Rights-based Social Work: Implications for Research, Education, and Practice

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What are human rights?

Human Rights

"The right to have rights"
(Hanna Arendt)

Women's rights

Migrants' rights

"I want to lay down, but these countries are like uncles who touch you when you're young and asleep. Look at all these borders foaming at the mouth with bodies broken and desperate… I spent days and nights in the stomach of the truck; I did not come out the same. Sometimes it feels like someone else is wearing my body." (Warsan Shire, 2011)

A *set of transnational norms*, the *inspiration for an array of economic, political, social, cultural, and environmental policies,* and *the "master frame" for a dense network of community organizations, social movements, non-governmental organizations, and UN agencies*.

HR CORE PRINCIPLES

INALIENABLE

UNIVERSAL

HR

INDIVISIBLE

INABROGABLE

Human Dignity

Social Work: A Human Rights Profession?

- A global context/standards of practice – "set of transnational norms" – *Universality of HR.*

- Non-hierarchical, indivisible standards - *Indivisibility*

- A pursue of equality rather than equity informing policy development – " the inspiration for an array of economic, political, social, cultural policies" – *Human dignity*

- Participatory practices – "the master frame for a dense network of community organizations, social movements, NGOs, and UN agencies" – leading to inclusion and ensuring *the Inalienability/Inabrogability of Human Rights.*

Three generations of HR

1st Generation	2nd Generation	3rd Generation
Civil and Political Social Work	Social, Economic, and Cultural Social Work	Collective (rights) Social Work

Three generations of HR

1st Generation	2nd Generation	3rd Generation

Civil and Political Social Work

Social, Economic, and Cultural Social Work

Collective (rights) Social Work

Rights-based social work practice

- UNIVERSAL
  - Global vs local/GLOCAL
  - Cultural relativism --- cultural humility
- INCLUSIVE/NON-DISCRIMINATORY –
  - social justice focus/addressing structures of oppression
- INDIVISIBLE
  - Macro/Mezzo/Micro levels of practice

Rights-based social work practice

- PARTICIPATORY
  - Empowerment
  - Power dynamics
- NON-STIGMATIZING
  - Otherness in the context of human dignity
  - Social work language (!)
- LEADING TO SUSTAINABLE CHANGES
  - How do social work interventions address structural oppression?

