

# Decolonizing Social Work: The systemic oppressive practice of unpaid work in the Social Work Profession.

By Nury Márquez, LCSW-S



# Learning Objectives

1. Identify and define the oppressive practice of unpaid work in the social work profession.
2. Examine specific challenges of faced by minority social workers in the profession.
3. Benefits of changing practice of unpaid work in the social work profession.
4. Identify practical strategies to support change in the systematically oppressive practice of unpaid work in the social work profession.



- Nury Márquez, LCSW-S ( She, Her, Ella)
- Indigenous, Immigrant
- English as second language
- BSW & MSW + paid work + unpaid work
- Non-profit & Community Mental Health since 2015
- Private Practice 2023
- LCSW-S 2023



# Jane Adams

- September 6, 1860, in Cedarville, Illinois.
- Father was an affluent state senator and businessman.
- Her father had many important friends, including President Abraham Lincoln.
- Jane struggled to find her place in the world. Battling with health problems at an early age.
- Traveled through Europe with friends including Ellen Gates Starr.
- 27-year-old Addams visited the famed Toynbee Hall in London, England.

# History and foundation of Social Work

- **Jane Adams**

- Co-founded one of the first settlements in the United States, Hull House.
- Co-winner of the 1931 Nobel Peace Prize.
- First female president of the National Conference of Social Work.
- Established the National Federation of Settlements and served as president of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.
- Known prominently for her work as a social reformer, pacifist and feminist during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

# Unpaid work in the Social Work Profession

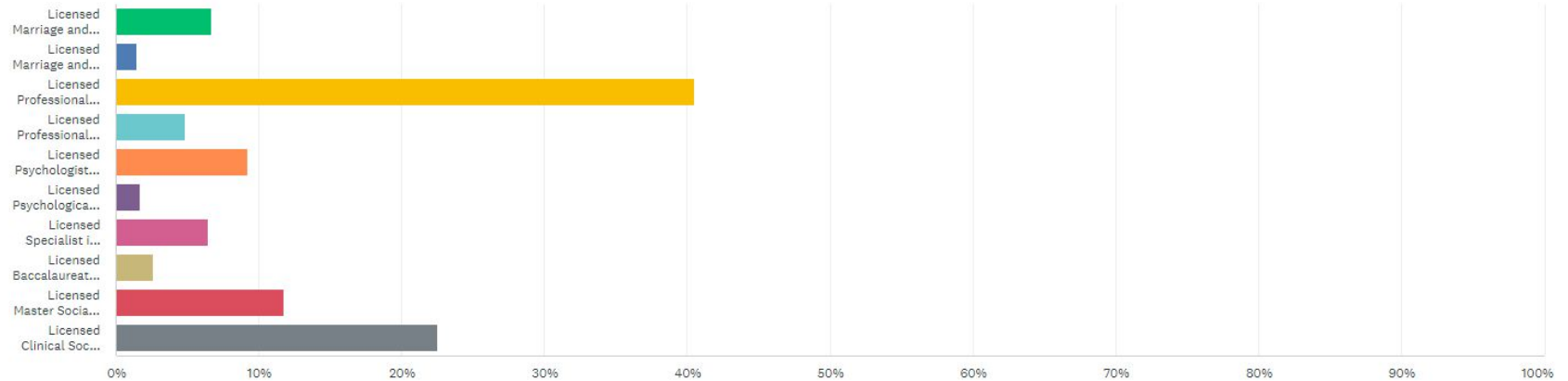
- Unpaid work is defined as *“participation in work-based activities that does not attract remuneration.”*
- Unpaid work is *“Typically characterized by a student, graduate or job-seeker spending a period of time in an organization, performing any combination of productive work, shadowing a more experienced worker, or performing low-level tasks for those who already occupy roles in the workplace or profession”*
  - Practicum, internships, volunteering and educationally focused work placements, work study.

