REVIEWS/RECENZJE

Tina Mattsson
Intersectionality as a Useful Tool: Anti-Oppressive Social Work and Critical Reflection. "Journal of Women and Social Work" 2014, 29 (1): 8–17

Reviewed by: Izabela Jajkiewicz

Social workers are usually equated with bureaucratic employees who act mechanically, often without second thoughts, routinely doing their job. Because this is a stereotype image – like any stereotype – it could contain a grain of truth. Every social worker should consider his or her action and think about whether their behavior could be oppressive and generate inequalities.

Tina Mattsson's article introduces the concept of intersectionality into social work as a useful tool for critical reflection (2014: 8). Looking at this concept in the context of the whole article, it is possible to deduce two ways of understanding it. On the one hand, critical reflection could contribute to working with unconscious reproduction of oppression, discrimination, and inequality. On the other hand, critical reflection could encourage the undertaking of a challenge to stop the regeneration of the entire social inequality structure by changing the ways people thinking about others in view of gender, sexuality, class, and race – the stereotypical perceptions of people and the actions which reproduce inequality.

Prejudices in society are formed in comparison with what does not fit into its social images about itself. Yet the author notes it is dangerous to adopt a neutral attitude (2014: 9). From this it could be concluded that all is well and right in accepting everything that is socially recognized as true and normatively proper. A neutral attitude could prevent exclusion and being wrong in the eyes of others. Thus, it looks like as though it is better to think and behave according to socially established routines, even in social work. The problem is that actions reproduce existing patterns and prevent critical thinking, constructive criticism, and the ability to change.

Tina Mattsson – although she does not say it directly – stresses that gender, sexuality, class, and race are interrelated personal components. It could be concluded that the individual is usually not seen as a whole but fragmented. When one component of a unit

seems to be socially "defective," the whole person seems to be defective. Social work should have the ambition to undertake uninterrupted attempts to change inequality, marginalization, and shattering oppression by applying structural understandings of social problems (2014: 8).

The author suggests that intersectionality could be explained as an analytical combination of gender, sexuality, class, and race (2014: 9). It creates a complex form of categories which socially construct the human. The individual consists of multiple identities which are intertwined and situate the individual at some position in the social structure (2014: 10). Based on Mattsson's words, it could be concluded that critical reflection should contribute to understanding how each part of the social human component has a strong influence on society's perception of an individual. Critical reflection is needed to increase awareness of how social work could reconstruct social structure and how social structure could affect social work practice to close the circle.

There would be nothing wrong with that if not for the potential power to reproduce oppression, inequality, discrimination and a lack of awareness of this. Social workers are not always aware that their actions could potentially support discrimination, stereotypical gender role perceptions or homophobia.

Serving as a case of open homophobia could be the example of my acquaintance and a future social worker. Some time ago she had an internship at a social work institution, under the supervision of a female social worker with long experience in social work practice. One time she and the social worker went to a home to do an environmental interview with the family. While traveling to this site, the social worker suddenly stopped, contemptuously looked at the house on the opposite side of the street, and said (more or less) these words: "Look at this, here live those gays. This is an abnormal, invalid family. They should not live here and demoralize children in a decent family." My acquaintance was in shock because one human aspect – sexuality – had been decisive in assessing that pair as infirm and anomalous.

Hence, I fully agree with Tina Mattsson about how a social worker could uphold and reproduce social structures and prejudices even though he or she is doing their job with good intentions (2014: 9). Through an expressed bias that social worker (and my acquaintance's supervisor) had a good intention (in her own opinion), because she wanted to caution my acquaintance against something she saw as wrong. But it was a great way to reproduce prejudice in a young social worker who does not undertake critical reflection in evaluating "abnormal phenomenon in social life."

Mattsson pays attention to how the social worker does his or her job in the environment of an organization, its bureaucratic rules, and in a specific cultural context with a specific perception of social rules (2014: 10–11). In an environment which has strict standards or ideals, the social worker may feel powerless and helpless to change and break out of imposed behavioral patterns. However, critical reflection could be a way to combine knowledge, awareness, and practice which, together, are able to change one's own prejudices and thinking patterns (2014: 11–12). With awareness of the social framework of ideas about roles, patterns of behavior, and prejudices towards people who do not fit

expectations, the social worker could change his/her own thinking and actions so as to break down the reproduction of the social structure and oppressive system. The author of this article emphasizes critical reflection as an instrument which could render social work a profession with the power to introduce change in society – most of all, a change in people's ways of thinking (2014: 14).