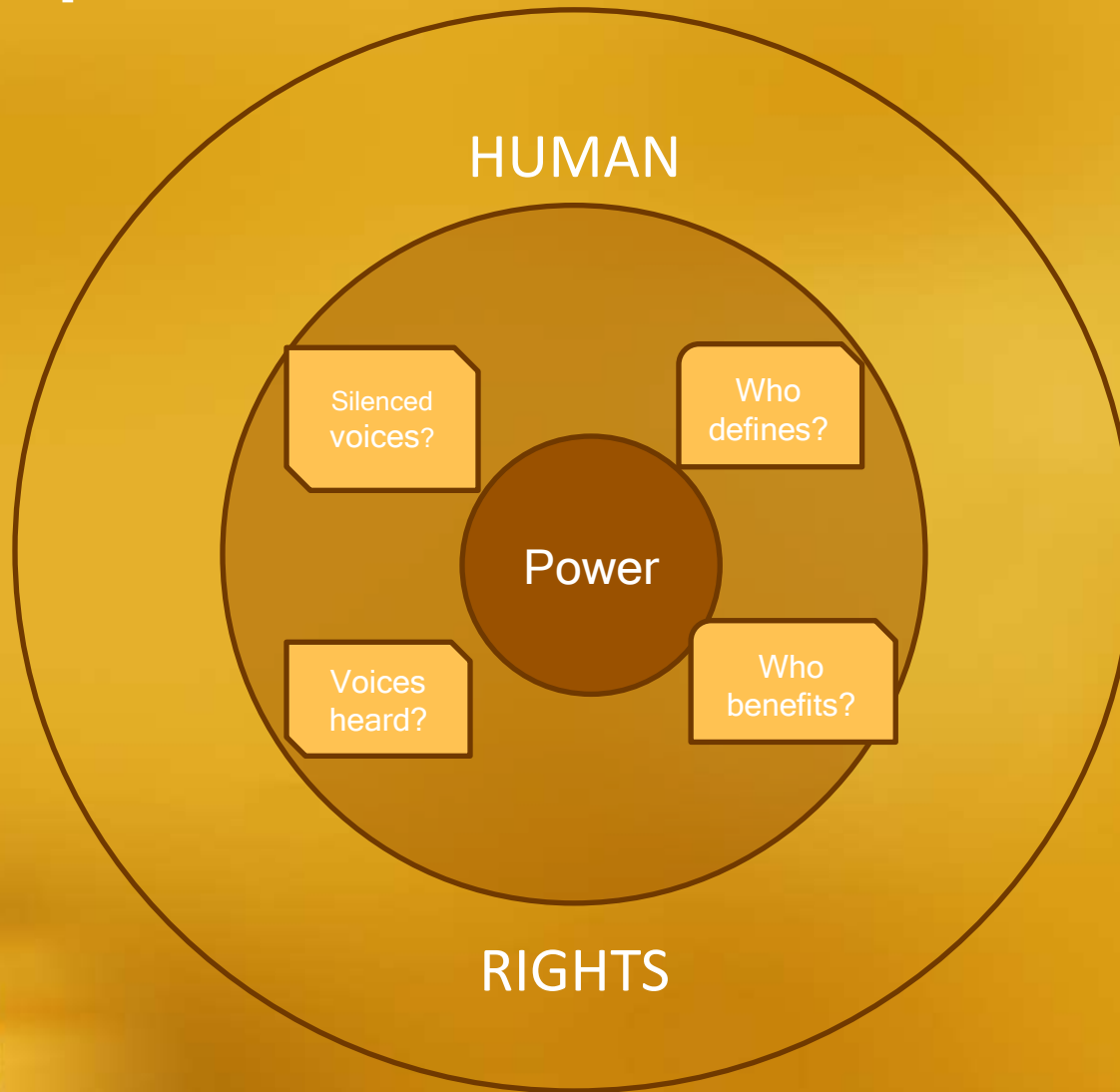# Rights-based policy practice

- KNOWLEDGE
  - Human rights content
  - Legal framework/implications
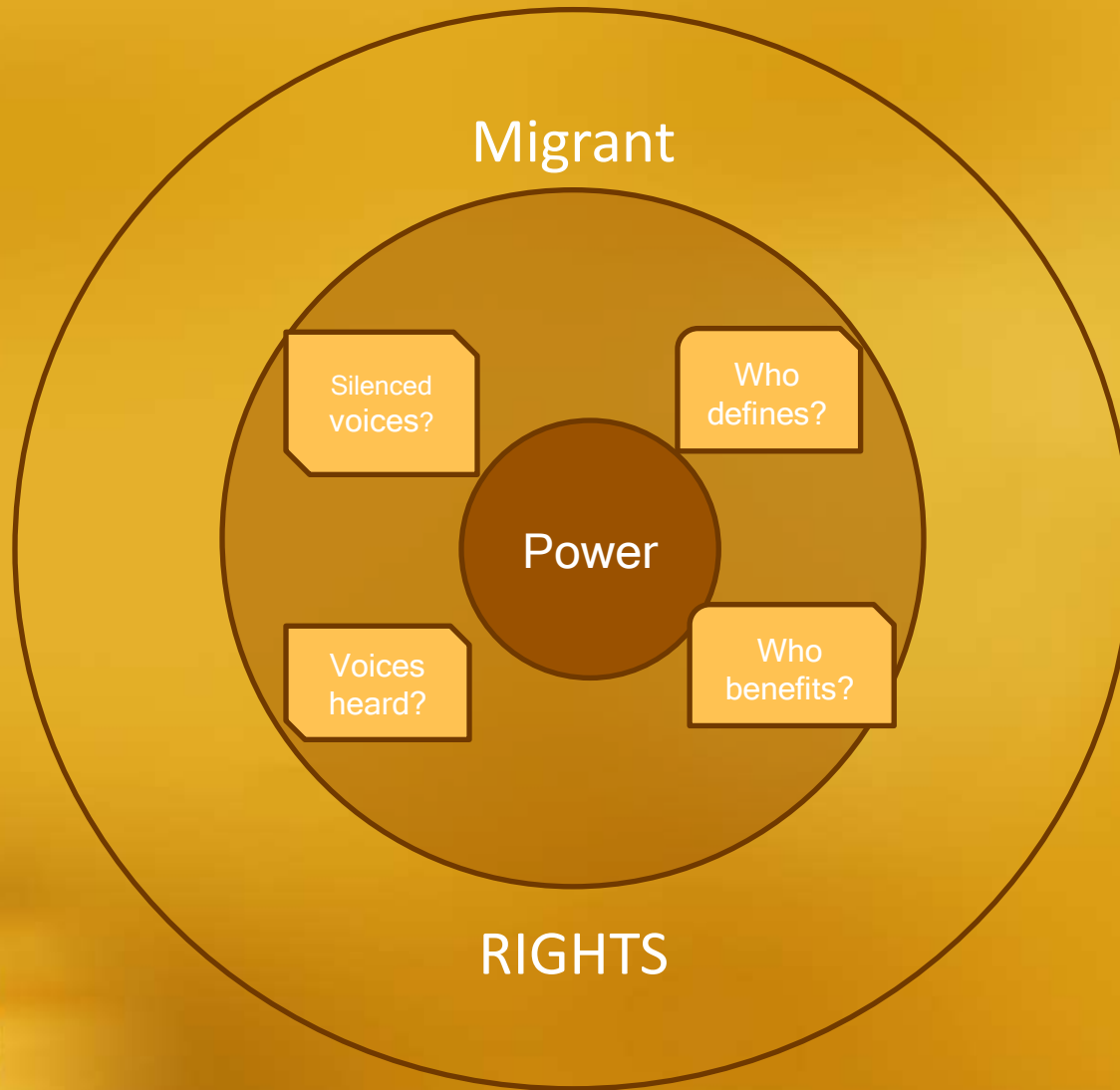 - Historical oppression/implications
- SKILLS
  - Stakeholder analysis
  - Capacity mapping
  - Community organizing
  - Policy analysis
  - Policy practice

