us, but on the other hand, the rather bustling and stressful environment may have influenced both how I asked the questions and how the interviewees answered the questions. The interviews conducted outside where not as long as the interviews made in an undisturbed environment.

**Cross-cultural Interviews**

Another factor that is relevant to discuss and may have affected the results of the interviews is the cultural differences between the interviewees and me. Kvale & Brinkman (2009) states that cross-cultural interviewing could be difficult due to different norms for interaction when it concerns aspects like initiative, directness and modes of questioning. Even if I have lived and studied in Ghana for five months and got to know Ghanaians and the Ghanaian culture, this was something I had in mind when preparing for the interviews. For example, how to greet someone in a formal context in the local language in order to show respect (e.g. Madam/Sir Maakye means Good morning Madam/Sir), how to shake hands (shaking hands and snap your middle fingers as you let go) and how you should dress in a formal meeting (Ghanaians always dress up with ironed clothes and polished shoes) were things I already know and took into account in my preparations. But I also, as mentioned earlier, structured the interview guide through test interviews with Ghanaian students and made an effort to have a phenomenological approach in my follow-up questions, in order to understand the interviewees experienced legitimacy from their own perceived perspective (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009).

**4.4 Ethical Considerations**

To have the possibility as a young student travelling to another continent to conduct a field study for a bachelor thesis is a privilege that a vast majority of Ghanaians don’t have and probably will not get in the near future. This, together with me being a white Swedish student conducting a research about professional social work in Ghana, may easily lead to an experienced power imbalance between the interviewees and me. Therefore, I have found it very important to explain that this study do not intend to evaluate nor describe Ghanaian social work, but to learn about how social work as a profession can be understood in different contexts and societies, and that this study can contribute to the understanding about social work in Sweden as well. It is also relevant to question whether this possible imbalance has affected the interview result.

The ethical considerations I have had towards the interviewees consists of four main requirements (Olsson & Sörensen, 2011): (1) to inform the respondents about me, the purpose of my study, these ethical considerations and that they are free to participate in the interview and at any point have the right to stop the interview and withdraw from participating (Ibid). Before all interviews I made sure that the interviewees know about me, the purpose of the study and my ethical considerations. After that, a handout where given to the interviewees (see Appendix D) stating the purpose of the study, the ethical considerations and contact information to me in case they had any questions or wanted to withdraw from participating. I made sure they read the handout and understood it. (2) The second requirement consists of the participants consent to participate in the
interview, their consent that I recorded the interview and that they have the right to tear up the agreement at any point (Ibid). All interviewees gave their consent to participate in this study and that I recorded the interviews. The consent consisted of a verbal agreement between the interviewees and me. (3) The third requirement states that the respondents will be anonymous and the information that they’ll give me will be treated carefully beyond the reach for others to take part of (Olsson & Sörensen, 2009). (4) The last requirement states that the collected data material only will be used to the purpose of this thesis and that it will be destroyed after used for this thesis (ibid). All interviewees will get a copy of the thesis when finished and approved by the examiner.

4.5 Analytic Procedure

The analytic procedure began with the transcription of the interviews, in order to get a better overview of the empirical material (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). When all interviews were transcribed, the themes (to diagnose, to infer and to treat) where identified in the transcribed material and marked with one color each. The different themes where then broken down, analyzed and compared to each other using Abbot’s theory about subjective qualities in professional work as a theoretical framework. This process aimed to structure the result and making the result analyzable and this was followed by a social constructivist meaning interpretation of the findings in each theme. Kvale and Brinkmann (ibid) states that meaning interpretation goes beyond what is directly expressed and thus aims to identify relations of meanings that is not instantly apparent in the text. In doing this, it appeared new patterns in comparison between the different themes. This can be seen as an abductive reasoning that cycle from theory to observation (deduction) and then back again from observation to theory (induction) (Robson, 2011).

4.6 Validity and Reliability

Robson (2011) argues that valid qualitative research is something that is aiming at being true or accurate. But since it is hard to prove something to be both true and accurate it can be an alternative to focus on whether the research is credible or not. Maxwell (1996) states that description, interpretation and theory are three different types of understanding that can be a threat to the validity in a qualitative research. In this study the data are described by quoting the interviewees. The interviews has been recorded and transcribed. This has made it possible to display and describe exactly what the interviewees have said by showing quotes from the interviews. The interpretation and theory goes hand in hand in this study. As the researcher, I have used theories to interpret the result at the same time as interpretation occurred when discovering new patterns in the result.

Since the empirical data in this study consists of my interpretations of professional social workers experiences of legitimacy it is has hard to say whether the research can be considered as true, accurate or reliable because others interpretations may have been different. But since the result is described openly and the study consists of a demonstration of how the interpreted result was reached, the study should be considered credible and to some extent reliable.
5. RESULT & ANALYSIS

This chapter contains a presentation and analysis of the collected empirical data. The presented data will be divided into four themes: how the respondents experience their legitimacy to (1) diagnose social problems, (2) to infer about social problems and (3) to treat social problems. The fourth theme is based on the analysis of the three earlier themes and will discuss (4) possible sources of legitimacy. I will analyze the empirical data from the first three themes using Abbott’s (1988) theory about professional work and in the last part of the chapter I will analyze the fourth theme in relation to the theoretical framework of localization, indigenization and professional imperialism as well as to the previous research.