Tina Mattsson lists three steps on how to learn critical reflection while looking at specific phenomena which, at first sight, seem abnormal in light of the social assimilation of certain patterns of behavior and obligations (2014: 13–14). First of all, we should start by identifying a problem or phenomenon which causes dissonance and then describe it in detail. The author is probably considering a description of the effects which a phenomenon can exert on feelings in individuals and their milieu. As a second step, we should identify the impact of this phenomenon. Everyone should consider why it arouses mixed feelings in us or looks controversial. That may be shocking because it does not fit the social order. For example, it may shock us to see, during a demonstration, a homosexual riding a motorcycle while wearing a wedding dress[1] – but we should think about why this shocks us. Where is the source of our negative attitude towards this? Why is it striking? Maybe our prejudices take hold from a world order internalized in us. This is the third step of critically reflecting – reconstruction and reflection about our ways of thinking and an attempt to change the old ones.

The social worker should be able to critically think and reflect, to observe, analyze, and draw conclusions. He or she should be able to look at the social structure and see how it works. It is in social thinking that the prejudices and tendencies are rooted, leading us to move away from things that appear not to match everyday life. The social worker should be able to move beyond this framework and be able to work against oppression and inequality.

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[1] That example comes from one of the social work courses at the Jagiellonian University.

Roni Strier, Sharon Binyamin
*Introducing Anti-Oppressive Social Work Practices in Public Services:
Rhetoric to Practice.* "British Journal of Social Work"
2014, 44 (8): 2095–2112

Reviewed by: Olga Maciejewska

The text focuses on the topic of anti-oppressive social work. It is important that this discourse has become a main point in many theoretical discussions, but, especially in public social practices, the impact of its principles is still marginal. Studies documenting the process by which anti-oppressive practices are implemented do describe the endeavors of non-governmental agencies and the grassroots initiatives of community organizations. Yet, despite growing interest aroused by the anti-oppressive approach, its real impact on public services is still unknown. This article by Roni Strier and Sharon Binyamin describes the case study of a comprehensive and long-term change process whose aim was to develop a new model in public social services, one based on anti-oppressive principles. This text discusses emerging questions connected with the viability of a new perspective in the practice of social work.

The starting point is to explain what anti-oppressive social work is. At the core of this perspective is that it aims to change the procedures and the structure of services delivery through macro-systemic changes. This is done on the political and legal level. Anti-oppressive practice embodies a person-centered philosophy. This is strongly connected with reducing the deleterious effect of inequalities – most of all, the structural ones – in people's lives. It is a way of structuring relationships between individuals "that aims to empower users by reducing the negative effects of social hierarchies" (2014: 2101) on people's interactions. We have to understand that we are all equal and there is no hierarchy.

There is an idea which Karabanow supports: the anti-oppressive perspective should attempt to build a respectful environment for those populations which are marginalized. Moreover, the environment has to be safe. The process should always be located in the specific context. It is important to enable people to notice and understand the connections between their life experiences, the social conditions, and the dominant ideologies. According to the guidelines of the anti-oppressive model, the people's understanding is always formed in the various contexts in which they live. Any implementation of anti--oppressive practices in the field of social work would require extensive changes in the culture and organizational structure of services. Not only individuals need to be active.

It is necessary to add that there is one gap between the anti-oppressive perspective and public social services. The former is intensely oriented towards social change, and the latter deals with the basic needs of individuals and groups of clients. There is then a conflict between the services delivered by the highly regulated public system and the more unconstrained anti-oppressive discourse. It is justified to question how to connect both ways? There are several elements that can be identified in this area. The idea then

is to bring new solutions to the existing reality and not to completely revamp the whole system.

The theoretical rationale behind the transformation of social services in the spirit of the anti-oppressive perspective may include, among others, adopting contextualized and structural views of client problems, developing client representation, developing non-hierarchical work relationships between social workers or agencies and clients, and promoting social rights. In addition, this also entails the creation of a non-bureaucratic organizational culture of agencies, acknowledging unequal power relations with clients of the system, creating alliances with clients, and responding to ethnic, class and/or gender diversity. One of the most important elements is to arouse reflexivity and critical consciousness among social workers and clients. Social workers, through self-reflection and self-evaluation, gain the possibility to draw nearer to the core of social work – i.e., understanding people and relationships between particular elements of social conditions. It is necessary to emphasize the importance of incorporating all these solutions into the daily practice of social work. Anti-oppressive practices are still rare in the sphere of public social services. Moreover the theoretical discussion on the viability of this approach is still in its infancy as well.

