

Teaching in the Research Curriculum

Culturally Competent International Social Work Research

Mahasweta M. Banerjee, PhD, and Edward R. Canda, PhD
The University of Kansas School of Social Welfare

Purpose of the Module

To present an introduction to issues for culturally competent international social work research (ISWR) with topics relevant to BSW, MSW, and PhD level students. The module includes three component modules, including an introductory module (Component A: Overview of International Social Work Research), and two other modules that build on the introduction to add more depth to culturally competent ISWR (Component B: Multicultural Teamwork and Interpretation Issues in ISWR and Component C: Institutional Review Board Issues for Human Subjects Protection in ISWR).

Learning Objectives

After completing this module students will be able to

- a. understand and value the importance and relevance of ISWR (focus of Component A),
- b. describe and reflect critically on types of ISWR and research issues of international or global significance (focus of Component A),
- c. describe and reflect critically on the relevance of cultural competence and linguistically appropriate practices for ISWR (focus of Component A),
- d. explain challenges raised by language differences between researchers and research participants in ISWR and plan for appropriate uses of translation and interpretation (focus of Component B),
- e. recognize common challenges raised by U.S. based institutional review boards for human subjects protection (i.e., signed informed consent, privacy, compensation, and risk of discrimination and oppression) (focus of Component C), and
- f. formulate culturally appropriate research strategies that effectively address challenges for ISWR (focus of Components B and C).

Note: All objectives are relevant to the full 3-hour module.

Estimated Time for the Module

The module can be used in its entirety (classroom duration 3 hours) or sections can be separated for classroom durations of 1 or 2 hours. Additional home study preparation time

(30 minutes for each 1-hour component module) is required for students to complete required reading and to reflect on questions to be used in classroom discussion.

EPAS Competencies Being Addressed

2.1.6--Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research.

Social workers use practice experience to inform research, employ evidence-based interventions, evaluate their own practice, and use research findings to improve practice, policy, and social service delivery. Social workers comprehend quantitative and qualitative research and understand scientific and ethical approaches to building knowledge.

2.1.4--Engage diversity and difference in practice.

Social workers understand how diversity characterizes and shapes the human experience and is critical to the formation of identity. The dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of multiple factors including age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identification and expression, immigration status, political ideology, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation. Social workers appreciate that, as a consequence of difference, a person's life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege, power, and acclaim.

2.1.3--Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments.

Social workers are knowledgeable about principles of logic, scientific inquiry, and reasoned discernment. Social workers distinguish, appraise, and integrate multiple sources of knowledge, including research-based knowledge, and practice wisdom.

2.1.5--Advance human rights and social and economic justice.

Each person, regardless of position in society, has basic human rights, such as freedom, safety, privacy, an adequate standard of living, health care, and education. Social workers recognize the global interconnections of oppression and are knowledgeable about theories of justice and strategies to promote human and civil rights. Social work incorporates social justice practices in organizations, institutions, and society to ensure that these basic human rights are distributed equitably and without prejudice.

Suggested Use of the Learning Module

This learning module provides concise essays on ISWR issues for each component. The essays provide a convenient time-saving way for students to receive a brief introduction to ISWR issues, rather than requiring students to read and discuss lengthy articles, chapters, or books. This approach makes it more likely that instructors can add the module component(s) into already crowded course contents. If more time is available for in-depth exploration of ISWR in a course, the instructor can choose from the citations, suggested readings list, and list of websites for possible additional readings and online resources. The

essays summarize insights from scholarly literature as well as a 2-hour group discussion conducted as background for this module with international social work doctoral students and visiting scholars and faculty who are international researchers about the issues and challenges they have experienced doing international research.

Module essay(s) should be read by the instructor and students to help prepare for discussion and exercises in the classroom. A PowerPoint presentation is provided for each module component to assist instructors to present a summary of the relevant essay(s) in classroom lecture. The lecture should be brief (no more than 15 minutes), because it is a review of the essay(s) to be read in advance by students. The instructor can give her or his own ideas and examples to elaborate on ideas in the essay(s). Each module component includes classroom activities.

Component A is an introductory overview of ISWR. BSW research students are unlikely to implement ISWR methods in formal scholarly research, given their generalist educational approach and negligible engagement with formal research projects. Therefore, Component A is most likely relevant to all BSW students. BSW students might be involved in practice with people from various countries (particularly recent immigrants and refugees) in their practica settings, and/or they might be enrolled in research courses with more emphasis on research design or in courses on social policy, cultural diversity, global issues, or study abroad, which would give them an opportunity for more in depth application of ISWR insights. In courses with substantial international content, the instructor may wish to supplement Component A with Components B (on multicultural teamwork and interpretation issues in ISWR) or C (on institutional review board issues for human subject protection in ISWR), as relevant, and as time allows.

Component A is also highly relevant to MSW foundation-level research students. For foundation level research courses that provide an opportunity for students to create or even implement small research designs, the instructor could add Component B and/or C. Components B and/or C may also be relevant to preparing activities in MSW practica and policy courses and to advanced level MSW courses that address culturally competent practice, which give an opportunity for conducting small-scale research projects and systematic information gathering for individual assessment and community analyses.

Components A, B, and C in their entirety are more relevant to doctoral students, who are more typically encouraged to design and conduct ISWR studies. Also, they will have a series of research courses dedicated to quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research designs. We recommend using all three component modules at the PhD level.

For BSW and MSW level students it is more realistic that courses will only allow time for 1 or 2 hours allotted to this topic. For PhD students we recommend using the full 3-hour module.

Sources Cited

Al-Krenawi, A., & Graham, J. R. (2009). *Helping professional practice with indigenous peoples: The Bedouin-Arab case*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

American Heritage Dictionary (2005).

<http://www.ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=Culture>

Bagati, D. (2003). Microcredit and empowerment of women. *Journal of Social Work Research and Evaluation*, 4(1), 19-35.

Banerjee, M. M. (1997). Strengths despite constraints: Memoirs of research in a slum in Calcutta. *Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping*, 3(3), 36–45.

Banerjee, M. M. (2008). The lightning rod: A non-resident Indian (NRI) divorcee in India. *Families: A Journal of Representations*, 5/6(1), 45–65.

Bosch, L. (2012). Cultural efficacy in communication and practice in global context. In L. M. Healy & R. J. Link (Eds.), *Handbook of international social work: human rights, development, and the global profession* (pp. 123–127). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Brodsky, A. E., & Faryal, T. (2006). No matter how hard you try, your feet still get wet: Insider and outsider perspectives on bridging diversity. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 37(3/4), 311–320.

Budruk, M. (2010). Cross-language measurement equivalence of the Place Attachment scale: A multi-group confirmatory factor analysis approach. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 42(1), 25–42.

Canda, E. R. (1980). The Korean mountain spirit. *Korea Journal*, 20(9), 11-16.

Canda, E. R., Carrizosa, S., & Yellow Bird, M (1995). Cultural diversity in child welfare practice: A training curriculum for cultural competence (revised ed.). Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas.

Canda, E. R., & Furman, L. D. (2010). *Spiritual diversity in social work practice: The heart of helping* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Canda, E. R., & Phaobtong, T. (1992). Buddhism as a support system for Southeast Asian Refugees. *Social Work*, 37(1), 61-67.

Cohen, R. (2001). Living and teaching across cultures. *International Studies Perspectives*, 2, 151–160.