5.1 The Experience of Legitimacy in the Process of Diagnosing

The interviewee’s experience of legitimacy differs between different types of tasks. For example, when it comes to cases concerning children and family issues most interviewee’s experience to have the legitimacy to diagnose problems. One interviewee expresses this:

“Because of the sensitization and education now, when somebody sees a child being maltreated, they go to the Social Welfare and report/.../People know now that the child has that right. If they see they will report to us. It’s not only clients that come; sometimes the teachers also come to us and report because they are worried about children.” (Interviewee number 5)

All interviewees argues that individual clients most of the time visit the Social Welfare Offices before they go to any other actors of social work. But they think it is different between Accra and rural parts of Ghana:

“Most of the clients come here. Because Accra is so modernized they come here. In rural areas they definitely go to the chieftaincy. But here, they know we can help them.”(Interviewee number 2)

“Accra is urban. If we would have been in the districts, we would have seen the traditional leaders would have been in control and power over the people. But Accra being an urban center, the traditional leaders do not have so much power. /.../ The clients come to us. We have their legitimacy.” (Interviewee number 3)

When it comes to individual cases or cases concerning family issues, the interviewees rarely or never seek contact with the traditional authorities or actors of social work. On the other hand, and interesting to notice, is that several of the interviewees have met clients that have been directed from traditional authorities to the Social Welfare Office. Some of the interviewees have also experienced that traditional authorities contact them and ask for advice in individual cases. One interviewee expresses this:
“Sometimes the chieftaincy, the members of parliament or the assembly men hear of a problem in a family or with a child, and they look at the nature of the problem and they realize that “no, there should be a professional hand”. Then they refer them to us.” (Interviewee number 5)

All interviewees consider their main objective to care for children’s welfare and rights, according to the Children's Act (1998). And all interviewees state that the family is crucial for this objective. Here are three examples:

“If you break the family the child is going to suffer. So we make sure that we patch them up, whatever it is.” (Interviewee number 2)

“It is the responsibility of the parents to take care of the children. Fine, when one party decides or refuses to do his responsibilities as a parent, the other party will come and report to us.” (Interviewee number 4)

“The important things we think are first the welfare of the child. We do not believe in separating the two parties. Children are vulnerable, they need both parents.” (Interviewee number 5)

It is clear that a broken nuclear family is diagnosed as a problem for the children. The interviewee’s states that denial of paternity is one of the most commonly reported problems to the Social Welfare Offices, and it is also illegal according to the Children’s Act (1998). But five of the interviewees express that they have another view on this problem compared to that of traditional actors of social work:

Sometimes they [i.e. traditional authorities] believe the children are for the mothers, but we social workers believe naturally that children are for the father to. So when it comes up we sit with them and discuss. Educating them about the advantages with both mother and father in the child’s life. (Interviewee number 6)

When these different views appear between the social workers and other actors of social work, the interviewees argue that their knowledge of the law, which they have a mandate to implement, is respected by traditional actors:

No one is above the law, so they [i.e. traditional actors] respect the law and they respect the office authority. Sometimes they are not even aware of certain things, then you need to make them aware of that. Certain assistance of certain laws. Issues of protection of the rights of children. So you need to create that awareness among them. It is the rights of your child to go to school, it is the right of your child to have good health, it is a right of your child to be fed. Once we talk to them they listen and say: “aha we have a lot of children here who are not going to school, so how can you help us?” (Interviewee number 7)

We use the Children’s Act, we have the law in our back. They use culture and tradition. /.../ We tell them whatever your traditions or culture; you’re in a country. You have to abide by the laws of the country. (Interviewee number 6)
There are things that we can do that they can’t. We know the law better than them. (Interviewee number 5)

When it comes to community care, the experiences of legitimacy seem to be a bit different than compared to the individual work with the clients. One of the interviewees gives an example that shows the importance of having good relationships with the traditional authorities:

We operate in traditional areas. If you want to implement a program, as a professional social worker, and you want that program to work, you need to inform the traditional authorities, who are custodian of the people, to get the people to be a part of your program. Currently we are implementing a program in my sub metro, we call it the Urban Poverty Reduction Program. And it is an unconditional custodian’s fare to the poorest of the poor within the community, to help meet the basic needs for them. We went around to people and visited their houses, but before we did that we had a community entering approach. And we went to the chief of Zongo together with the team we were working with, and we met assembly persons who are elected members of the community. I informed them about the program and interventions that is going to come for their people, the poorest of the poor within their community. We want them to inform their people this is what we are up to. So in the night they broadcast it. /.../So every program you are going to introduce in a community, if you don’t get the support of these people, that program will fail. That is how it is. They install your program. It is like traditional authorities are custodian of the people. (Interviewee number 7)

Another example showing the dependence of traditional authorities for gaining the legitimacy of the people when it comes to community care:

When we have a program for the community, we go to them [i.e. traditional authorities] and tell them: “please we want to come and do something like this. Can you tell the people on our behalf that we are coming to do certain things, on this day and that date. So before you go, he has done his work. So the people accept you easily and then whatever you have to say will go to the people. If you don’t go to the chief first, otherwise nobody knows what you are doing. (Interviewee number 4)

In these cases the social workers have a diagnosed problem they want to address at a community based level but they have to ask for permission from the traditional authorities first. Many of the interviewees refer to them as custodians of the people and that they have more knowledge about the communities and that’s why it is appropriate to collaborate with them:

What happens with the dynamics in the community if we interfere, these kinds of questions are relevant to ask the community leaders about. It’s always advisable to discuss these things with the leaders, then if the leaders find it true they can tell their people that this is what is important to us. Sometimes the community leaders need to
explain to the people why we are doing as we are doing. There are different protocols, norms, for entering every situation. (Interviewee number 1)

There are some things that we can do and they can’t. We know the law better than them. /…/ But in some situations they know things about the community better, that’s their strength. But because of we collaborate we can use each other’s strengths. (Interviewee number 5)

The interviews showed that it’s also the other way around; that the traditional authorities sometimes turn to the professional social workers and ask for advice and help in community related problems:

Sometimes the traditional actors come to us. Maybe they need us to come and talk about some issues or they wonder what facilities or institutions are available for them that can help them solve their problem that they have identified. (Interviewee number 1)

5.1.1 Analysis

As mentioned earlier, the obligations of the Social Welfare Offices are, among others: “(i.) The promotion and protection of the rights of the children. (ii.) Justice and administration of child related issues.” In accordance with these obligations, the interviewees seem to experience the legitimacy in diagnosing problems concerning individual child related issues. The interviewees are stressing that the people are aware that children have certain rights and therefore they report to the Social Welfare Offices when these rights are violated.