Roni Strier and Sharon Binyamin stress that "the public social services have probably become the most criticized social institution"(2014: 2103). Such criticism comes from several sources of note. The first one stems from the dominant neo-liberal discourse which is connected with violation of the image of public services and the systematic dismantling of the welfare state. The neo-liberal policy favors the social system that generates an "anti-welfare political climate", high levels of poverty, and punitive reforms, and – what can be considered the greatest threat – intensifies the further degradation of the social services sector. The public system is being transformed by privatization which could lead to the abandonment of customers.

The second source of criticism is connected with the neo-managerial school of management. The point is to take a critical view on the impact of this ideology on social services. According to the authors, neo-managerialism has harmed the ability of many services to respond to the needs of their most vulnerable groups. Furthermore, this ideology undermines a social worker's capacity to fulfill his/her fundamental social mission – namely, to promote social changes.

Finally, the third source is derived from a general dissatisfaction among the consumers of public services. The problem is that public services are slow to react to the lack of solutions to the most pressing social problems. The environment wherein social workers provide services stymies the ethical nature of their mission. Public social services have an image which does not support the change. The system is portrayed as taking part in the labeling of marginalized groups and strengthening the discrimination. It is not surprising that social services for excluded populations – as well as people without a voice in society – are something of a fertile ground for oppression.

It is necessary to stress that public social services are the primary and sometimes the only source of institutional support for groups living in poverty. The general criticism

against social services is based on the concept of a unique social mission. Yet we have to understand that they are tools to achieve the goals of society, not simply commodities that can be exchanged on the goods market. Furthermore, they cannot be assessed only by standards of costs, profit, efficiency or outputs. The point is to change the ways of thinking and understanding about the role of agencies and services.

Sharon Binyamin and Roni Strier describe in their article a case study at the Family Aid Centre (FAC) in Jerusalem; referenced is the implementation and development of new forms of assistance in public welfare services. The starting point is to stress that welfare services in Israel are delivered by the municipalities with central and local governmental funding. That means that the government lays down the regulations, but only local welfare bureaus are sovereign in the development of the system. In the past almost all social workers were employed by the state, but a trend towards outsourcing and privatization has resulted in new patterns. Many services are provided by NGOs and the new privatized system includes the provision of essential needs for groups. Against the alarming rise of social inequalities and poverty a comprehensive proposal has emerged for the restructuring of public social services.

The new service-agency was developed as a joint initiative of private foundations interested in funding and promoting innovative solutions and the municipal, public social services. This initiative was the result of a rise in poverty in Jerusalem, and increasing demands for services which ran parallel to government cutbacks in personnel and budgets. In the first evaluation studies, social services were defined (before intervention) as "a situation of a permanent state of emergency"(2014: 2105). Social workers were interested in fulfilling their mission in a more holistic way; they wanted something more.

It took some years to define a theoretical framework for the change. FAC was defined as an agency focused on supporting clients whose fundamental problem was poverty. It was oriented to support the clients' strengths and pay attention to their needs. The satisfaction of the clients is monitored constantly. The Family Aid Centre aims to provide a high level of services – accessible, flexible, easy, and connected with needs and sensitivity. The point is to develop an egalitarian worker-client relationship based on a non-hierarchical structure and to intensify a reflective organizational culture through dialogue and relations. The new services seek to build strategies and create coalitions to mobilize the community. The key is to encourage alliances and partnerships between workers and clients on three levels: individual, group and community. Developing innovative intervention methods that can integrate the community, workers and experts is in the spotlight of FAC. It promotes the participation of clients in decision-making processes.

The Family Aid Centre is defined as an agency delivering services, adopting the structural theory of client poverty, working with client definitions of the problem, and developing an intervention methodology that should be understood as a multilevel solution. FAC encourages class, gender, ethnic and cultural awareness, and fortifies competences. Promoting participation and reflection, changing the professional status of frontline social workers, and improving service delivery are still at the heart of the idea of FAC.