Fadiman, A. (1997). *The spirit catches you and you fall down: A Hmong child, her American doctors, and the collision of two cultures*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Gray, M., Coates, J., & Yellow Bird, M. (Eds.). (2008). *Indigenous social work around the world: Towards culturally relevant education and practice*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Group Discussion. (April 27, 2012). Experiences with conducting research in the international arena. Participants were five international doctoral students, two post-doctoral international researchers, and three faculty members among whom two are originally from Asia and all three of whom conduct international research. University of Kansas, School of Social Welfare, Lawrence, KS. The authors thank all the participants.

Healy, L. M. (2012). Measuring social well-being. In L. M. Healy & R. J. Link (Eds.), *Handbook of international social work: human rights, development, and the global profession* (pp. 417–423). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Healy, L. M., & Link, R. J. (Eds.). (2012). *Handbook of international social work: human rights, development, and the global profession*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

IFSW. (no date). Standards in Social Work Practice Meeting Human Rights. Retrieved from http://cdn.ifsw.org/assets/ifsw_92406-7.pdf, March 3, 2013.

IFSW. (2012) Statement of ethical principles. Retrieved from <http://ifsw.org/policies/statement-of-ethical-principles/>, March 3, 2013.

Indian Child Welfare Act. (1978). Retrieved from http://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/federal/index.cfm?event=federalLegislation.viewLegis&id=3

Midgley, J. (2012). Development. In L. M. Healy & R. J. Link (Eds.), *Handbook of international social work: human rights, development, and the global profession* (pp. 24-29). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

NASW (2008). Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers. <http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp?>

Padgett, D. K. (2008). *Qualitative methods in social work research* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (3rd ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Rubin, A., & Babbie, E. (2011). *Essential research methods for social work* (3rd ed.) Stamford, CT: Brooks/Cole Cengage Learning.

Silva-Martinez, E., & Murty, S. (2011). Ethics and cultural competence in research with battered immigrant Latina women. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Diversity in Social Work*, 20, 223–239.

Sullivan, C., & Cottone, R. R. (2010). Emergent characteristics of effective cross-cultural research: A review of the literature. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 88, 357–362.

Tripodi, T., & Potocky-Tripodi, M. (2007). *International social work research: Issues and prospects*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Tsai, J. H., Choe, J. H., Lim, J. M., Acorda, E., Chan, N. L., Taylor, V., & Tu, S. (2004). Developing culturally competent health knowledge: Issues of data analysis of cross-cultural, cross-language qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. Retrieved from <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0>

United Nations (2008). United Nations declaration on the rights of Indigenous peoples, 2007. Retrieved from http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf March 3, 2013.

Weaver, H. N. (1997). The challenges of research in Native American communities: Incorporating principles of cultural competence. *Journal of Social Service Research*, 23(2), 1–15.

Required Reading

Banerjee, M. M. & Canda, E. R. (2012). Culturally competent international social work research. Alexandria, VA: Council on Social Work Education. Retrieved from <http://www.cswe.org/CentersInitiatives/KAKI/KAKIResources/63419.aspx> (Module 7)

Recommended Readings

Sources Cited, plus:

Bosch, L. (2012). Cultural efficacy in communication and practice in global context. In L. M. Healy & R. J. Link (Eds.), *Handbook of international social work: human rights, development, and the global profession* (pp. 123–127). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Felke, T. P., & Menon, G. M. (2012). Using technology for international education and research. In L. M. Healy & R. J. Link (Eds.), *Handbook of international social work: human rights, development, and the global profession* (pp. 349–355). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Jaques, L., & Vanbalkom, W. D. (2012). International social development projects. In L. M. Healy & R. J. Link (Eds.), *Handbook of international social work: human rights, development, and the global profession* (pp. 411–416). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Rotabi, K. S., Gammonley, D., Gamble, D. N., & Weil, M. (2007). Integrating globalization into the social work curriculum. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, 34(2), 165–185.

Tan, N. T. (2012). Cultural conflict and conflict resolution. In L. M. Healy & R. J. Link (Eds.), *Handbook of international social work: human rights, development, and the global profession* (pp. 128–133). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Websites/Databases

Campbell Collaboration:

http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/resources/resource_center.php

Cochrane Library: <http://www.thecochranelibrary.com/view/0/index.html>

Google: www.google.com

Indigenous Wellness Research Institute: <http://www.iwri.org/>

International Association of Schools of Social Work: <http://www.iasw.org>

International Federation of Social Workers: <http://www.ifsw.org>

Richard Estes' website on social and economic development:

<http://caster.ssw.upenn.edu/~restes/praxis.html>

Sociological Abstracts

Social Work Abstracts

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO):

<http://www.unesco.org>

United Nations, Universal Declaration of Human Rights: <http://www.un.org/en>

Millennium Development Goals: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF): <http://www.unicef.org>

United Nations Development Program, Human Development Reports: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/>

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees: <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home>

United States Agency for International Development (USAID): <http://www.usaid.gov/>

World Bank: <http://www.worldbank.org>

World Health Organization: <http://www.who.org>

Journals

Asia Pacific Journal of Social Work and Development

British Journal of Social Work

Caribbean Journal of Social Work

European Journal of Social Work

International Social Work

Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Diversity in Social Work

Journal of Social Development in Africa

Journal of Social Work Research and Evaluation: An International Publication

New Global Development: Journal of International and Comparative Social Welfare

Social Development Issues

Social Work

Assignments or Exercises

Included in each module component

Required Reading Materials

Banerjee, M. M., & Canda, E. R. (2012). Culturally competent international social work research. Alexandria, VA: Council on Social Work Education. Retrieved from <http://www.cswe.org/CentersInitiatives/KAKI/KAKIResources/63419.aspx> (Module 7)

Module Component A

Introduction to Culturally Competent International Social Work Research

Mahasweta M. Banerjee, PhD, and Edward R. Canda, PhD

The University of Kansas School of Social Welfare

Meaning and Relevance of International Social Work Research

Tripodi and Potocky-Tripodi (2007, p. 5) define international social work research (ISWR) as “research that involves the use of literature from two or more countries to frame the research problem and specifies implications of the research for two or more countries.” Further, they state that “international social work research involves different languages, customs, traditions, and emphases in using social research methods to develop knowledge for social work” (p. 5). They classify international social work research into three categories: supranational, intranational, and transnational.

Supranational research is concerned only with research and research participants from one country. The research may be in any country. But it uses literature from two or more countries to formulate the problem and discusses implications for two or more countries, for example, a study on microcredit in India with literature drawn from India, Bangladesh, and the United States and implications discussed for relevant countries. Intranational research is concerned with study of people from one or more countries who are studied in a host country (another country), and literature from all concerned countries is used with implications drawn for all concerned countries. Examples include study of immigrants, refugees, or seekers of political asylum from various countries in the United States and studied in the United States. Transnational research is concerned with comparison of populations of two or more countries; literature is used for populations from all concerned countries, and implications are made for each population. Another name for this type of research is cross-national research, as long as the criteria of literature and implications for two or more countries are met. An example would be a study on depression across various countries.

National research can be conducted in any country. It does not use international literature to develop the research problem and to discuss implications for social workers in an international context. Research conducted in India, for example, but published in a U.S. journal, is not considered international research. Nonetheless, Tripodi and Potocky-Tripodi (2007) state that hypotheses pertinent to international social work can be developed from national level studies, but it is up to the reader to do so. They note that the focus of international social work research depends on the state of current knowledge about the problem under investigation, and the research methods employed depend on the type of knowledge sought, financial and ethical considerations, the sociopolitical environment, and expertise in the use of research methods.