*“Clarifying terminology has pragmatic implications because it will allow for more consistency, accuracy and shared understandings in discussions, decisions and practices by students, higher education institutions, organizations, researchers and policy makers around unpaid work.”*

# Social Work Demographics

Please identify yourself: (check all that apply)

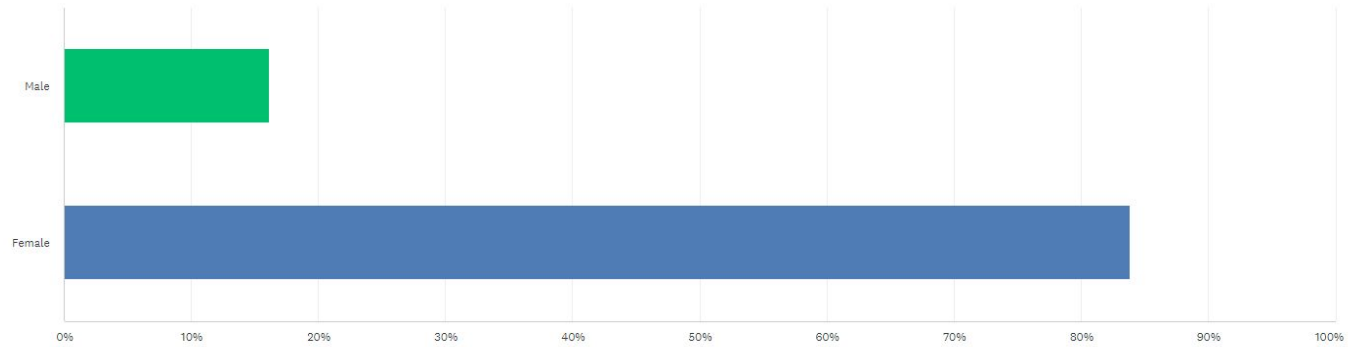
Answered: 6,909 Skipped: 0





### What is your gender?

Answered: 6,624 Skipped: 285

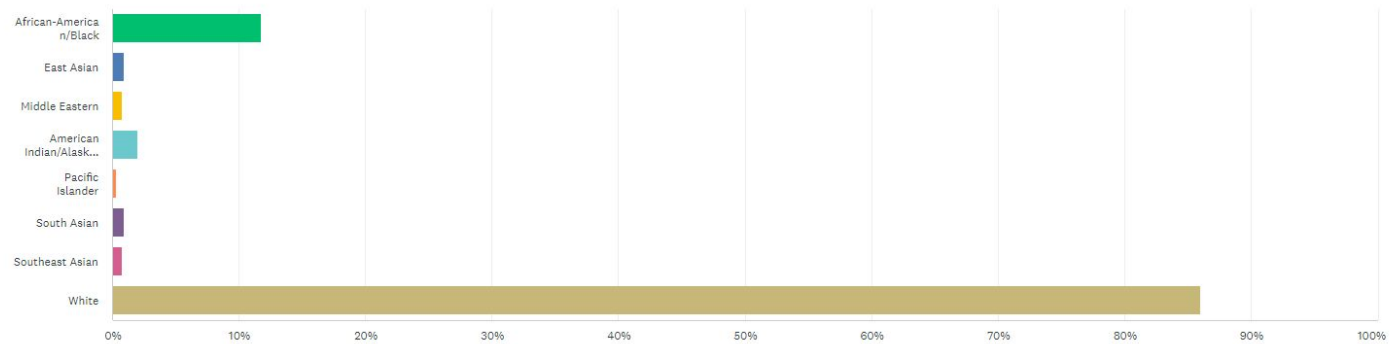


Texas Behavioral Health Executive Council Workforce Study

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### What is your race? (check all that apply.)