Abbott (1988) stressed that diagnosis was built upon colligation and classification. When analyzing the result from the interviews it is possible to see that the colligated picture of the diagnosed problems concerning children differs between the traditional authorities and the interviewees. The interviewee’s stressed that it is important that both parents are responsible for the wellbeing of the children to show on one example. But some of the interviewees experience that the traditional authorities are less inclined to deal with this issue. Explanation to this lack of interest among the traditional authorities in addressing this issue could be that the nuclear family has traditionally and historically been a rare entity in the Ghanaian society (Nukunya, 1992). The traditional authorities have governed over the extended families, which are either patrilineal or matrilineal, and are thus based on one parent (the mother in the matrilineal families and the father in the patrilineal families) and that parent’s descent. Thus, in the matrilineal extended families, that are most common in Accra (Nukunya, 1992), a maternal uncle or aunt is often considered to have more responsibility for the child than the child’s father.

Abbott (Ibid) stated that the process of colligation intends to remove redundant and irrelevant information about the clients. The interviewed social workers expressed that there could be different views on what is relevant for a child’s wellbeing compared to the view of traditional authorities. But the interviewees

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also expressed that the traditional authorities respected their way of diagnosing problems because they have the law in their back, and the Children’s Act that is guiding their actions.

This leads us to the classification of a problem. According to Abbott the classification is based on two parts: professional knowledge and the treatment system (Ibid). The professional knowledge in this case seems to be knowledge about the law and the Children’s Act in particular. The interviewees experience that their knowledge about the child’s rights give them the legitimacy, not only from the legislature, but also from the clients and the traditional authorities to diagnose problems. Diagnosing problems among children is what the Children’s Act is doing per se, and the social workers have the mandate to implement it.

When it comes to different treatment systems as a way of classifying problems (Ibid), it is interesting to look at the interviewee’s view of the family. The interviewees stress the families’ role in securing a safe environment for the children. Abbot (Ibid) stated that the treatment system classifies problems by linking them with other types of problems that share similar treatments. Analyzing the interviews and the interviewees view on the family as one of the most important institutions for the child’s welfare, it is interesting to see their view of the coherent nuclear family as a possible treatment for several different problems that can violate the child rights. Thus problems that can be solved by holding together the nuclear family is lumped together and a part of the diagnosing process.

Analyzing the legitimacy of diagnosing when it comes to the third (iii) task of the Social Welfare Offices: “Community Care (for disabled and needy adults)” the situation is a bit different. In implementing community programs, the interviewees express that they have to go through the traditional authorities to gain legitimacy from the people. The social workers experience to have the legitimacy to diagnose problems from the traditional authorities, and through the traditional authorities they get it from the people. In this process, the preceding knowledge that aims to provide logical explanations in order to classify the observed problems (Abbott 1988) does not only derive from the social workers knowledge about the law and individual circumstances (as in the individual cases), but also from the traditional authorities knowledge about the community structures in terms of different customs, norms and protocols. This knowledge legitimizes the traditional authorities among the people and that is why the social workers need to go through the traditional authorities in order to reach out to the people. Because of the social workers lack of legitimacy in implementing community programs, they have to implement their programs with the help from someone who have the legitimacy among the people.

This raises the question about who is colligating the picture of the problem when it comes to community care. If the traditional authorities don’t agree on what is relevant or not relevant in a diagnosed problem by the social workers, do they oppose or even refuse to collaborate in implementing the program? The interviewees express that they have never had any such experiences, but when it comes to the experiences of the reasoning and inference of how to treat a

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5 2012 Orphans and Vulnerable Children Care Reform Initiative GHANA (CRI). >http://www.ovcghana.org/about_dsw.html >2012-12-01
diagnosed problem in a community, the interviewees express that the collaboration is a bit different.

5.2 The Experience of Legitimacy in the Process of Inference

Inference is the middle act of professional practice and the bridge between diagnose and treatment (Abbott, 1988). When it comes to the legitimacy to infer about social problems, the interviewees share a similar experience as in the case of the legitimacy to diagnose. Since the clients visit the Social Welfare Offices they not only legitimize the social workers to diagnose their problems but also to infer about them. This example concerns a father that has left his family without supporting the mother in childcare:

"The mother come to us to say the children has this father... and due to the break of the relationship has gone and left her with the children. So we try to contact the man and make a calculation of how much he need to support the woman and the children. We look at the work the man does. And then how much he earns etc. We also look at his other responsibilities that he might have. And then we arrive at a decision that he can afford and close to something similar that the children had before the breakup. And then we come out with the amount." (Interviewee number 1)

Here is another example concerning the inference in a custody dispute:

"Sometimes one party says “I want the child for myself to take care of the child in a proper way”. It could be maybe the mother cannot take care of the child but the father says he can. But we don’t just give the child out. We have to go out, go home and find out whether the man is able and capable to take care of the child, investigate if the environment is good for the child. We do all that and then we go back and find out who should take care of the child, in the best interest of the child." (Interviewee number 4)

In these processes of investigation, reasoning and inference it is only professional social workers involved. The clients do not want to involve other parties and the traditional authorities do not claim legitimacy in these processes.