Tripodi and Potocky-Tripodi's (2007) research typology, although helpful, does not capture all possibilities. For example, studies within the United States (or any other country) that

address issues of Indigenous nations relating to intertribal issues or Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations can be considered international, such as implementation of the Indian Child Welfare Act [1978]) involving matters of tribal sovereignty, colonialism, and postcolonial social work (Gray, Coates, & Yellow Bird, 2010). This is because Indigenous nations existed long before the establishment and superimposition of colonialist nation-states. As the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples of 2007 (United Nations, 2008) points out, Indigenous peoples' rights to self-determination are to be respected and states (i.e., those established by colonial control) are to respect treaty agreements made with Indigenous peoples. For example, in the case of the United States, federally recognized tribal nations are acknowledged to have limited sovereignty; therefore, they have treaty agreements with the U.S. government. Social workers should be cognizant that practice with Indigenous peoples involves this distinctive international quality. The fact that tribal sovereignty remains a legally complex and contested issue in the United States (including that the United States refused to sign the Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples) highlights the importance of social workers' sensitivity to this issue.

Further, the International Federation of Social Workers' Standards in Social Work Practice Meeting Human Rights (IFSW, n.d., Standard 4.6.6, p. 20) states that "research methodologies must be addressed towards empowerment and human rights and cannot therefore be neutral, positivist, value free research, but rather research with clearly articulated positions." This standard refers to traditional forms of scientific research rooted in the European philosophy of positivism. Positivist and postpositivist (aka neo-positivist) research rely on an assumption that there is an objective reality that can best be known through sensory observation, objectivity, detached reasoning, and mathematical/statistical analysis (Rubin & Babbie, 2011). It is not attentive to socially constructed aspects of social reality and human subjective experiences, dynamic and holistic processes, professional value-driven research (such as prioritizing research to promote justice on behalf of disadvantaged populations), or culture-specific ways of knowing. Again, this standard is not always adhered to by U.S. social work researchers in the international context. Along these lines, many U.S. based social work writings on international social work tend to rely on Eurocentric assumptions about the nature of research methods and data sources. For one example, students and researchers are generally directed to use only scholarly literature for their bases of theory, knowledge, and research design. These rarely include non-English literature sources or orally transmitted wisdom that is so important in nonliterate traditions. Education for culturally competent ISWR could encourage multilingual students to draw on all available literatures. Students who have access to the oral-tradition wisdom of elders and community leaders could be encouraged to explore this in a manner that is respectful within the particular cultural context (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2009; Gray, Coates, & Yellow-Bird, 2008).

International Social Work Practice and Research

International social work research focuses on producing and disseminating knowledge that is pertinent to practices and policies that affect or are implemented by social work organizations, practitioners, administrators, and educators. ISWR is research that is relevant to international social work practice and policy. Healy (2012, p. 11) states that international social work takes place in four areas of action: "domestically based practice and policy advocacy in situations with international dimensions, international professional exchange of personnel and ideas, practice in international relief and development organizations, and

participation in global policy formulation and advocacy.” Some scholars use the terms *global social work* and *international social work* interchangeably. Healy (2012) clarifies that global social work (including research) pertains to the entire world and has a much more expansive focus and concern in relation to ISWR. Social workers rarely conduct research on the entire globe. As such, it is preferable to use the term *international social work research* because “it can encompass both the truly global dimensions of concern and those practice and policy situations that involve only a few countries or regions” (Healy, 2012, p. 11). However, we encourage social workers to use a global perspective on any type of research, so they may be aware of global contexts and possible interactions between local and global issues. As the slogan attributed to Mohandas Gandhi puts it: think globally, act locally.

Social Work Research Issues at the International Level

Any social work problem or issue can be considered for international research or research from a global perspective. However, those social work problems that have global factors involved in personal or social problems and that occur both within and between countries are considered to be global problems and should be studied internationally. Some examples of ISWR issues include globalization and its multifaceted effects; human rights and social justice; immigration, refugee flight, and resettlement; genocide; colonialism and postcolonial liberation; postconflict international peace and reconciliation endeavors; natural and human-induced disasters; international trafficking of drugs; international human trafficking; HIV/AIDS and other public health issues that cross borders; culturally specific forms of domestic violence that might be in violation of internationally established human rights; mental health issues and cultural/national variations in the understanding and treatment of mental disorders; issues related to children, older adults, and families such as child abuse, neglect, and adoption, elder neglect and abuse, and livelihood and income security of low-income families; spiritual diversity in relation to refugees, immigrants, and international social work practice (refer to Healy & Link, 2012, for more details).

In contrast, national problems are specific to a particular context within a country, such as dowry deaths in India. Examples of national policy evaluation include evaluation of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Act programs within U.S. welfare departments and other social agencies and National Rural Employment Guarantee Act programs through government and NGOs in India.

Importance of International Social Work Research

Social workers with a global perspective can use basic research knowledge in four ways. First, the social worker needs to understand, critique, and use the results of research (especially international research) for social work practice in general and in particular for comparative policy analysis and innovations in direct practice based on insights from international comparisons of service approaches. Second, the social worker can engage in needs assessment and assessment of cultural characteristics of clients and their communities (notably immigrants and refugees), especially in the use of clinical assessment and practice, small surveys, focus groups, and community studies. Third, social workers can be involved in the evaluation of the effectiveness of practices, programs, and policies

through ISWR. Ability to conduct research with a global perspective and in the international arena allows social workers to assess and practice (at all levels) more effectively. Fourth, doctoral students who are preparing for scholarly careers need to have the ability to conduct ISWR related to the types of international research mentioned above. They need to be able to develop and implement culturally appropriate research designs for ISWR that will provide a knowledge base for social work practitioners, researchers, and educators.

Cultural Competence in International Social Work Research

In accord with National Association of Social Workers (NASW) ethical standards and the social work ethical principles of the International Federation of Social Workers , all social work practice must reflect cultural competence (IFSW, 2012; NASW, 2008). Cultural competence is an especially pressing concern for ISWR because of the understandably high level of relevance of cultural dynamics and cross-cultural interaction engaged in ISWR.

The American Heritage New Dictionary (2005) defines *culture* as “the sum of attitudes, customs, and beliefs that distinguishes one group of people from another.” It continues, “culture is transmitted through language, material objects, rituals, institutions, and art, from one generation to the next.” To work effectively with people of cultures different from their own, social workers need to develop cultural competence. To begin to develop cultural competence, social workers need to be aware of their own beliefs and biases, understand the worldviews of others, develop appropriate practice approaches, and understand the forces within and around them that inhibit cultural competence. A key to developing cultural competence is to understand that different cultures may be wired differently, “not better, not worse, just different” (Cohen, 2001, p. 159). To work effectively with difference, social workers can adopt a neutral, nonjudgmental, and open-minded attitude, which can be challenging but also a work in progress to be developed in conversation and dialogue with others.

Social workers need to be particularly careful about cultural encapsulation, which inhibits cultural competence (Bosch, 2012). Cultural encapsulation occurs when social workers assume themselves to be at the center and people from other cultures to be at the periphery. Bosch reports there are five identifying features of cultural encapsulation:

- 1) “reality is defined by particular cultural assumptions (all people think like I do), 2) people assume that their view is the right one (therefore the British drive on the wrong side rather than the left side of the road), 3) assumptions are not dependent upon proof but are truth (... all parents want to participate in their child’s educational program), 4) solutions to problems are quick fixes (the best way to raise children is ...), and 5) people are judged from one’s own cultural frame (the way we do things here ...). (Bosch, 2012, p. 123)

Cohen (2001, p. 159) suggests such views are privileged, reflecting a “self-centered, ethnocentric view of the world.”

