



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

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**Lisa Werkmeister Rozas/
Johannes Herwig-Lempp**

A Matter of Perspectives: Systemic Social Work

(from a Merseburg/Hartford perspective)



Merseburg



Lisa Werkmeister Rozas
Johannes Herwig-Lempp



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Merseburg

- Castle and Cathedral
- Incantations
- Industry



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HoMe - Hochschule Merseburg
University of Applied Sciences

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HOME
HOCHSCHULE
MERSEBURG^{FH}
University of
Applied Sciences

FACHBEREICH
SOZIALE ARBEIT,
MEDIEN, KULTUR

Faculty of Social Work.Media.Culture (700 stud.)

- Social work (B.A.)
- Culture and media pedagogics (B.A.)
- Applied sexuality sciences (M.A.)
- Applied media and culture sciences (M.A.)
- Systemic social work (M.A.)
- Culture management and marketing (M.A.)

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systemische-sozialarbeit
masterstudiengang



www.sysoma.de



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Hartford



School of Social Work
sww.uconn.edu

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Hartford

- Insurance Industry
- Wadsworth Atheneum Museum
- The Mark Twain House



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1798 Asylum Avenue
West Hartford, CT



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Uconn School of Social Work Programs

- **Master of Social Work (M.S.W.)**
 - First year based on professional foundation curriculum
 - Areas of Specialization: Casework, Administration, Group Work, Community Organization and Policy Practice
 - Focus Areas: Black Studies, International Issues, Puerto Rican/Latino Studies, Practice with Older Adults, Women and Children in Families and Urban Issues
- **Master of Social Work Advanced Standing**
 - 1 year program for BSW graduates
- **Social Work Ph.D.**



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Social work as profession



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My Godness!
What a big heart!

I read in the documents that she is a social worker.



Lisa Werkmeister Rozas
Johannes Herwig-Lempp



Social work is more challenging than therapy: Six „ways to act“ for social work

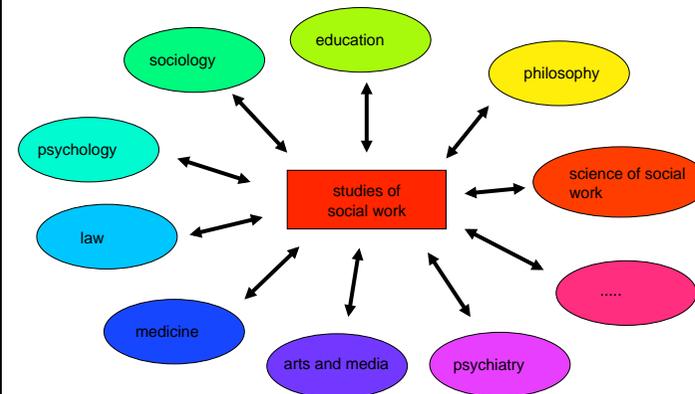
- to counsel
- to negotiate
- to intervene
- to advocate
- to procure
- to be present



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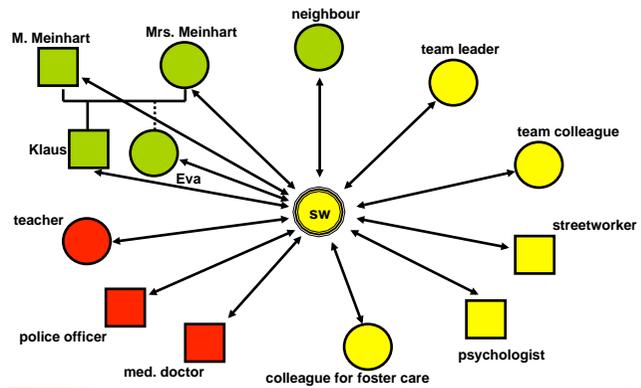
Social work as 2nd order sciences



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the point of view of a social worker in the child care services



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Johannes Herwig-Lempp



Diversity



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Identity Timeline

- Draw three timelines
 - Gender
 - Race/Ethnicity
 - Dis/ability
- Think of the first time you thought about your identity and mark it on each of your timelines
 - How old where you?
 - What was the context?