When it comes to the legitimacy to infer about community care it is a bit different. The interviewees have to involve the traditional authorities when it comes to infer about social problems at a community level:

"Because they are traditional leaders, their rule is traditional. Ours is not. But what we do is that, you can’t condemn their activities. You accept it, and then maybe modernize whatever he want to do or how he want to do it." (Interviewee number 1)

The process of inference seems to be a “give and take” between the traditional authorities and the professional social workers:

"We sit down together. Since we have... how should I put it... the professional touch, we decide what we think would be good for their..."
communities, “what is your view?” And then we sit down together and when we are all happy we go to the field and then have the educational session. (Interviewee number 5)

Several of the interviewees have experienced disagreements in these meetings, one interviewee express it like this:

*The conflicts come when there are cultural practices. We [i.e. the Ghanaian people] have our beliefs, especially the chieftaincies. Sometimes you think, professionally, “no it is wrong” but the tradition is saying, ”No we have to do it this way”. /.../ Sometimes can the cultural practice collide with the professional practice. But most of the time the professionals gets right, not always but most of the time.*

(Interviewee number 5)

5.2.1 Analysis

The empirical data concerning the social workers experience of legitimacy in the process of inference show a similar pattern as their experiences of legitimacy in diagnosing problems. It suggests two different levels where they experience to have different degrees of legitimacy. In the inference concerning problems at the individual level they experience to have the legitimacy from both the clients and the traditional authorities. But at the community level, the inference is often conducted together with the traditional authorities.

Abbott (1988) argues that inference is made upon construction or exclusion. As described in the interviews the social workers seem to infer by construction, drawing conclusion that leads to possible treatments that will maximize the chances of success (ibid). This construction is in the individual cases conducted by the professional social workers themselves, and in the cases on the community level it is conducted together with the traditional authorities.

The constructed inference at the community level shows it can lead to conflicts between traditional authorities and the professional social workers. Abbott (ibid) states that too little inference makes a professional task an act of routine and too much of it makes it too complex to legitimate. In this case we can see that if one part, either the traditional authorities or the professional social workers, conducts too much of the inference, the other party won’t legitimize it. Therefore, they have to sit down together, combine the traditional rules with the professional knowledge in order to find a treatment that suits both parts.

5.3 The Experience of Legitimacy in the Process of Treatment

The interviewees experience to have legitimacy in treating among both clients and traditional authorities when it comes to individual cases. As mentioned before, the parents and the family are often seen as an important institution for the treating of diagnosed problems among children. The interviewees stresses that the parents are the most important for the welfare of the children, but in some cases they emphasize the need and importance of the extended family:

*We have caregivers in the extended families. We believe that... in African culture or African system, the family is not nuclear. We*
spread our tentacles. If you do not have food your brother would have. If you have a child, you have a big family. Maybe you have someone who can take care of it. It solves a lot of problem. (Interviewee number 5)

In order to involve the extended families in the process of securing a child’s welfare, they turn to the traditional authorities that are heads of the extended families. The next and last step for a child, if it can’t get the sufficient welfare according to the Children’s Act in either the family or the extended family, the social workers turn to the institutions:

If there is an extended family, if there is an auntie somewhere or an uncle somewhere. If there is, we try to involve them. /.../ If they can, fine. If they can’t the last option are institutions. Institutions should be the last resort. Because we know that a home is better than an institution. (Interviewee number 2)

When it comes to cases concerning denial of paternity, parent who are divorced or any other case concerning broken families, the social workers not only judge in who and how they should contribute to the children’s welfare but they are also trying to reunite families:

If it is a broken marriage, after a time we ask the father to take the money to the woman at home now, doing that, we want the relationship to get better. We have no interest in letting them live separately. We say when two elephants fight it is the grass that suffers; the grass here is the child. (Interviewee number 7)

Four of the interviewees argue that they actively work for reunite divided families through making the parents collaborate on issues related to the child. In many cases it is a part of their judgments that the parents should meet, in hope that they would get together again for the sake of the child. Many of the interviewees also states that they involves traditional authorities for monitoring the compliance of their decisions and rulings:

They [i.e. the traditional authorities] have their role to play. We involve them, yes. They are able to exercise a form of control, if the situations changes they inform us. (Interviewee number 1)

They [i.e. the traditional authorities] also do follow up check on the cases. (Interviewee number 5)

Even if the social workers indicate that they have the legitimacy to conduct treatment on the observed social problems, they come across cases when the traditional authorities adjudicate in problems. In these cases the interviewees express that it can occur conflicts between social workers and traditional authorities. Here are two examples told to me:

For example if a child offense an elderly person in the community it is like... they get stigma, because in our society you do not abuse an elderly person so when the child does that it classifies as “bad”, it is that tag, stigma around her or him. They think it is a form of
punishment, but professionally we know stigmatization is wrong. So sometimes we tell that this is not how you have to do it. So once in a while we have these conflicts when it comes to cultural practice. The cultural practice can sometimes collide with the professional practice. /.../ You need to let them know that, we are not here for the child today. But for today and tomorrow and the child’s future. So if a child does something, and you stigmatize the child, right now, you think you have punished the child but you have to let them know that it will go better for the child if you don’t. We talk to them a lot, and we convince them. Without our professional touch they would have not listened to us or agreed to what we are saying. (Interviewee number 5)

When they [i.e. the traditional authorities] adjudicate on a case, they have their own way of passing their judgment. It encourage people to behave well in the community, it is good. But sometimes it could be harsh. It can make some people become even harder. (Interviewee number 2)