Tripodi and Potocky-Tripodi (2007) state that social workers need a broad base of attitudes, knowledge, and skills to conduct competent research at the international level. Attitudes include awareness of our own ethnic backgrounds and how they have shaped our outlook and experiences; identification of our own negative attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors toward other ethnic groups; realization that a person may have negative attitudes toward members of one's own group; value and respect for and lack of judgment about cultural differences (so long as it does not harm others); increased contacts with members of different ethnic groups to enhance valuing and respect of others; commitment to the social work profession's mission to expand social justice and empirically based practice; and recognition of our own limitations. Knowledge includes awareness of multiple theories, self-knowledge, different ethnic group characteristics, environmental influences, evidence-based practice, and the cultural basis of social work research. Skills include engaging participants in research, communicating appropriately while interviewing, selecting and developing culturally sensitive research instruments that are reliable and valid, and analyzing and reporting findings in a culturally sensitive manner.

Within the U.S. context, Rubin and Babbie (2011, p. 306) state that culturally competent social work research "means being aware of and appropriately responding to the ways in which cultural factors and cultural differences should influence what we investigate, how we investigate, and how we interpret our findings." In other words, cultural competence needs to be incorporated into all the steps in the research process: problem formulation; instrument construction; research design; sampling and generalizability by populations, time, and place; data collection and analysis; and conclusions and implications. These authors discuss cultural competence in the context of research with minority and oppressed populations in the United States.

American social workers need to consider how to be culturally competent in their research both in the Global North and the Global South (Midgley, 2012). By *Global South* we refer to countries mainly in the southern hemisphere with disproportionate incidence of poverty, experience of colonialism, and extraction of resources by countries of the northern hemisphere. These countries are often in process of transitioning from a primarily rural lifestyle to one of industrial and information technology development. For example, countries of the Global South discussed in this module are Afghanistan, China, Ethiopia, India, Mexico, and Sri Lanka. *Global North* refers to industrialized countries (mainly in North America, Europe, and in Australia), usually with a majority of European origin population.

Prior to conducting ISWR it is important for social workers to immerse themselves in the literature and culture of the countries concerned. There are many differences between people from the Global North and the Global South. Briefly, one of the major differences lies in the tendency toward individualism in the Global North (especially among Euro-Americans) versus familism or collectivism in the Global South (and among many ethnic minority populations in the Global North). Other examples of cultural differences include customs related to power, gender roles, family honor and shame, interpersonal distance for comfort, eye contact, touch, sense of time, work, money and barter, and privacy.

With regard to social work research in the Global South, it is important to understand that poor, vulnerable, and oppressed people in these countries may not necessarily be minority populations as defined in the United States. For example, caste plays an important role in the Indian culture, and there is a hierarchy in the four-caste system. A U.S. researcher might assume that someone from a high caste is better off and not oppressed in any way, and someone from a low caste is poorly off and oppressed. But socioeconomic status is not necessarily associated with the caste system in India. A person from a high or the highest caste could be very poor and oppressed, and there could be many of them. Consequently, it is imperative to know and understand the culture and cultural prerogatives of the countries studied before embarking on a research project. The intersectionalities of oppression may vary by country and need to be known in advance or, depending on the type of research, learned on the ground and considered throughout the research process.

Second, the United States has a certain privileged (and contested) status in the global context, particularly in the Global South. Therefore, researchers from the United States are viewed differently in other countries. Commonly they are assumed to be White, educated, and affluent; they could be perceived more positively, more negatively, or shades of both. U.S. researchers who are naturalized citizens face other problems of identity when they conduct research in their countries of origin or in other countries. For example, Banerjee (2008), who is of Indian origin, is considered an NRI (nonresident Indian) in India. The NRI status has both positive and negative connotations in India because generally such individuals are viewed as betraying the country to reap a harvest in another country. Regardless of national origin, cultural competence for U.S. researchers working in other countries is more complex than it is in the United States, as explained in following paragraphs. American researchers need to bridge these differences with local people before, during, and after the research process.

Third, unless the U.S. researcher knows the local language and customs, communication with local respondents is a major hurdle that researchers do not need to consider as often in the US context, except when the research is conducted across ethnic and language differences. Interpreters and translators are often needed, and ideally they should be bicultural and bilingual with subject-matter familiarity or expertise. Often professional interpreters and translators refer to live (i.e., spoken or signed) cross-language mediation as *interpreting*, and recorded (e.g., written) cross-language mediation as *translation*. In addition, the researchers need to be trained in effective skills and culturally appropriate means of using interpreters and translators. Last, researchers need to apply the basic social work skills of working with people to conduct satisfactory research in other countries. Despite their best efforts at being more culturally competent, there is evidence that U.S. researchers often struggle with research in the international context.

For example, Banerjee's (1997) research in a slum in Calcutta (India) showed that when she went back to study strengths among very poor urban Indian people, some of whom were involved in microcredit, she faced issues tied to cultural competency. For instance, when she asked a very poor illiterate woman to identify her primary strength, she was startled by her response: "I am intelligent" (p. 41). Banerjee realized that she needed to overcome an elitist assumption that a poor, illiterate woman would not identify intelligence as her major strength.

Further, Banerjee described a situation in which the same respondent requested that she be allowed to carry Banerjee's new video camera. Because Banerjee had known her over some time during the research process, she agreed to let the respondent carry the camera. Then the respondent suddenly disappeared. Banerjee described her dilemma regarding whether to report the loss to community members or to trust the respondent to return. Due to the tenuous nature of her relationship with the community and the need to complete her research in that community, Banerjee chose to remain silent about the disappearance to retain community trust. Defying negative assumptions about people living in dire poverty, just as suddenly as the respondent had disappeared, she suddenly reappeared, smiling, after half an hour with the camera. In this instance a basic faith in human honesty allowed the author to overcome what could have otherwise jeopardized her research on the ground.

In another study, Brodsky, an American scholar, and Faryal, an Afghani activist (Brodsky & Faryal, 2006) struggled with the different traditions and contextual variables in the course of their research with Afghani women, who were members of an underground activist group. Brodsky realized that Afghani women had very different cultural perspectives on what information could and could not be shared with outsiders. Brodsky and Faryal reported that in the Afghani culture

extended families are the primary social units, and rural Afghans in particular may spend their whole lives in villages populated entirely by family members; such bonds are often maintained by arranged marriages between first cousins. Even if one does interact with nonfamily members, sharing personal or family information with them is discouraged. The family serves all social and support needs of an individual and the maintenance and protection of the family collective, including its privacy, is of paramount value. Years of political unrest have also trained Afghans to be wary of outsiders who might be working for any of the brutal regimes. But even within the family, sharing is also curtailed by strict gender and age hierarchies and by severe sanctions that are placed on any behavior or expression of thoughts or feelings that might make one stand out as an individual and could bring shame to the family. (Brodsky & Faryal, 2006, p. 314)

For Brodsky, the U.S. scholar, one of the most disturbing aspects of Afghani culture was its treatment of women. She reported that Afghan women have not only suffered under the Taliban regime, but also a long history of traditional repression based on tribal and religious practices has made the Afghan women among the most oppressed groups in the world. In rural and uneducated families women are considered worth half what men are worth, and their estimated 21% literacy rate, extreme levels of maternal mortality, and lower life expectancy than men allude to this cultural oppression. Even in a feminist organization where she conducted her research, the U.S. scholar identified the effects of ingrained societal thinking about women. Although the activist Afghani women had a say in the organization, at home they lived by cultural patterns wherein the men held more power; girls and women had to be more careful about their dress, behavior, and reputation than boys and men; and stereotypical divisions of labor flourished. However, Faryal, the Afghani interpreter and coauthor, did not fully agree with the U.S. scholar's understanding and interpretation of the Afghan culture (see Module B for Faryal's response to Brodsky). Thus,

the American scholar concluded that certain research topics are more difficult for her to broach in the Global South despite striving for cultural competency.