This article by Roni Strier and Sharon Binyamin calls for a debate on critical questions for the future of social work and the services system. It is based only on a case study which is explanatory. The essence is to touch up on the implementation of new solutions in the field of social work. It is necessary to focus on the activity of individuals, groups and communities. There is a lot of power in people and this should be utilized to the fullest.The implementation of anti-oppressive practices can be understood as a very interesting way to improve action in the field of social work. People have to understand that all of us must invest some work and effort to incorporate new practices into the organizational culture of the existing social services system. To debate this question, everyone concerned should ground their theoretical studies and experiences on agencies. It is possible to develop services for people living in difficult conditions by incorporating new perspectives into daily practice. The new solutions adopt a more contextualized view of client problems – simply because people win a voice and represent themselves. The anti-oppressive approach is based on more egalitarian and less hierarchical solutions. Furthermore relations and dialogue are in the limelight in this perspective.

The widely understood system of social services needs to be changed. The anti--oppressive approach delivers a lot of inspiration for all the workers and clients who want to create something new. It is worth trying to implement new perspectives in Poland: agencies cannot continue to ignore the changes in social life.

Scott Harding, Kathryn Libal
Iraqi refugees and the humanitarian cost of the Iraq war: What role for social work? "International Journal of Social Welfare" 2012, 21: 94–104

Reviewed by: Zofia Markiewicz

If this very article was to be published in one of the Polish journals of social work it would have been very revolutionary as it focuses on one of the missions of the social work profession that seems to have been almost utterly forgotten, at least in our Polish reality. This mission, or rather the mandate of our profession is to promote social justice and human rights, also on the national and global scale. I believe that this is something of which we constantly need to be reminded. The social worker should be the one to advocate on behalf of those at risk of social exclusion in order to influence and shape just policies and practices. This is connected with our identity and dignity as social workers. Unfortunately, social work in our reality is very rarely associated with some greater influence or impact on policymakers. Another thing that is rarely looked upon is that, in these postmodern times, those at risk of social exclusion are not only our own poor, homeless, orphans, persons with disabilities or the elderly, but also there are new dimensions of modern homelessness and poverty created by unjust and oppressive policies which leave many refugees and undocumented migrants without any legal status or assistance, trying to deprive them of their human dignity and rights. As social workers we should also act on their behalf.

Scott Harding and Kathryn Libal state that the case of Iraqi refugees has proven that the current policies and programs targeting refugees are oppressive and inadequate. They are alarmed that in spite of the clear mandate, social workers do not play an active role in shaping those policies and providing relevant services for refugees. My impression is that the main point of the article is to emphasize this mission and vocation of our profession. It does not focus on the practical ways of how to achieve this and make our voice heard. It does not give us ready answers. We are inspired to change our way of thinking and we can feel what should be done but have no clue as to how to accomplish this.

This can be seen as a drawback of the article, yet I believe we are just challenged to think about the answers ourselves. The role of the article is rather to motivate us to stand up and act, to make us feel responsible for the injustice which we witness in our world today. It may, for a while, make us feel ashamed for our neglect and indifference, but the main point is to look ahead and concentrate on the opportunities. We should stop being passive, stop being 'bystanders'. Harding and Libal are calling us to get up and stand up for their rights.

As stated in the article, refugees in the Global North are dependent on 'a patchwork of humanitarian aid, family remittances and informal labour'(2012: 95). However, all those factors are not reliable sources of income. Humanitarian aid focuses on the short-term, most urgent and basic needs and will not last for long. Family remittances cannot be relied upon in times of war and conflict; additionally, informal labor is often

connected with exploitation and human rights abuses. Deprived of legal status, refugees are often left in 'limbo' without any prospects of change – and this is what concerns Harding and Libal.

According to them, in order to change this situation, active collaboration of different actors is required at the local, national, and international levels. The authors argue that social workers have multiple opportunities to influence global social justice policies. They cite lobbying and educational campaigns as ways in which social workers can act. To me these suggestions seem quite vague and unspecific. However, they also emphasize the role of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), the International Association of the Schools of Social Work (IASSW), and the International Council for Social Welfare (ICW) as important actors in this matter. According to the IFSW, our profession 'has a responsibility' to look for policies that address worldwide refugee concerns. The article at hand reminds us that all this needs to be achieved by collaboration on different levels and also beyond borders.