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Three Levels

- Individual
- Institutional
- Structural/Cultural



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Frameworks

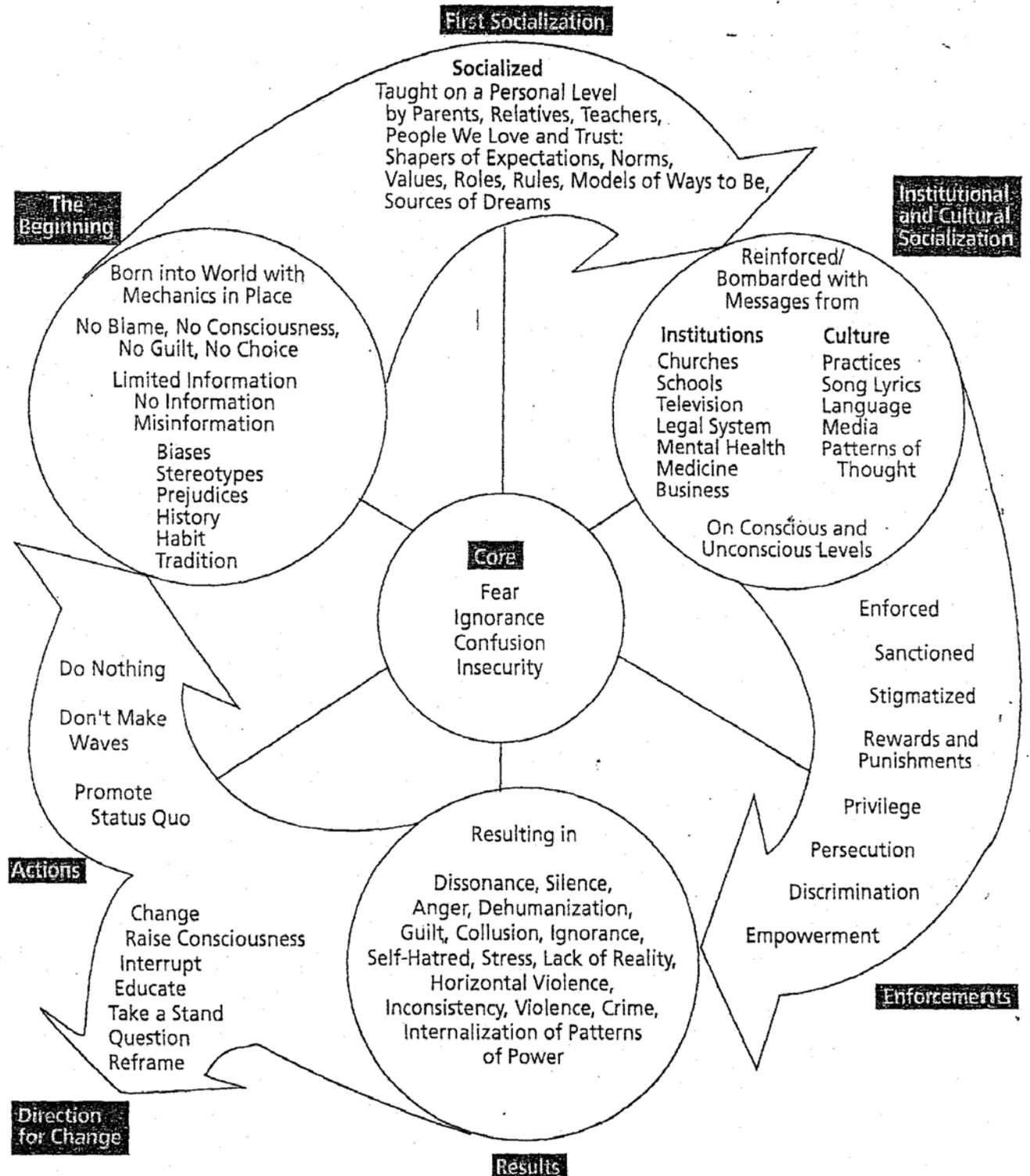
- Power
- Privilege
- Discrimination
- Decolonization
- Oppression (racism)



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Cycle of Socialization



Systemic social work



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“systemic” means:
we can always change our
perspective -
and changing perspectives
can be very useful.

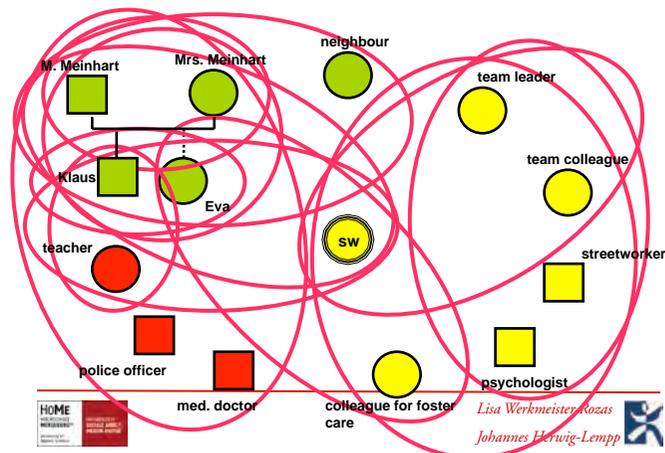
a system is nothing “real”:
“you can never kiss a system.”



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a system is a set of variables put together *by someone*



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Social work is more challenging than therapy

The 6 plus 4 “ways to act” of social work

A) With clients

Counseling – open new perspectives, information, guidance - in form of conversations, but also by means of exercises, immersion, etc.

Negotiating – both facilitation and mediation between all stakeholders as well as the negotiation of agreements, etc.

Intervening – controlled/controlling intervention in cases of danger or for protection - without a mandate and/or against the wishes of those affected.

Advocate – acting for clients (running the risk of paternalism).

Procuring – ensuring that clients are supplied with money, goods or services as mediated by the social worker.