Many of the interviewees seem to be ambivalent when it comes to some of the traditional authority’s treatments to problems. At the same time they think disciplinary judgments can be good and prevent further offences and that it is important to respect the traditional authorities, they think that some of these judgments can be too harsh and thus in some cases do harm to the individuals. The interviewees seem to find the issues that can arise between traditions and professionalism as hard to describe for me that is from outside Ghana:

We are born in to it you know. It is a part of our society. We have to link the traditional culture with the law. (Interviewee number 6)

Social work must take the environment and society in consideration. You cannot pick what is in Sweden and bring it over here and think it would work. The people are not the same. The way of understanding is not the same. The level of education is not the same. Social workers need to be adaptable to the area. (Interviewee number 7)

When it comes to community care and treatment, the interviewees talk about two different kinds of programs: preventive programs focusing on education and creating awareness of different social problems among the people in the community and poverty reduction programs. The poverty reduction programs are developed in higher instances and delegated to the Social Welfare Offices to implement. The preventive programs are often conducted by the Social Welfare Offices but with the help from the traditional authorities, as one interviewee puts it:

They can talk to their people and prepare them for us to come in to the community. They have control over their people more than we do. We need them to gather and serve information to their people etc. (Interviewee number 1)

Five of the interviewees state that the church provides platforms for educational programs. The interviewees express that they have to go through the church or traditional authorities in order to implement community programs. Otherwise the
people in the communities wouldn’t listen to what they had to say. Here is an interviewee expressing this:

*It is like traditional authorities are custodian of the people. Even when the British came to Ghana it was thru the traditional authorities that they were able to rule the people, thru what we call indirect rule. They present the issues to the authorities [i.e. the traditional authorities] and the authorities would take the issues to their people as if it was coming from them. If the white people had come forward straight away it would have failed. So the traditional authorities need to be recognized, they need to be respected, they need to be accorded that respect. So if you enter his community without informing him, just for him to come and see that you have started implementing a program, he would say ‘what is this? Why didn’t you inform us or asked us?’ Sometimes you cannot bypass them.* (Interviewee number 7)

5.3.1 Analysis

As in the previous professional tasks of diagnosing and inferring, we can indicate two different levels for the analysis of the experienced legitimacy to treat social problems: the individual level and the community level. According to Abbott (1988) professional treatment is organized around classifying and prescribing. As mentioned in the analysis of diagnosing, the family has an important role in securing the welfare of the children. Many of the individual cases handled by the interviewed social workers concerns child maintenance, custody disputes and denial of paternity. In these cases the maintenance of the family seem to be desirable in order to protect the welfare of the child. Thus, it can be said that the treatment is organized around classifying the family as a desirable institution that is able to securing the welfare and rights of the children. In this work with the families, the interviewees seem to experience to have the legitimacy from the clients.

This can be seen in the prescribing part of the treatment as well. In cases when deciding child maintenance the interviewees expressed they sometimes prescribe the paying parent of the child to go home to the caregiver of the child once a week with the maintenance fee, hoping that this informal meeting would make them come together again. In this prescribing process they could also involve the traditional authorities in order to control that this was carried out.

Interesting to notice is in those cases when the family is experienced as dysfunctional and not enough for securing the welfare of the child, the interviewee’s states that they turn to the traditional authorities in order to look for suitable custodians in the children’s extended family. It appears thus that the interviewees experience to have the legitimacy dealing with nuclear families but not with extended families. In those cases they turn to the traditional authorities in order to gain their legitimacy.

The interviewees also expressed that there could be conflicts in situations where the traditional authorities adjudicated in individual cases. They expressed ambivalence, and emphasized both the traditional authorities’ relevance and importance in their society, as well as they sometimes disagreed with their methods. They also expressed that it is difficult for me, as a foreigner from
another context, to understand this meeting between the profession of social work and their traditional rule.

When it comes to the legitimacy to treat problems at a community level, the interviewees expressed that they had the legitimacy to treat problems among the traditional authorities but not among the people. But by letting the traditional authorities present their programs and gather the people, the programs gains legitimacy among the people. Abbott (1988) states that the prescribing part of treatment has the function of making the treatment efficient. How the clients’ life’s look like and who the client is, is important for the prescription. All interviewees are stating that the traditional authorities have knowledge about the communities that they don’t have, referring to the traditional authorities as custodians of the communities. Therefore the social workers give the traditional authorities the legitimacy and jurisdiction to be a part of the prescribing part of the treatment. The traditional authorities are not developing the programs, but they decide when to gather the people and how to present the program to the people.

5.4 An Individual Level and A Community Level: What can be said about the sources of legitimacy?

The results have shown that it is necessary to distinguish between an individual level and a community level when analyzing the sources of legitimacy. In the individual cases the social workers experience legitimacy to conduct social work in all of the three professional tasks of diagnosing, inferring and treating both from the clients and the traditional authorities. But when it comes to the experience of legitimacy in community care it is a bit different. Then they have to go through the traditional authorities to get the legitimacy from the people to implement their programs in the communities. Neither the people nor the traditional authorities would legitimize a program implemented without transparency from the traditional authorities.

Both Osei-Hwedie in Developing Culturally Relevant Social Work Education in Africa (2008) and Grey and Coates in From ‘Indigenization’ to Cultural Relevance (2008) argues that professional social work is a product of the modern industrialized society that are based on a foundation of materialistic and individualistic rights and not a profession customized to address problems in communalistic contexts where the communities are a part of the individual identity. This can be an explanation why the interviewees don’t experience to have the legitimacy among the people when it comes to conduct changes in the community in terms of implementing educational- or poverty-reduction programs. If the communities, as Osei-Hwedie (ibid) suggests, provides the norms, values and social processes in which the individuals in the communities can identify, it can be seen as intruding when someone from outside suggests changes in the community. It appears to be against the custom that others than the traditional authorities suggest changes at a community level. The people in the communities seem to see a value that the rules and power over the community are obtained by the traditional authorities.