In my mind, this is a great challenge for social workers: to change perspective and look at the broader context of global inequalities. I believe this is something that is crucial in the postmodern era, as it is no longer possible to draw a line between 'us' and 'them'; moreover, issues of the Global South or war-torn countries have started to affect us in different ways. We cannot close our eyes to the injustice. The time has come for social workers to act. Needless to add, it is much harder to put those words in action. Although, as Harding and Libal believe, a variety of opportunities exists – starting from direct practice with refugees to cooperation with different NGOs as well as collaboration with partners in such countries as Jordan, Syria (at the time the article was published), and Lebanon. Through such transnational cooperation and exchanges of social work students, staff, and know-how, both the emigration and immigration countries can benefit in multiple ways. It is a great partnership model for capacity building through mutual learning.

What I really admire about the article is the empowering and grassroots approach to our partners. Harding and Libal stress the importance of working in partnership with different institutions and NGOs in order to find appropriate solutions suitable for the socio-economic and cultural context, rather than export ready-made (and, therefore, usually useless) solutions from the West. These are key values for every social worker, but, in humanitarian work with refugees, they might in some cases be forgotten. Social workers are the ones who should represent those values.

Another field in which the profession can contribute is community-building. This is a very basic and accessible means by which to promote the social inclusion of refugees. However, what concerns me is that Harding and Libal do not emphasize the central role that the refugees themselves should play in developing services best suited to their needs and situation. This is definitely something that should not be neglected as the aim of this work is to empower, and we cannot talk about empowerment when refugees are not invited to participate in the process of developing these services. Nevertheless, the

article does mention the need for refugees to assess services at present; this might be the first step towards integrating them into the self-help system.

In light of the arguments mentioned in this article, we can clearly see that we, as social workers, possess great potential to provide substantial input in integrating refugees into our societies. This is not only a potential, but also a responsibility of our profession. Social work methods and perspectives could influence humanitarian organizations; by forming alliances across borders, we could work on more sustainable solutions for refugee inclusion. Harding and Libal are well aware that the profession cannot achieve all this by itself. We should start by joining coalitions and campaigning for social justice and human rights. This way, step by step, we could challenge inequalities on a global scale. Even if this change is going to be very slow and difficult the article urges us to act.

As social workers we are obliged to uphold a clear value base and advocate for the realization of human rights, therefore we do not have an excuse to ignore injustice. This is something that every social worker should have in mind, but, needless to say, when one is overwhelmed with everyday duties there is always a danger of getting carried away and forgetting to look at the bigger picture. This is why I emphasize the importance of academics and practitioners reminding us about that mandate of our profession. So let's unite and stand up for a more just world! Some might point out that the writers' approach to our mission (or rather vocation?) is far too idealistic or utopian, but, for me, this is rather inspiring – exactly the form of inspiration which is needed in social work in the postmodern era.

Frederic G. Reamer
Ethical Challenges in the Technology Age. "Social Work Today"
2015,15 (1): 14–18

Reviewed by: Noemi Rakus

This article speaks about a new age in social work – the technology age. This is a time in which social workers can use the broad variety of new possibilities for communication which our contemporary era offers. For example, they use e-mails, text messages, online chat rooms or smartphone apps. These advances certainly have a big influence on social work as a profession and on the shape of assistance relations.

Frederic Reamer's thesis is that new technological solutions have created new challenges and dilemmas that did not exist at the beginning of social work. In the first paragraph, the author recalls the figure of Mary Richmond, one of the pioneers of social work. Her goal was to create an official, formal learning program for social workers and her undertakings had a very great impact on the development of the profession. In her book, *What is Social Case Work*, published in 1922, she focused on partnership and cooperation as essential elements in assistance relationships. Face-to-face contact was the only means of contact with clients that she knew. Her amazement would be great, if she found out in what ways social workers communicate with their clients nowadays.

Today, it is possible to help a client without any physical, real contact. This means that social workers can do their job, like support or problem solving, through digital forms of contact. This leads to the fact that nowadays many social workers have clients when they have never met in person. Practitioners contact clients by using:

- video counseling technology – Today e-clinics exist where social workers offer online counseling. This means that clients can have an online chat by using a video camera. The therapy can take two forms: individual or group. Customers can pay for this by credit card;
- online social networks – Social networks are very popular, both in the social worker's and client's lives. Some groups of social workers suppose that having contact with a client on social networks may have a very positive influence on the entire assistance relationship. It can render this formal connection more friendly and the social worker more accessible. Both these things are important to clients and help them feel that they are treated individually;
- smartphones – Applications for smartphones have become a tool in social work practice. Today some clinical programs exist which require the installation of special applications by their clients. These applications are used to collect information about the client, e.g., about their symptoms or moods. Apps, on the basis of these data, automatically send an appropriate response, like how to deal with stress;
- avatars – Some social workers offer counseling services in the virtual world. To stay anonymous, clients, as well as social workers, can use avatars instead of their

own, real image. An avatar is a digitally generated image; clients can create one and enter a virtual room for therapy, remaining unrecognized;

