

“Do we have to cross water to get to South Africa – I didn’t know that”!

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The Care of Kin...

- A presentation of a study in relation to the care of kinship care in the South of England and Kwazulu Natal, South Africa

The Care of Kin...

A significant national problem

Around 145,000 children in England are being looked after by people who are not their parents, but by members of their extended family or friends.

- **Defining kinship care**

‘The full-time care, nurturing and protection of a child by relatives, member of their tribe or clan, godparents, stepparents of other adult who has a family relationship with the child’ (Wilson et al 2007)

The study...some questions

- Why does kinship care work well in SA and not in the UK
- Why is the role of the SW viewed so differently within different cultures
- How do we help our students understand social work in international settings and other cultures

Literature Overview

- Kinship care is a globally recognised phenomenon, but has different meanings around the world
- In Western societies the public and child welfare professionals are prone to seeing this alternative child-rearing as abnormal
- In South Africa, kinship care is viewed as part of their normal cultural practice and underlying philosophy of Ubuntu
- The literature search highlighted the lack of;
 - Kinship carers' views and experiences of statutory agencies involvement
 - Cross cultural studies that explored one culture with another in relation to kinship care practice and delivery

Research Question

‘Through the unique and individual experiences of kinship carers, can we learn anything to enhance social work practice, policy and legislation in relation to kinship care delivery’

In order to address the paucity of literature in relation to cross cultural studies, this study explored kinship care from two distinct cultural settings, the United Kingdom and South Africa.

The Methodological Approach

- The study sought to respond to the research question by adopting an ethnographic, case study approach through;
 - Conducting interviews with kinship carers who had undergone a statutory kinship care assessment, which resulted in providing a kinship placement
 - Interviews with social workers in the UK and SA
 - A critical analysis of kinship care in the context of legislation, policy and practice for both countries
 - A deliberation and analysis of kinship care from a multi derivation viewpoint

Findings

- Key findings...



Discussion

- Similarities were identified in that both cultures (UK and SA) have a mixture of Christianity and capitalism that play key roles in the kinship carers reasoning and expectation to provide a kinship placement – although Christianity and capitalism are perceived differently in each respective country.
- UK kinship carers viewed the statutory assessment process negatively, finding the social workers involvement interfering in their family life and as such, withheld information.
- SA kinship carers viewed the assessment process as only a means of obtaining financial remuneration – welcoming the SW's into their homes

Learning for our students...

- How do we share our learning with our students?
- Re-thinking global social work internships in relation to kinship care (and SW practice)
- Working with other cultures in practice
- Sharing our research and hearing their thoughts (“Do we have to cross water to get to South Africa”!)

Future Research

- **Legislation, Policy and Practice Implications:**
 - UK - Government protocols should be introduced for specialised training and upskilling of the social workers involved with kinship carer
 - SA - Government recognition of the issues such as, illiteracy, education, starvation and social exploitation of kinship carers and how other agencies can effectively work together to deal with immediate and urgent problems
 - Specialised training and continuous professional development for SW's involved with kinship carers

Some UK issues...

- Isolation of attitudes amongst some students (staff!) - BREXIT, who view UK as centre of the globe
- Review of the curriculum to include international communication skills and appreciation of other cultures
- Problematizing of whiteness
- Personal and Professional development improved through experience of other cultures

- **Any Questions?**

References & Acknowledgements

- **References:**

Wilson, R, G. and Crewes, S. E. (Eds), 2007. Tradition and policy perspectives in kinship care. Binghampton. NY: Hawthorn Press

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