This international study raises important issues for social workers who may become involved in international aid efforts in Afghanistan or work with Afghani immigrants and refugees in the United States. By reflecting on this quandary, social work students can increase their awareness of the relevance of ISWR for this particular population and for culturally competent practice in general.

Exercise for Module Component A

1. Prior to class, instructor and students read essay for Component A, "Introduction to International Social Work Research" (30 minutes homework prior to classroom session).
2. In class the instructor provides a summary of ideas from the essay, based on the accompanying PowerPoint presentation, along with her or his own examples (15 minutes).
3. Classroom discussion (45 minutes): The instructor breaks the class into small groups of four or five students. Students are instructed to select two of the following questions to discuss in light of the issues raised in the essay for Component A (20 minutes). Each discussion group selects a reporter, who summarizes major insights from the group in a brief presentation to the entire class (10 minutes). If the class size is too large to allow all groups to report, then the instructor selects up to three for variety. Then the instructor adds observations and comments to pull together the students' insights and advance critical thinking (10 minutes).

Question 1. In light of the explanation about types of ISWR and relevance to social work practice and policy, identify one way in which your social service practice setting (whether volunteer, practicum, or paid) of the past, present, or hoped for in the future could benefit from a global perspective and information from international research. For example, if your service setting includes recent immigrants or refugees, how could international research based literature or future studies enhance service delivery and/or agency policies?

Question 2. Consider one type of informal or formal research activity you are expected to undertake as a practitioner—ranging from individual assessments to systematic community studies, and from quantitative and/or qualitative data collection and analysis methods—that would have a global or international dimension. How are your informal or formal research activities as a social work student in the United States affected by the cultural differences and power dynamics related to contrasts of Global South and Global North?

Question 3. What do you think about Brodsky's views on Afghan women? Are you in agreement with Brodsky, and if so, why? How does your standpoint fit with social work ethics?

Module Component B

Addressing Cultural Diversity through Interpretation, Translation, and Multicultural Teamwork in International Social Work Research (ISWR)

Mahasweta M. Banerjee, PhD, and Edward R. Canda, PhD
The University of Kansas School of Social Welfare

It is often difficult to manage cultural and linguistic differences between researchers and research participants in ISWR. For example, many times researchers use English originated concepts in research survey instruments, interview guides, and research topics. These can be hard to translate literally, such as anorexia and bulimia, self-efficacy, depression, empowerment, strengths, resiliency, spirituality, and domestic violence (Group Discussion, 2012; Silva-Martinez & Murty, 2011; Sullivan & Cottone, 2010). For example, group Discussion (2012) revealed that the term *spirituality* as used in Western social work (Canda & Furman, 2010) has no direct easy translation into Japanese. It is sometimes translated into Japanese as *reisei* (based on kanji, i.e., Chinese characters) which implies something about ghosts. So many Japanese people prefer to convey the idea of spirituality by transliterating the English sounds into Japanese pronunciation by syllabary writing (*katagana*). Then some further explanation is given to clarify meaning.

Interpretation and Translation

Interpretation and translation are challenges in culturally competent ISWR. Silva-Martinez and Murty (2011) report that use of standard assessment tools or interview guides is a common practice. They state that such methods are not appropriate for research with survivors of domestic violence from different backgrounds, who may define their experiences differently. They report that even when a standard data collection instrument is not used, translations of qualitative data collection questions used with Anglo populations could compromise data collection in Mexico. They believe it is inappropriate to use a single translation of an interview guide into standard Spanish. A Latina may not be familiar with this term even in her own language, and it may not express how she experiences domestic violence as a Latina woman. Thus, it is dangerous to assume that the American understanding of domestic violence is universal in all Latino/a cultures or in other cultures. The challenge of translating concepts that do not readily appear in other languages underscores the need to be aware of differences in language and culture. For example, self-esteem is a widely used concept in the Global North but is not easily translated or explained in a variety of languages and cultures, particularly Asian cultures (Sullivan & Cottone, 2010). Therefore, it is necessary to go beyond translation to the sociocultural context of the language.

Additionally, it is important to note that there are different linguistic terms, dialects, and regionalisms in many countries. Silva-Martinez and Murty (2011) state that it is preferable for the researcher to be both bilingual and bicultural and not need an interpreter when studying sensitive issues such as domestic violence. Further, prolonged engagement and persistent

observation (Padgett, 2008; Patton, 2002) both with the community and research participants are important to gain trust and access to accurate data.

Despite supporting and abiding by culturally competent research practice wisdoms, there is evidence that U.S. researchers can still face problems. For example, outsiders know that Hindi is the official language in India. However, 29 languages with more than 1 million speakers are spoken in India. Thus, translating an English instrument into Hindi cannot work for research with all Indians. Cultural familiarity allowed Budruk (2010) to develop cross-language measurement equivalence for the Place Attachment Scale, where she translated English items of the scale into Marathi, the language spoken in Maharashtra in western India. Despite cultural familiarity, translation of the scale into Marathi, and dropping negatively worded terms in the original scale because they do not translate well in other languages, she found that the English version of the scale had consistently higher levels of reliability than the Marathi version of the scale. She concluded,

The insufficient fit of the Marathi data with the specified model suggests the inappropriateness of this translated version of the scale for examining a first order, three factor correlated model of place attachment. This scale is, therefore, not useful in exploring place attachment among the Marathi speaking population. (p. 37)

She recommended that focus group interviews may be more useful in determining the emic dimensions of an etic construct. In this case, it is possible that for these respondents hills are not spaces where they have a sense of attachment. Perhaps more pertinent areas of space attachment here are temples, sacred spaces, pilgrimage venues, homes or ancestral villages. Thus, in addition to translation issues, content areas may need to be adapted to cultures as well.

Similarly, Brodsky and Faryal (2006) realized that in the data interpretation stage, the two authors did not agree with the findings of the study. What was identified as oppression toward women by Brodsky, the U.S. researcher, was interpreted as cultural efficacy by Faryal, her Afghani interpreter, debriefer, and coauthor. For example, Faryal explained that the apparent contradiction of activism outside the home and submission inside the home is a result of the culture-specific need to balance political advancement of women with the imperative of maintaining honor and dignity—the most important currency for women in Afghani society. Faryal explained that to work within the society and community, women had to sacrifice some forms of personal equality to maintain honor and dignity and to push for more important political goals. Further, Faryal questioned why Brodsky focused so much on the negative aspects of Afghani diversity and not on the positive differences. She reminded Brodsky that women in the West are not totally liberated either. She elaborated that most American women still have more responsibility in the home regardless of their employment status; their reputations are still more important than men's; societal pressure and regard for wearing revealing clothing may not be so different than the Afghani pressure to be fully covered; men's voices are still more loud and important in most public and private arenas; and women do not have equal political power when their representation is compared with some other countries. Brodsky concluded “although we have over the course of this project both experienced each other's worlds, we remain essentially outsiders in each other's

spheres ... A call for connectedness should not be a mandate for convergence” (p. 319). Faryal’s criticism of Brodsky resembles many others’ views of research in/on the Global South from people in the Global North. Social workers can try hard to build bridges and enhance their cultural competence, yet a convergence of meaning may not be possible across cultures.