Even if the social workers experience that they don’t have the legitimacy among the people to conduct social work at a community level, they have found a way to implement community programs. They turn to the traditional authorities and convince them about the appropriateness and benefits of the program they want to
implement. Then the traditional authorities present the program and prepare the people for the social workers to come and implement the program. Through this process, the social workers get the legitimacy from the people by getting the legitimacy from the traditional authorities. One interviewee expressed this as a form of indirect rule, and compared it with the British colonialism. This makes it interesting to analyze in relation to post-colonialism and Midgley’s (1981) concept of professional imperialism. Midgley stated that social work is a modern product of the individualistic and industrialized Western society, and therefore not suited for non-industrialized Non-Western contexts with different sets of values and lesser degree of individualization. Many interviewees stated that many of the community programs that they have obligation to implement are poverty reduction programs. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) develop many of these programs (see for example World Bank 2003 and International Monetary Fund 2012). Being big neo-liberal economic institutions it is reasonable to assume that these organizations are a product of the individualistic and capitalistic system developed in the Western world. These organizations influence on Ghanaian social work will not be investigated in this thesis but it is relevant to raise the question when investigating the concept of professional imperialism in Ghanaian social work. In Kreitzer’s (2009) participatory action research the participants stressed that the African knowledge and traditional social structures are seen as primitive when it is compared to Western education, knowledge and social welfare systems. But the legitimacy the traditional authorities appear to have from the people in the Ghanaian communities indicates that the people value the traditional knowledge and rules more than the knowledge and rules of the professional social workers at a community level. It is therefore relevant to ask how and to what extent does the World-Bank and IMF influence the community care programs and how well does this influence correlate with their legitimacy among the Ghanaian people?

In the individual cases, the interviewees experienced to have legitimacy among both the clients and the traditional authorities. The clients most often turn to the Social Welfare Offices when they are in need of support concerning children’s welfare. All of the interviewees stresses that it is different in the rural areas of Ghana, where the people most often turns to the traditional authorities instead of the Social Welfare Offices. The reasons they state is that Accra is modernized and more urban and that there are a higher degree of awareness among the people. Kreitzer et al (2009) also stated that in the urban settings of Ghana people are living more Western lifestyles. It is reasonable to assume that the nuclear family ideal is a part of to what they refer to as the “Western lifestyles”. The interviewees also expressed that nuclear families are increasing in Accra. The nuclear family is gaining strength as a new way of organizing the family and thus a new institution to assure social security of the children. Traditionally and historically, the extended family has had this role (Nukunya, 1992). The traditional authorities don’t claim to have the jurisdiction to deal with problems in nuclear families, because the nuclear families are not traditional institutions. The traditional authorities refer those people coming to them with such problems to the social workers at the Social Welfare Offices, which indicates a growing awareness of individual rights among the traditional authorities. Therefore, the social workers get the legitimacy and jurisdiction to deal with the problems in, and support to, the nuclear families.
The communalistic identities appear to have narrowed in Accra when it comes to the family as an institution and thus the social reality for the people seems to have changed. This, together with the expanded individual rights the children have got through the Children’s Act (1998) that stresses both parents duty for the rights and welfare of the children, and a growing awareness of these rights among the people, has led to a need and demand among the people for different institutions than the traditional in order to contribute to their striving for meaningful life’s. It appear that Kirby (2009) has right when he argues that the culture of rights have dawned in Ghana. But it is also relevant to highlight the question of what is shaping this source of legitimacy; is it Western solutions adapting to African issues or is it African problems adapting to Western solutions (Ibid)? Is it possible that the professional social work institutions and their provision of new services and resources has made the people adapt to the institutions view of a social reality, in order for them to gain access to the services and resources provided by the institutions?

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter the analysis of the different themes will be summarized in order to conclude the empirical findings. The findings from the analysis will also be used in answering the research questions of the study. The last part of this chapter contain a discussion of the findings in relation to social developmental issues and in suggesting topics for further research.

6.1 Summary of Analysis

The professional social workers experienced legitimacy to diagnose, to infer and to treat social problems share the same pattern. They experience to have legitimacy when it comes to problems at an individual level and in problems in social domains and institutions that historically been rare or non-existing in traditional Ghanaian communities. Example of such institutions is the nuclear family. The nuclear family system is a relatively new institution in Ghana (Nukunya, 1992) and a broken nuclear family is often diagnosed as a problem for the children. The social workers express that both the people and the traditional authorities respect the state law and knows that the social workers have the legislative mandate to implement law’s concerning children’s rights and welfare according to the Children’s Act. The treatment of individual social problems concerning children’s rights and welfare seem to be organized around methods to keep the nuclear family intact, trying to reunite broken nuclear families or making both parents responsible for the child maintenance.