Core questions

HUMAN

Silenced voices?

Who defines?

Power

Voices heard?

Who benefits?

RIGHTS

Reichert, 2006, p.8

Application: Forced Migration

Migrant

RIGHTS

Power

Silenced voices?

Who defines?

Voices heard?

Who benefits?

Bringing HR to POLICY PRACTICE

DEDUCTIVE

- Start from HR documents
- Use the RIGHT to deduct principles for practice
- E.g: If refugees have the right to international protection and fair representation [Geneva Convention, 1951] what poicy mechanisms are needed to ensure this right?

INDUCTIVE

- Starts with a current issue
- Identifies rights at stake – based on the indiividual's and the community's reality
- It is built on participatory policy practices – involving the community
- Attach a political dimension to the current concern
- E.g. Status of women migrants in refugee camps

(Ife, 2009)

Person - In - A GLOBAL WORLD

✓ Who do you work/advocate for ?
        (client vs. constituent)

✓ Whose values are you promoting (North vs. South)?

✓ Whose rights are you protecting/from what prospective?

✓ What knowledge are you using in your helping process?

Knowledge and values

- Holistic approach – green movement – oneness, interconnectedness
- Postmodernism – questioning imposed definitions, and reframing issues within local/community contexts
  - How do we operationalize universal rights to address the barriers, the needs of a given community, in a specific place, at a specific time?
  - Participatory democracy - increase individual and community rights – HOW?

- Feminist frameworks –challenge patriarchal powers and the maintenance of the status-quo
  - Shaping policies to promote Nonviolence
- Redefining traditional needs-based approach, by identifying HR implicit in any statement of need (Ife, 2009)

- *What are the intrinsic values we base our profession on? How do we align then with a rights-based approach to theory and practice?*

Rights–based social work research

- Evidence-based
  - WHY?

  - Whose evidence?

  - Dissemination and implications

Application: Outcome Evaluation vs Participatory Action Research

- Who defines success?
  - Assisted "voluntary" returns
- How are outcomes measured?
  - Data ON versus shared narratives
- How are findings used?
  - Dissemination
  - Accountability
  - Follow-up

Rights-based social work direct practice

- Who is your "client"?
  - The power of language
  - US: the power of diagnosis
  - The concept of "mandatory" client versus self-determination
  - Community as "client"

Ethics and rights-based social work practice

THREE-TIER MANDATE:

Profession

Populations served

HUMAN RIGHTS