Nonetheless, U.S. social workers strive to create more global understanding and cultural competence by conducting research in other parts of the world. It is not always possible for U.S. researchers to be bicultural and bilingual. Interpreters and translators are routinely used in conducting research in the international context. Group Discussion (2012) scholars reported that the use of interpreters and translators is a mixed blessing. One faculty participating in the Group Discussion observed that one advantage of outside researchers is that respondents can be more frank with them than with insiders. Others identified that the inability to understand the conversation between the interpreter and the interviewee can be frustrating. They suggested it is important to be aware that the way the interpreter speaks with respondents could be disrespectful, and they could use the language of the dominant group in interviewing oppressed populations. They noted that it is important to select interpreters well and to get reputable interpreters. Additionally, the interpreter should be specifically trained in the topic, the researcher and the interpreter/translator need to train one another in the culture and the language of the other, and the interpreter/translator should serve as a debriefer (see detailed recommendations for interpreters below).

Further, despite working with professional translators for transcription, there could be incorrect understanding of words when translated into English. This is because translation is more than an exchange of words from one language to another. Translators create texts from their own perspectives. Their perspectives are shaped by culture, lived experience, and knowledge about the subtleties of the languages into which they translate. Whether data produced by professional certified translators are more trustworthy than those produced by their counterparts is likely to depend on how fully the translators are aware of these issues and how mindful they are in their translation process.

A Group Discussion (2012) participant reported that he conducted interviews for a doctoral qualitative research methods course with a few Ethiopian respondents via Skype in Amharic and then translated the interview transcripts back into English. The study focused on men’s use of the plant *khat* as a stimulant in social gatherings and the participants’ views of its beneficial and deleterious effects. In the transcription, when literally translated into English a statement read, “*khat* makes me moody,” in which the term *moody* is a local idiom adapted from English. But after discussion with the faculty supervisor, the student realized that in American English, a better translation would be “*khat* makes my mood good.”

Multicultural Teamwork

Tsai et al. (2004) reported that the Chinese literal translation of *normally* is *ordinary time*. But the translation *ordinary time* made no sense in the context of their research on colorectal cancer unless retranslated as *normally*. Thus, language incongruence during the coding process can threaten the trustworthiness of a cross-language study. They reported that all

their interviewees were immigrants from China, Hong Kong, or Taiwan. Although all respondents were ethnically Chinese, they came from different places of origin with varying social, cultural, political, and economic structures and historical relationships with the United States. The researchers realized that although Mandarin, a Chinese language, was used for the interviews, Mandarin is used differently in the respondents' respective countries. For example, *tu-tou* (in Mandarin) means *potato* in China, whereas it means *peanut* in Taiwan. Thus, an interviewee's experience and expressions of that experience might not be understood well by a Chinese coder who was raised in a different Chinese society or environment.

In Tsai et al.'s (2004) qualitative study, the research team consisted of six people, among whom four had varied Chinese ethnicity and degrees of adaptation to the Global North for data collection, analysis, and interpretation. The Chinese coders functioned as cultural brokers to convey the participants' concepts for other coders during the data analysis phase. Often the interviewees used Chinese terms to explain their medical conditions or medicines used such as *bao ji wan* and *huai hua*, which made no sense to some coders; but when defined by Chinese coders as herbal medicines, they made sense. Also these coders helped others understand interviewees' beliefs and actions and were able to capture the subtle cultural meanings embedded or unstated in the verbatim translation of the interview. Further, unknown to the non-Chinese coders, the English terms *stress* and *pressure* share the same Chinese characters in commonly used Chinese–English dictionaries. There were several discussions, raised by Chinese coders, about whether *stress* would be a better translation than *pressure*. As a result, the translation was subsequently refined to *stress*. Thus, the researchers state that the interpretation phase of the research can be the most difficult step when cultural knowledge must be incorporated into the research process. Cultural knowledge allows participants' cultural frame of reference to be considered during data analysis and may yield the most useful results.

Despite many advantages, Tsai et al. (2004) also reported disadvantages to including “insiders” or coders who are members of the studied ethnic groups in the analysis process, and there are also drawbacks to relying solely on these coders to interpret the data. The researchers found that the non-Chinese coders tended to question the meaning of the words used (for example, “blow to the spirit”), ask for reasons behind the choice of words or translation, and search for good equivalents for concepts to determine whether those were specific to Chinese culture. In contrast, the Chinese coders were less likely to question the meaning of words used by interviewees. The shared cultural and linguistic background with the interviewees made it easier for them to make sense of the interviews, even when the English translation was less fluent. The drawback here is that insiders' knowledge might make the Chinese coders overlook behaviors or concepts that are unique but recognized only by those who come from other cultural groups. Further, if the insiders are not aware of their own cultural and social specificity (being women vs. men, being middle class vs. working class) they might ultimately report findings that reflect their own experiences rather than the experiences of the researched. The insiders' knowledge might also make coders see all the behaviors and concepts identified in the transcripts as being attributed only to culture but not to other factors such as gender, socioeconomic status, or individual or family

traits, if they are not self-reflexive. The lesson learned was to use both Chinese and non-Chinese coders to interpret data in the best possible way.

Aside from formal scholarly research, it is common for social work practitioners to work with immigrants and refugees for whom English is not the first language. In these cases it is crucial to effectively use interpreters and translators for conducting individual assessments, community studies, and for implementing helping plans.

Following are suggestions for effective use of interpreters (adapted and expanded from Canda, Carrizosa, & Yellow Bird, 1995). These suggestions can be applied in direct practice social work and in scholarly qualitative research studies.

Recommendations for Use of Interpreters

1. Establish multicultural teams of professionals/researchers, paraprofessionals, and volunteers, including interpreters/translators, across relevant agencies and community-based support systems. For a detailed guide for multicultural teamwork, see Canda and Furman (2010).
2. Establish a pool of qualified interpreters/translators, relevant to languages in the community, who can be accessed readily and prepared for teamwork in social service provision and social research.
3. Interpreters/translators should be trained, at least through workshops, with skills specific to the professional vocabulary and practice or research situations (e.g., medicine, mental health, law, and child welfare).
4. The service provider or researcher who will partner with interpreters should be trained, at least through workshops, with skills in working with interpreters in the particular linguistic and cultural contexts.
5. Service providers/researchers should not use family members (especially children), friends of clients or research participants, or partisans as interpreters except in cases of emergency or significant exigency. In cases of emergency or exigency, engage appropriate interpreters as soon as possible. Otherwise, conflicts and confusion of roles are likely to result. For example, children are likely to be unqualified and may experience distress when interpreting about sensitive or complex topics. This also creates confusing role relations between children and adults in the situation.
6. Whenever possible, include two interpreters, one of whom can actively interpret, and the other who can observe and report on accuracy and appropriateness to the service provider/researcher.
7. Maintain long-term collaborations between interpreters and service providers/researchers whenever possible to build mutual competency, rapport, and trust.

8. Pay or otherwise reward interpreters/translators in a culturally appropriate and fair manner.

9. Prior to each interpretation session, have an orientation meeting between interpreter and service provider/researcher to establish agreement for goals, tasks, roles, and style of interpretation.

Note: There are three main styles of interpreting. *Summary style* involves the interpreter summarizing and editing the message. This has the advantage of saving time. However, the original message will be distorted. This method is not recommended except in emergency situations. In *simultaneous style*, the interpreter conveys the complete message nearly simultaneously with its spoken delivery. This has the advantage of speed. However, it is rare to find interpreters who are trained at that level of expertise. Also, in complex interactions this becomes confusing. *Consecutive style* is generally most useful for social work practice and research. In this style, communication partners exchange turns delivering oral message content in short segments, allowing time for interpreting. It has the advantage of providing complete and unbiased mediation of communication. A disadvantage is the slowing and unnatural flow of communication. This is why the reason for use of the interpreter should be explained at the outset of interaction. See numbers 10 and 11.