Answered: 6,472 Skipped: 437



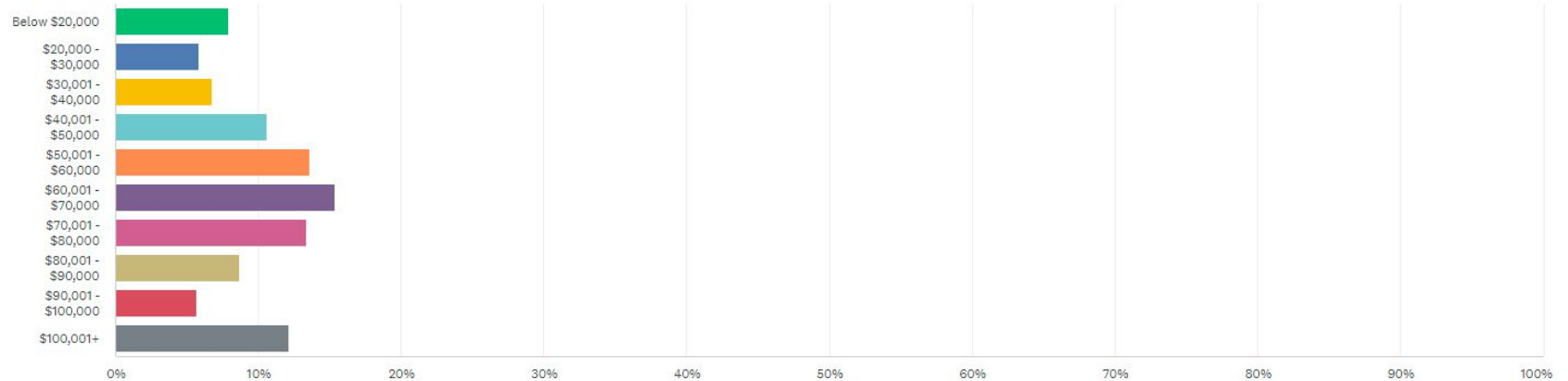
Texas Behavioral Health Executive Council Workforce Study

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# Social Work Demographics

## What is your individual annual take home pay?

Answered: 5,780 Skipped: 1,129



Are you a licensed Mental Health professional ?

Menti slide.

## Challenges Faced by Minority Social Workers in the Profession.

- “Highly classed, raced, gendered, ageist and subject to geographical inequalities.”
- Those who are economically disadvantaged may not have the same opportunities to participate due to the imperative of juggling unpaid work and paid work ...to cover living expenses.
- Men are nearly 2 times (1.898) more likely to be in paid internships than women.
- Ethnicity & Family income proved insignificantly important.
- Case of two unpaid workers

# Challenges Faced by Minority Social Workers in the Profession.

- Students from lower income households showed a very slight tendency to participate in unpaid internships than did students from high income families.
- High levels of unpaid internships appeared for arts and letters, communication and social science
  - 68%, 70% and 73% more likely to be in unpaid positions than business.
- Education and health science majors, as expected, were in unpaid assignments because these experiences are embedded in the curriculum and training.
- Overwhelming likelihood that women will be engaged in unpaid experiences, regardless of ethnic affiliation or family income.
  - Their academic major choices, combined with their preferred career pathways into and through organizations that predominantly offer unpaid experiences, position
  - women to possibly face more financial constraints either through higher loan needs to meet college expenses or entering lower paying occupations at the start of their careers.

## Challenges Faced by Minority Social Workers in the Profession.

- BEM communities were identified as having specific unmet social care and welfare needs
- BEM social workers report being subjected to racial verbal abuse, open rejection on basis of skin colour and racial violence by service users.
- Twenty out of twenty-eight respondents in this study felt that their abilities were constantly questioned and their service provision overly scrutinised.

## Challenges Faced by Minority Social Workers in the Profession.

- Some respondents in this study thought that contradicting expectations placed on them were also a form of racism: while these workers were viewed as 'race experts', they were also perceived as 'difficult' workers if they challenged racism.
- "We have to work harder as a black worker to prove ourselves and our ability"
  - Affects ability to move up on work settings/ promotions
  - Lack of diversity in management