The professional social workers experience to lack legitimacy from the people when it comes to conduct social work at a community level and in social domains and institutions that has historically been in the jurisdiction of the traditional authorities. When the social workers for example couldn’t treat problems concerning children’s welfare within the nuclear family and they find it relevant to involve the extended family, they go through the traditional authorities in order to get the extended families legitimacy. Furthermore, at a community level the social workers experience to have the legitimacy to diagnose social problems from the traditional authorities but not from the people. In order to get the
legitimacy to diagnose problems from the people and to get the opportunity to implement the community care programs, they involve the traditional authorities at an initial stage. In such a way they experience to get the legitimacy to diagnose problems among both the traditional authorities and the people in the communities. When it comes to the legitimacy to infer about problems at a community level the social workers experience to consider it as a collaboration between them and the traditional authorities and thus a process of inference based on cultural practices on one hand and professional social work knowledge on the other. If one of the parties and that party’s inference would become dominant in the construction of the problem, the other party would not legitimize it. And because that the social workers are dependent of the traditional authorities in order to gain legitimacy among the people they have to listen to and accept the traditional authorities cultural practices to some extent.

The basis of legitimacy seems to depend on whether the social problem is in a domain or institution where the traditional authorities historically have had the legitimacy and jurisdiction to deal with it. Osei-Hwedie (2008) and Gray & Coates (2008) theses about professional social work as a product of the modern industrialized society and as unsuited to address problems in communalistic contexts seem credible to some extent. The traditional authorities have historically governed the kinships and the social security in the communities and they still appear to have the legitimacy to do so. But at the same time the people in Accra seem to abandon the extended family ideal and the nuclear family seem to become the new ideal for organizing family life. This together with the increased awareness about children’s and individual rights in the nuclear family appear to legitimize professional social work because it is the only institution addressing these issues.

6.2 Answering the Research Questions

1. How do professional social workers in Accra experience their legitimacy to conduct social work in Accra communities?

The interviewed social workers experiences of legitimacy differ between different situations depending on whether they have legislated mandate to conduct social work or not and whether the people think the professional social work are contributing to a meaningful improvement in their lives without taking jurisdiction from the traditional authorities that historically have been conducting social work in the communities.

2. When do they experience to have, respectively not have, legitimacy to conduct social work?

They experience to have legitimacy from both the traditional actors and the clients to conduct social work in cases that concerns individual children’s welfare and rights as well as in dealing with problems in nuclear families. They do not experience to have legitimacy from the people to conduct professional social work when it comes to situations concerning problems in extended families or social problems at a community level. But they experience to have the legitimacy from the traditional authorities in these situations, and by involving the traditional authorities in the social work in extended families and in cases at the community level, the social workers experience to get legitimacy from the people as well.
3. What is the basis for legitimacy?

The professional social workers seem to have the legitimacy to conduct social work when it concerns problems that have arisen as a result of the modernization and urbanization of Accra. The modernization and the urbanization have led to that the people in Accra have reformed their lifestyles to become more similar to those we have in West, including nuclear family structures and the importance and awareness of individual and materialistic rights. These partly new lifestyles and social realities have created new social needs that are alien to the traditional authorities and their traditional social support systems that historically been conducting social work. This has led to a need for institutions with a different kind of social support systems that take these new lifestyles and social realities in consideration, and that is something that the professional social work can provide for. Thus, the professional social workers legitimacy comes from their legislative mandate and ability to address needs among the people that are not met elsewhere. However, the communalistic traditional values and customs still seem to be important and a part of the identities and social realities of the people in Accra. So when it comes to social work at a community level or conducting social work in areas that traditionally been in the jurisdiction of the traditional authorities, the professional social workers do not have the legitimacy to conduct social work without involving and collaborating with the traditional authorities in the process.

4. How do they experience the meeting with traditional authorities that historically been conducting social work in Ghana?

The professional social workers experience the meeting with traditional authorities as a necessity when it comes to conduct social work at a community level. The traditional authorities are seen as a master key in getting the people’s legitimacy and therefore the social workers have to maintain good relations with them in order to be able to implement community care programs at a community level. When it comes to the meeting with traditional authorities concerning problems in individual cases the professional social workers experiences seem to be a bit ambivalent. At the same time that the professional social workers seem to see the traditional authorities as a form of custodians of the communities that fulfill a function in terms of having knowledge about - and some control over the communities, they sometimes find their methods in doing so as contra productive and out of alignment with their professional social work knowledge.

6.3 The Relevance of the Study In Relation to Social Developmental Issues and Suggestions for Further Research

The findings in this study have shown that the professional social workers in Ghana experience legitimacy from the people in social work addressing issues and problems in areas concerning nuclear families and individual rights. Since the families in Accra are increasingly organized in accordance with the nuclear family ideal and that the individual rights appear to become more important to the people and that there are no other institutions addressing issues or providing services in these areas, it is reasonable to assume that the professional social work is playing an important role in contributing to a standard of living that is perceived as meaningful to the people. However, it can also be relevant to highlight the question of whether the professional social work has contributed to the processes
that have been a part in changing the lives and social realities of the people. Social work as a profession came to Ghana with the British colonialists (Kreitzer et al 2009) and it is a profession that provides resources and services to people in need. This makes it a profession with power over those who need and applying to take part of its services and resources. There is an uneven power balance between the one who conduct social work and the client who is dependent of social work. This makes it reasonable to ask what opportunities and awareness the client has, as the dependent part in the relation, in questioning the norms and assumptions underlying the allocation of resources and services that are provided by the professional social workers. Is it possible that the clients adjust to the social workers perception of reality in order to take part of the resources and services offered, and that the profession of social work thus is a part in shaping the social realities in areas where it is practiced? Is professional social work, as a Western solution to social problems, adapting to African issues or are African problems adapting to the Western solutions? Is this leading to a desirable or undesirable development? What are the alternatives? Focusing the clients’ views and experiences of professional social work in relation to their lived reality are a relevant topic to address in order to investigate these questions further. In doing so it becomes possible to examine what is shaping the sources of legitimacy for the professional social work. This can lead to a deeper knowledge of how professional social workers from the Western world can contribute to a social development that is sustainable and desirable in the clients’ point of view, and at the same time examine potential imperialist and post-colonial tendencies in professional social work and social developmental work.
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Empirical references

Interviewee number 1

Interviewee number 2

Interviewee number 3

Interviewee number 4

Interviewee number 5

Interviewee number 6

Interviewee number 7
Appendix A

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK
UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

P. O. Box LG 419, LEGON - ACCRA. TEL: 233-5130515/52/560300 Ext. 3209
E-mail: socialwk@LEGU.UG

Our Ref No: SC.1 (b)

The Regional Director
Dept. of Social Welfare
Accra,
Greater Accra Region.