10. At the beginning of the interpretation session introduce all parties and explain the purpose and style for use of the interpreter, emphasizing a commitment to full mutual understanding between service provider/researcher and the client/research participant.

11. During the interpreting session use consecutive style whenever possible (i.e., speak briefly and clearly, allow interpretation of entire message without editing by interpreter, wait for client/participant response, deliver your own response, and repeat the cycle; occasionally summarize your understanding back to the respondent to check for accuracy, using the same consecutive style).

12. After the interpretation session, have a debriefing meeting with the interpreter so that the worker/researcher and interpreter can review what happened, clarify any confusion, and plan for the next task, if any. If the interpreter is bicultural and has expertise relevant to the situation, she or he can be consulted for insights about nonverbal aspects of communication and cultural context and issues that affect the nuances of the verbal messages. Note that professional ethical standards for interpreters/translators usually prohibit the offering of personal opinions or information to the parties that go beyond the actual messages of the client/research participant. So consultation with the interpreter should be clarified within the role agreed to. A bicultural consultant is more than an interpreter.

Exercise for Module Component B

1. Prior to class, instructor and students read essay for Component B, "Addressing Cultural Diversity through Multicultural Teamwork, Interpretation, and Translation in ISWR" (30 minutes homework prior to classroom session).

2. In class the instructor provides a summary of ideas from the essay, based on the accompanying PowerPoint presentation, along with her or his own examples (15 minutes).

3. Classroom Discussion (45 minutes): The instructor breaks the class into small groups of four or five students. Students are instructed to select two or three of the following questions to discuss in light of the issues raised in the essay (20–25 minutes). Each discussion group selects a reporter to summarize major insights from the group in a brief presentation to the entire class (10 minutes). If the class size is too large to allow all groups to report, then the instructor selects up to three for variety. Then the instructor adds observations and comments to pull together the students' insights and advance critical thinking (10 minutes).

Question 1. Review the examples of difficulties involved in translating and interpreting English terms into other languages for research purposes. Think about your own practice or research setting, especially how it engages people and issues with an international quality (e.g., refugees or immigrants). Identify at least one key concept (e.g., self-esteem, spirituality, schizophrenia, strengths, domestic violence) that is important to your setting. What are the relevant languages into which the term should be translated or interpreted and for what purpose? Given that, how could you go about developing a culturally appropriate translation/interpretation of the term?

Question 2. What do you think about the differences of viewpoint between the research partners in the Brodsky and Faryal study? Are you more in agreement with Brodsky or Faryal and why? How does your standpoint fit with social work values?

Question 3. Review the list of 12 recommendations for use of interpreters in social work practice and research. Evaluate how well each of these recommendations is currently implemented in your practice/research setting. Identify one way your setting can more effectively use interpreters to enhance practice/research overall and work with international issues in particular. (Students who can actually implement innovation in practicum or research project settings can be encouraged to form an action plan to implement outside class for improving the use of interpreters.)

Module Component C

Addressing Institutional Review Board and Research Design Issues for International Social Work Research

Mahasweta M. Banerjee, PhD and Edward R. Canda, PhD
The University of Kansas School of Social Welfare

Given the differences in culture, language, and scholarly research policies that are commonly encountered when U.S. based researchers engage in research in other countries, special attention needs to be given to address issues of university affiliated institutional review boards (IRBs) for human subjects protection. This essay addresses four such issues: signed informed consent, privacy and confidentiality, compensation, and risk of discrimination or oppressive use of research. Very briefly, it comments on adapting dominant research designs for ISWR.

Signed Informed Consent

Rubin and Babbie (2011) noted that research with American Indians and Alaska Natives indicated that prospective participants can get turned off by U.S. informed consent procedures. Similarly, Group Discussion (2012) revealed that the language in IRB protocols can be intimidating to people for whom English is not the first language, and also because it is not the customary way of doing research in their own countries. For example, some countries mentioned (India, China, Taiwan, South Korea, and Ethiopia) do not have routine IRB procedures for conducting survey research, such as signing informed consent forms or getting a payment for participation in research. Therefore, local researchers in these countries do not routinely follow these procedures, and research participation is considered a contribution to the greater good. However, U.S. researchers must get IRB approval from their U.S. institutions prior to research and must abide by the protocol. This creates a potential for cultural conflict on the ground unless U.S. researchers are better prepared in advance. A Group Discussion participant reported that in China people are afraid to sign their names on a formal document, and when required to sign informed consent forms they write their nicknames, or place an animal sign (see also, Fadiman, 1997). In India, illiteracy is so high among prospective social work research participants that starting a research project by asking respondents to sign their names would be a certain rapport breaker. One way to be culturally competent in these situations is to seek oral consent in place of signed informed consent. Therefore, U.S. researchers often would be better served by specifying oral consent in place of signed consent when applying for IRB approval of their proposal.

Additionally, Group Discussion (2012) participants shared that to get access to respondents for surveys, focus groups, or in-depth interviews U.S. researchers must first get approval and permission (oral consent) from gatekeepers. (This is also true of research with minority communities in the United States). Once the gatekeepers understand the purpose and value of the study and trust the outside researcher, it is easier to get access to respondents. After

this step, researchers need to build rapport and trust with respondents before data can be collected. Often this requires spending a lot more time and energy with potential respondents/local people before data collection can start. To collect data about developmentally disabled adults in China, one Group Discussion participant mentioned that she spent 1 full day with the families getting to know them, listening to their stories and concerns, and observing them, which allowed the family to trust the researcher. Then she went back the next day to collect her formal data related to adults with disability. Thus, in communities accustomed to bureaucratic behavior or academic research, trust can be built through explicit agreements and signature on a formal document, but in many communities, trust needs to be built through informal relationship-building over time.

For example, an American member of the Group Discussion (2012) recounted his first experience interviewing a Korean shaman for research many years ago. He had planned to ask questions about the nature of her shamanic practices. He was brought to the shaman's home and introduced to her by a relative of the shaman, which helped to open potential for trust. However, the researcher's naïve plan to move immediately into interview questions proved unrealistic. First, the shaman offered to share tea and talk informally (via the interpreter). The researcher tried to ask a formal question. The shaman said, "Before I discuss this, please tell me how you feel when you walk in the mountains." The researcher was surprised at this turn toward personal experience and self-disclosure. But he realized this was an important step for building rapport and that it also revealed the shaman's own commitment to a respectful relationship with nature and the mountain spirit. So the researcher explained his own experiences walking in the forests of his homeland and in the mountains of Korea. The shaman was only then satisfied to continue discussion (see Canda, 1980).

Privacy During Data Collection and Confidentiality

U.S. researchers are accustomed to doing individual or focus group interviews in a private room or space. Such personal and protected space may not always be available in some countries of the Global South, where family members, neighbors, or gatekeepers may be routinely present during data collection. This is particularly true in India and is difficult to accept at first for U.S. researchers, who tend to have a heightened sense of privacy. But cultural competence requires adjustment to cultural expectations and restrictions of space.

For example, in illustrating a study from India on micro-credit by Bagati (2003), Tripodi and Potocki-Tripodi (2007) raise the question whether conducting interviews in respondents' homes was the right strategy. Experience shows that many NGOs in India generally have such small and crowded offices it is very likely that the small home of respondents was a better fit for the research than an NGO office. Also, Monshi and Zieglmayer (2004, cited in Sullivan & Cottone, 2010) noted that the western concept of privacy needed to be reexamined when conducting research on the patient–healer relationship in Sri Lanka. The authors found that insisting on providing privacy during data collection interviews contradicted the local social norms and expectations that consider therapeutic interventions to be a public act. Thus, it is important to be aware that privacy has different connotations in

various countries; some situations that are considered private in the Global South (e.g., Brodsky & Faryal, 2006) may not be considered private in the Global North, and vice versa.