# Intersectionality/ Parts of your Identity

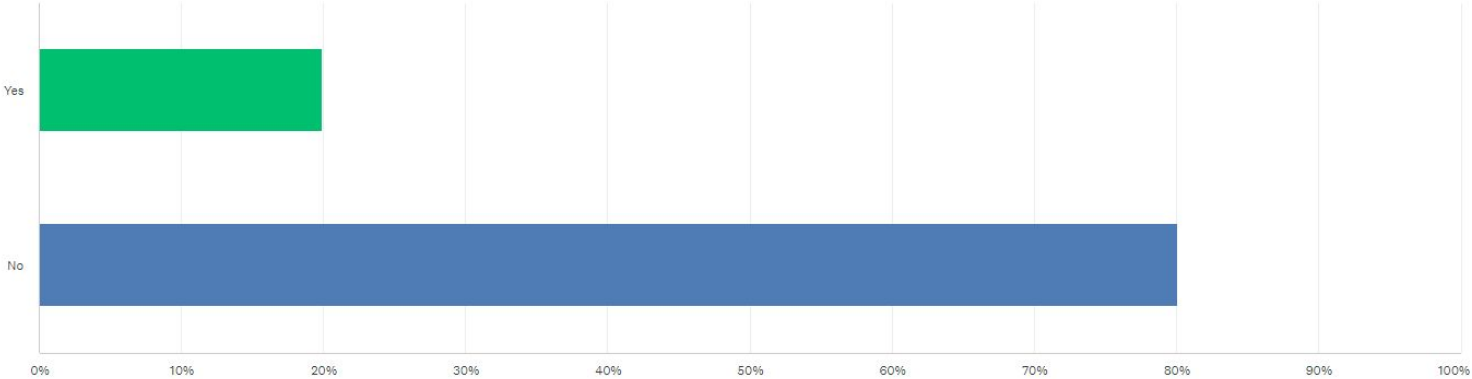
Menti Slide



# Benefits of changing practice of unpaid work in the social work profession.

Do you offer mental or behavioral health services in a language other than English?

Answered: 6,238 Skipped: 710



## Benefits of changing practice of unpaid work in the social work profession.

- Recruit more BME workers, increase knowledge about cultural issues within the workforce and therefore improve practice
- Where [about 40% of the population is Hispanic](#), only about 15% of more than 6,000 recently surveyed mental health providers identified as Latino or Hispanic.
- Only 20% of the respondents offered mental health services in a language other than English.
- Between 2014 and 2019, the proportion of facilities in the U.S. offering mental health treatment in Spanish [declined by 17.8% — a loss of 1,163 Spanish-speaking mental health facilities](#),

# Benefits of Changing Practice of Unpaid Work in the Social Work Profession

- Hispanics are now confirmed as the largest demographic group in Texas with more than 12 million residents, while non-Hispanic white population is estimated to be 11.9 million,
  - **Dallas** , Total: 2.6 million, Hispanic population: 1.08 million
- “It’s deeper than the language. It’s very deeply rooted in the identity of individuals, and how much you feel understood just simply by talking to a person who looks like you”
- Consequently, students who completed a paid internship were far more likely to attain employment than students who completed an unpaid internship.

## Benefits of changing the systemic oppressive practice of unpaid work in the social work profession.

- Paid interns had higher internship structure and advancement opportunity perceptions compared to unpaid interns.
- Equitable care More noteworthy, when mental health clients felt like a cultural element was important in their care, but did not perceive it to be present, they were less satisfied with aspects of their treatment. However, this was the case *only* for ethnic minority clients.
- multicultural competence was significantly associated with treatment satisfaction

# Practical strategies to support change in the systematically oppressive practice of unpaid work in the Social Work profession.

- Attend meetings by the Texas Behavioral Health Executive Council
  - And get involve
  - Be aware of the changes impacting Social Workers in Texas
- Petition Texas Behavioral Health Executive council for more data that accurately represent the professionals it constitutes.
  - In order to understand the needs of the professionals we need more accurate information about the intersectionalities and systemic issues affecting the professionals the board represents.
- Acknowledge Social work as an institution is not immune to these issues and can be a site for inequalities based on 'race', thus, challenging the success of social work in a multicultural society and creating particular challenges for BME workers
- As a practicum site with interns consider your role on the systemic oppressive practices that continue to exist in the field of social work. And consider the financial, educational, systemic, generational traumas you will be supporting to heal through the process of paid internship opportunities for future generations of social workers.
  - Advocate for social work interns
  - Scholarships
  - Stipend
  - Hourly rate

# CONCLUSION

- The first step toward Decolonizing a practice or way of thinking is DECOLONIZING YOURSELF and acknowledging the role we take in systemic oppressive systems. This including the education system.
- Social work as an institution is not immune to these issues and can be a site for inequalities based on 'race', thus, challenging the success of social work in a multicultural society and creating particular challenges for BME workers
- Some schools are recognizing the longer-term financial implications of unpaid experiences providing stipend support while others are reducing the credit requirements to ease burdens.
- A profession whose values are held in advocacy and social justice needs to take a deeper look at the systemically oppressive practices affecting the those who make up the profession.

<https://twitter.com/BernieSanders/status/1664715479661834243?s=20>

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THERAPY