Being present – a "simply being there", accompanying and being available without the goal of making any immediate changes; the skill of tolerating the seemingly intolerable.

(cf. Peter Lüssi, *Systemische Sozialarbeit*, 5th edition, Bern 2001 pp. 392ff)

B) In the background / On the level of suppositions

Managing – the organisation and administration of work with clients as well as one's own office, including minutes, documentation, financial planning and administration, the organisation of work processes, statistics, etc.

Learning – reflection with the aim of professional development (i.e. individual following up, literature, collegial counselling, supervision, further education and training, systematic evaluation).

Promoting – demonstration and presentation of one's own work to clients, colleagues, cost carriers, politicians, the public - with professional self-confidence.

Interfering – take influence on policy and legislation and on one's own work conditions, network and create partnerships and alliances above and beyond the day-to-day work.

(Several) key skills of social workers

Sense for multiperspectivity: the ability to consider different perspectives, accept their apparent incompatibility and still include them in planning.

Sense for possibilities: the ability to think the unthinkable and make it possible: it could be different.

Sense for decisiveness: the ability to make difficult decisions, in diverse, unpredictable and very complex situations and accept responsibility for them.

Sense for faith: the ability to put faith in the skills of others, their resources, self-responsibility and their ability to change, especially when these are not immediately apparent.

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Systemic Theory

Theoretical suppositions/ axioms

- The environment that we perceive is our invention.
- Objectivity is the delusion of a subject.
- Everything said is said by someone.
- Problems are a matter of opinion.
- It could be different.
- There are always at least seven possibilities.
- Everything flows. Change is a constant. Move ahead instead of moving back.
- Small changes lead to further changes.

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Suppositions on the human condition

- All people are autonomous and have their own way how to perceive the world (are “eigensinnig”).
- People always do what they want.
- Everyone has a good reason for doing what they do.
- Mixed feelings (ambivalencies) are normal.
- Instructive interaction is not possible.
- All people want to cooperate all the time.
- All people are equal with respect to these assumptions.

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Methodical and practical focus: My systemic view is directed towards

- Resources, strengths, abilities and achievements
- Contexts
- Different perspectives
- Mandates
- Exceptions, solutions, the future
- The multiplication of options
- Autonomy and own ideas
- Willingness to cooperate
- Feelings, moods, atmosphere and humour
- Appreciation/respect/esteem

Meta-theoretical suppositions/definitions

- Systems exist. Right? Wrong!
- Suppositions are not true, but could eventually be useful
- Theories are tools

“Eigensinnig“: make one own’s sense of the world

“Eigensinnig“ is a German term which I want to describe as a part of our human condition – and which seems difficult to translate: I understand it literally as “make one own’s sense“ of the world. Originally it meant “stubborn“, “naughty“, “headstrong“ and “willful“, all with negative connotations. However, if considered a part of the human condition, as something what serves our individuality, it can be viewed as less negative and more essential to our humanity. Everyone makes her/his own sense of the world – and so every one creates/constructs his/her own perspektive of the world. More recently we are (most times) proud about our children being “eigensinnig“, but in former times there was another opinion – as the shortest of the Grimm Brothers fairy tales reflects:

The wilful child

Once upon a time there was a child who was wilful and did not do what his mother wanted. For this reason God was displeased with him and caused him to become ill, and no doctor could help him, and in a short time he lay on his deathbed.

He was lowered into a grave and covered with earth, but his little arm suddenly came forth and reached up, and it didn't help when they put it back in and put fresh earth over it, for the little arm always came out again. So the mother herself had to go to the grave and beat the little arm with a switch, and as soon as she had done that, it withdrew, and the child finally came to rest beneath the earth.

<http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/grimm117.html> (Oct. 2011): “Titles used by other translators: “*The Stubborn Child*,” “*The Wayward Child*,” “*The Naughty Child*.” Source: *Das eigensinnige Kind, Kinder- und Hausmärchen (Children's and Household Tales -- Grimm's Fairy Tales)*, no. 117. Translated by D. L. Ashliman (I have arbitrarily assigned male gender to the child, whose sex cannot be determined by the German text.)”

Das eigensinnige Kind

Es war einmal ein Kind eigensinnig und tat nicht, was seine Mutter haben wollte. Darum hatte der liebe Gott kein Wohlgefallen an ihm und ließ es krank werden, und kein Arzt konnte ihm helfen, und in kurzem lag es auf dem Totenbettchen. Als es nun ins Grab versenkt und Erde über es hingedeckt war, so kam auf einmal sein Ärmchen wieder hervor und reichte in die Höhe, und wenn sie es hineinlegten und frische Erde darüber taten, so half das nicht, und das Ärmchen kam immer wieder heraus. Da mußte die Mutter selbst zum Grabe gehen und mit der Rute aufs Ärmchen schlagen, und wie sie das getan hatte, zog es sich hinein, und das Kind hatte nun erst Ruhe unter der Erde.

(Brüder Grimm, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen Band 2, München 1984, dtv*)

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