- text messages – Clients can purchase a monthly service in which they have the opportunity to exchange unlimited text messages with their social worker; and
- e-mails – Many social workers offer their help by e-mails, though not as an answer to a specific question but as a repetitive service. This means that the client can pay for monthly (or other length of time) access to this service with a guaranteed response within 24 or 48 hours.

Certainly, all these new ways of contact with a client may have as many advantages as disadvantages. Some professionals may be enthusiastic to use them as tools in a counseling service and others may be against this. The author of this article presents a few ethical dilemmas and fresh challenges connected with using new technology in social work. These are related to:

- informed consent – To gain authentically informed consent to online counseling can be very difficult, especially when the social worker never meets the client in person; another thing is that the social worker never knows who really is on the other side of the monitor;
- privacy and confidentiality – Social workers simply cannot be sure that their e-mails or text messages are not being shown to third parties;
- boundaries in relationships – Having informal contact with clients on social media may lead to a blurring of boundaries in formal contacts;
- social worker's competence – New tools in social work practice require new skills; social workers have to learn about new technologies and how to use them properly; and
- archiving – Social workers have to ensure proper archiving of e-mails, text messages or video counseling services.

This article is very interesting and intriguing for me. Among other reasons, I selected it because of my familiarity with the author, Frederic G. Reamer whose articles and style of writing I enjoy. Moreover, I am interested in social work ethics and ethical dilemmas which are raised here. The author presented some facts about using new technologies as tools in counseling service; he also showed that they may create new moral issues. Nevertheless, he does not present his own opinion: he leaves his readers with room for their own reflections. Reading this article led me to questions about new technologies and their utilization in social work.

Times are changing and social work is changing with them. This is a normal process of development in any profession. Social work has to be appropriate to the modern society and social workers need to be prepared for the new trends, problems, and challenges. With this I fully agree though I am not so sure if social workers should be providing services solely by via digital forms of contact. I believe I am more like Mary Richmond than like a modern social worker.

For me, the most important aspect of a counseling service is the real, tangible contact. From my side, the assistance relationship is not complete without it. Having face-to-face

contact with clients is truly helpful and permits the social worker to collect much information about them. Sometimes body language signals many more things than just verbal communication. Additionally, by personal contact we can build trust which is very important for successful help. It seems to me that people do not feel better when totally unrecognized in their contact with a social worker. In fact, it may be an impediment to building a valuable relationship that could lead to the solution of a problem. Of course, I can imagine situations in which someone contacts a social welfare center by e-mail, but this should ultimately lead to personal contact with a real person.

E-mails or text messages can be helpful but not as the only means of contact, but as an additional tool. In discussing this with my husband, he was more open to such kinds of counseling service, but he is a programmer hence, in his eyes, technology appears to only present benefits. However, he drew my attention to one thing which I considered an advantage to this form of communication. Namely, the anonymity afforded by participation in online counseling can give more courage to a person needing to talk. For some it may be the only way to deal with, especially, embarrassing difficulties. For example, a woman can freely admit that her partner abuses and is violent against her; in response, the social worker can encourage and direct the woman to specific institutions without knowing her personally. When I think about such a means as the only possibility for her to get some help, then I can agree that using only digital forms of contact is good. Of course, there is the other side. There are a lot of people who do not have access to the internet, or even to a computer or smartphone. Today this means that they are in danger of exclusion.

Another advantage which I perceive is that this way of counseling can solve the issue of an insufficient number of social workers and understaffing at centers. It is known in Poland that this is a very common situation. One social worker has too many clients and, because of that, he or she cannot help them all in the most efficient way. There is no time for that. In this case, applications which automatically send an appropriate response seem a good resolution. Yet this can still lead to a very serious quandary. Assuming that online services and all these digital solutions become sufficient one day, what will then happen with real, human social workers? Perhaps we will work only with the 'digitally-excluded', or perhaps we will only be freelancers actually competing for clients. In conclusion, it is my conviction that social workers should use digital forms of contact with clients, yet only as an additional tool because nothing can replace personal contact.