Dear Sir,

MINOR FIELDSTUDY PROJECT: 7TH MAY – 21ST JUNE 2012
ALEXANDER BJÖRCK, MALMO UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, SWEDEN

I write to request for placement of Alexander Björech with the Department of Social Welfare for a minor field study project.

Alexander is a final year student of the Department of Health and Society, Malmo University College, Sweden with which University of Ghana has collaboration. He is pursuing a Bachelor’s degree in Social Work. Last year Alexander came to Ghana for a semester studies at Legon. This year as a requirement of Malmo University he is in Ghana to undertake not fieldwork placement but seven weeks minor field study project under the supervision of the Department of Social Work, Legon. The field study entails interviews and interaction with professionally trained social workers in various units and agencies of welfare service delivery, clients receiving the services and the challenges being faced by the social workers in the field. At the end of the study the student will come up with a report which will be beneficial to your organization and our Department.

The Department has therefore identified your organization as an ideal place for Alexander to undertake the study and also for interacting with students who will be placed with you for fieldwork from June 2012.

He will need to be linked with zonal offices, correctional centres, shelter home, probation and remand home, children’s home, hospital welfare offices, DOVVSU welfare office, destitute home, disabled training centre and some NGOs such as Help Age Ghana, CAS, Street Kids Aid, etc where he will meet social workers and clients.

I shall be grateful if this request receives your highest consideration. If issues arise please contact me on 0208182039.

Yours faithfully,

P.K. Abrefah,
Lecturer & Fieldwork Coordinator
Email: pkabrefah@yahoo.com
Appendix B

RE : MINOR FIELD STUDY PROJECT: 7TH MAY – 27TH JUNE 2012

ALEXANDER BJORK, MALMO UNIVERSITY COLLEGE SWEDEN

The attached letter from the University of Ghana, Department of Social Work is self explanatory.

You are kindly requested to give the student the fullest cooperation as you have always been doing for students during their field work attachment.

THE METRO DIRECTOR,
DEPT OF SOCIAL WELFARE
ACCRA.

THE MANAGERESS
OSU CHILDREN'S HOME
OSU – ACCRA

THE MANAGERESS
SHELTER, REMAND & G.C.C
ACCRA

THE CENTER MANAGER
ACCRA REHAB CENTER
ACCRA
THE OFFICER IN CHARGE
WELFARE OFFICE
R.B.T.H - ACCRA

THE OFFICER IN CHARGE
DOVVSU - ACCRA
Appendix C

Interview guide

Ethical considerations

- Inform the respondents about me, the purpose of this study, these ethical considerations and that they are free to participate in the interview and at any point have the right to stop the interview and withdraw from participating.
- Ask of the respondents consent to participate in the research. The consent will consist of a verbal agreement between the respondent and me.
- Inform respondents that they will be anonymous and the information that they’ll give me will be treated carefully beyond the reach of others to take part of.
- Inform that I will only use the collected data material for the purpose of this thesis.

Opening questions

What do you work with?
- Which organization/authority?
- Which target group do you work with?
- What are your job duties?

Can you describe a typical day at work?

Theme 1 – Diagnose

What problems or needs have the clients you work with?
What problems and needs are relevant for you as a social worker?
How do you experience the legitimacy to classify (diagnose) social problems?

Theme 2 – Inference

How do you assess the needs of a client?
How do you assess the needs in the community where you work?
Who assess the needs? Can there be other actors involved? Who has the legitimacy among the people to assess the needs?
What knowledge is the assessment based on?

Theme 3 – Treatment

How can you as a professional social worker help the clients?
How do you experience the legitimacy from the people to intervene (treat) in social problems?

Are there other actors or institutions in the community where the clients can get help?
Appendix D

Ethical considerations and contact information

My name is Alexander Björck and I am student at Malmö University in Sweden. We are about to conduct an interview as a part of a minor field study for my bachelor thesis in social work. The purpose of the study is to examine Ghanaian social workers views and experiences of legitimacy in the communities and how you experience the legitimacy to perform your professional tasks as social workers. This letter will be given to everyone who participates in the interviews. The letter states the rights you have as respondents in this study, as well as contact information to me in case you have any questions or if you want to withdraw from participating.

Ethical considerations – your rights as a respondent in this study

You are free to participate in this interview and you have the right to stop the interview at any point and withdraw from participating.

I will ask for your consent to participate in the interview and to record the interview. This consent will consist of a verbal agreement between you and me. You have the right to decline my request. If you accept my request, you still have the right to tear up the agreement at any point, and you will then be free to withdraw from participate. A withdrawal from participating will not lead to any consequences for you.

You will be anonymous and the information you give me will be treated carefully beyond the reach of others to take part of.

The information I receive from this interview will only be used for the purpose of my bachelor thesis in social work and it will be destroyed after used for this purpose.

Contact information

Alexander Björck
Social Work focusing the Development of Agencies
Malmö University, Health and Society
Ghanaian telephone number: 0200318664
Swedish telephone number: +46(0)704902289
E-mail: m09p2056@student.mah.se