When an interpreter, translator, or bicultural consultant is part of the research team, there are important confidentiality issues and procedures (including for a particular interpreting session, ex parte communications, and handling of transcripts). Group Discussion (2012) participants noted that researchers and other members of a research team who are members of the community/culture being studied can experience pressure from other community members to divulge information as “good” fellow community members. This can be especially difficult if the community does not adhere to individualistic notions of relationships and privacy. A further challenge arises when research unexpectedly uncovers incidents of child abuse, criminal behavior, imminent danger, and human rights abuses. If the researcher is legally or ethically mandated to report such matters, participants should be informed as part of the informed consent procedure. This can be especially complicated if there are fundamentally different understandings of human rights between the researcher and participants and with simplistic oral consent forms.

Compensation

In the United States it is customary to provide financial compensation to research participants for taking part in funded research. Once again this may not be true in other countries where research participation is considered a way to contribute to the greater good. Yet U.S. researchers can and do find ways to give back to the individuals/communities who have participated in the research. One of the researchers in the Group Discussion (2012) mentioned that for her research in India she addressed this issue by giving a large amount of cash (by local standards) as a donation to the agencies that gave access to many respondents, based on the hope that the donation would be used to cover expenses for needed services and resources used by their client populations. In China a student researcher gave small gifts such as notebooks in lieu of cash compensation. Similarly, a researcher based in South Korea reported that she gave handmade items such as organic soap or jewelry to her respondents as gifts for participation. Although China and India are relatively poor countries, how cash is handled in noncommercial contexts is important. Gift giving is more acceptable in these cultures than cash compensation. Group Discussion (2012) scholars recommended that if the decision is to give cash compensation, then it should always be placed in an envelope and not given in a visible way, because otherwise it may resemble giving alms to beggars. This is because showing respect and regard for others is very important in these cultures.

Silva-Martinez and Murty (2011) report that, after their oral history research with elderly Latinas, one of the researchers created keepsake individualized monographs containing the life review narratives of each participant and gave them to the women to share with their family members. Other ways of giving back include informing the community of the research results, providing information to respondents, assisting with referrals, and participating in community projects. Sharing findings with respondent communities is also important among Native Americans in the United States (Weaver, 1997), and some countries of the Global South (e.g., India) implicitly require this of outside researchers. Indeed, ISWR can benefit

from participatory research designs (such as participatory action research and postcolonial research) that ensure that research processes and results directly contribute to the well-being and empowerment of participants and their communities (Patton, 2002).

Risk of Discriminatory or Oppressive Use of Research

Unfortunately, historically, much social research has been conducted by researchers representing colonialist and ethnocentric agendas. In the U.S. context, research with Indigenous peoples has been notorious (such as for rationalizing outplacement of Indigenous children from their families or focusing on deficit-based negative stereotypes). International research is also sometimes conducted to gather information for use in military or espionage contexts or for economically exploitive commercial ventures. Of course, whatever the research context, social workers' ethical principles prohibit any research process that contributes to negative discrimination or oppression.

Yet there is always the challenge that the research process or findings could be used by readers to promote stereotypes, negative discrimination, or oppression, even without any such intention on the part of the social work researcher. For example, a Group Discussion (2012) member recounted his ethnographic research about the role of Buddhist temples in providing social support for Southeast Asian refugees in the Midwest. He developed a research design with full support of community leaders. In the process, some refugee service experts and Theravada Buddhist leaders cautioned him about racist and anti-Buddhist sentiments from extreme elements in the wider society. Some Buddhist temples had been painted with Nazi swastikas or sprayed with bullets in drive-by shootings. Some conventional medical professionals expressed hostile attitudes toward Southeast Asian traditional healers, such as monks and shamans, for so-called primitive quackery or practicing medicine without a license. Some Christian church members, who generously provided material and social support for Buddhist refugees, pressured them to convert to Christianity. Therefore, there was a risk that if particular temples or locales were identified in the research report, they could become subject to hostile or discriminatory reactions.

Ideally, ethnographic style reporting would give locality specific details in realistic portrayals while protecting the identity of individual participants. In this case, under advice from Southeast Asian refugee leaders, the research report provided only a collective portrait of common patterns of social support derived from several unidentified locations across multiple states (see Canda and Phaobtong, 1992). This provided useful information for enhancement of social workers' collaborations with community-based support systems while avoiding the risk of oppressive reactions against particular temples.

Such risks would need to be accounted for in IRB applications and in research designs. Minimizing such risks requires that researchers gain knowledge about the cultural and political contexts of the research topic and the historical and current relations between the research participants' communities and the likely users of the research findings, and that researchers form research topics that are focused on promoting community empowerment in terms that are congruent with the values and goals of the participants.

In conclusion, awareness of cultural differences and appropriate adaptations to those differences makes it possible to be open to variations in values and meanings based on cultural differences and permits a deeper understanding. The process of conducting research in the international arena is time-consuming and labor intensive work. Despite current efforts at cultural sensitivity, we may still make mistakes and arrive at inaccurate understandings. But sustained efforts at being aware of and adapting our attitudes, knowledge, and skills as well as learning from our mistakes are essential for building knowledge that can effectively inform global/international social work research, practice, and policy.

Exercise for Module Component C

1. Prior to class, instructor and students read essay for Component C, “Addressing Institutional Review Board and Research Design Issues for ISWR”) (30 minutes homework prior to classroom session).
2. In class the instructor provides a summary of ideas from the essay, based on the accompanying PowerPoint presentation, along with her or his own examples (15 minutes).
3. Classroom Discussion (40 minutes): The instructor breaks the class into small groups of four or five students. Students are instructed to select three or four of the following questions to discuss in light of the issues raised in the essay (20 minutes). Each discussion group selects a reporter to summarize major insights from the group in a brief presentation to the entire class (10 minutes). If the class size is too large to allow all groups to report, then the instructor selects up to three for variety. Then the instructor adds observations and comments to pull together the students’ insights and advance critical thinking (10 minutes).

Question 1. What issues pertaining to signed informed consent are pertinent to your ISWR project? What is the most culturally appropriate manner of seeking consent in this situation? If you are not sure, identify a plan for how you can gain relevant information about the cultural context issues.

Question 2. Review the story about the researcher who experienced an unexpected challenge in forming rapport with the shaman or the story about the researcher whose video camera disappeared for some time with a respondent. Consider an ISWR project in which you are or could be involved. How can you enhance rapport building with key informants, gatekeepers, and interview participants for this study?

Question 3. What are the distinctive issues related to privacy, confidentiality, and security of data in your ISWR project? Identify culturally appropriate ways to address these.

Question 4. In your ISWR project do you plan to compensate participants in any way? Will they receive direct or indirect benefits for participation? If there is direct compensation, how can this be done in a culturally appropriate manner?

Question 5. Critically reflect on whether your ISWR project poses any risk of promoting negative stereotypes or contributing directly or indirectly to negative discrimination or oppression for research participants or their wider communities. If so, how can this risk be eliminated or minimized? Do the benefits outweigh any potential risks? Have participant representatives and relevant community leaders been involved in making this decision?

Question 6. What are the pros and cons of asking an interpreter to also serve as a bicultural consultant within a multicultural research team? If you do include a bicultural consultant, how can the team members become prepared for effective collaboration?

Question 7. (For students who are actually conducting ISWR projects.) Based on answers to any of the above relevant questions, refine your research design outside class time.