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The Migration of Social Workers to and from the United Kingdom: A Comparative Perspective.

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Abstract

This article reports findings from a large mixed method study exploring the migration to the United Kingdom (UK) of social workers trained in Australia, Canada, India, Romania, South Africa, the US, and Zimbabwe, and the migration of British trained social workers to Australia. The project aimed at exploring the motivations for migration, the experiences of integration, and the impact of culture on these. This article focuses on the quantitative findings and will use some of the qualitative data to further explain and interrogate the differences between these groups based on their country of origin. The findings show the greater challenges migrants from developing countries have experienced, including lack of recognition of their qualifications and experience, and discrimination. The findings also show that contrary to common assumptions, the migration experiences of social workers coming from Australia, Canada and the US are not as easy as expected. American social workers who migrated to the UK turned out to be the group least professionally satisfied. The British in Australia on the other hand, were the most satisfied. Implications for practice and future research are explored.

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Introduction

According to a new report published by the Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford, over 20% of the employees in the field of health and social work are migrants, though this data did not separate those in health-related positions from those in social work (Fernández-Reino & Rienzo, 2021). Another recent report by Skills for Care indicates that the number of adult social workers with

non-British nationality is stable and stands on 10%, with 4% from the EU and 6% from outside the EU (Adult Social Care Workforce Dataset, 2021). The status of the UK as a receiving country for international social workers is guaranteed since for over a decade it has been on the UK Shortage Occupation List (Shortage Occupation List, 2021). This is also evidenced by registration figures from the General Social Care Council which was the social work regulator until 2012, and data provided by the Health and Care Professions Council, that replaced it (Hussain, 2018). According to this data, 10% of the workforce in England received their training and social work qualification abroad (Hussein et.al., 2010; Hussein, 2018). Our own FOI request from the HCPC (FR07188) resulted in the data below. The total number of foreign trained social workers who registered between 2014-2019 was 5249 which are 17% of a total of 30,298 number of social workers who applied for registration during these years. The highest number of migrating social workers arrived from the countries taking part in our study, but these are only about half of the total number. The rest arrived from about 120 other countries.

Table 1: Social workers trained abroad & HCPC registered, 2014-2019

	Total	Australia	Canada	India	Romania	South Africa	US	Zimbabwe
Trained abroad HCPC registered	2726	463	116	204	390	203	330	1020

The UK has been experiencing a shortage of social workers for a long time, with a decline in applications to study social work, high turnover among practitioners, and short careers (Harlow, 2004; Curtis, Moriarty and Netten, 2010). Hussein et.al (2011) reports that approximately 67% of all international social workers in England are from five regions of the globe including Australia, New Zealand, North America, Southern Africa and South-Central Asia. These regions also feature in our research. In 2008, a government points-based scheme was launched with migration policies permitting entry into the UK of skilled workers in shortage occupations. These empowered

employers to encourage and actively solicit applications by social workers who trained particularly in the EU (Hussein, 2018). Simpson (2009) suggests that one of the major 'pull' factors for international social workers to the UK is the availability of vacancies. The social work profession in the UK has a strong tradition of colonial connections and exchanges with countries such as Australia, Canada, the USA, South Africa, India, Zimbabwe, and Ghana arising from academic, historical, political, and linguistic commonalities, trade investment and cultural ties. This supports the Migration Systems theory which argues that the best explanation for migration are the dynamic links between different structural aspects, such as the links between sending and receiving countries (Hussein et al, 2011; Castles and Miller, 2014).

The migration of social workers as an international trend

There is limited data about the scale of social work mobility to the UK or the motivations and experiences of internationally qualified social workers (Hussein et al, 2010; Hussein, 2011; Lyons and Huegler, 2012; Simpson, 2009; Walsh, Wilson and O'Connor, 2010). Previous research that focused on social workers' migration suggests that global mobility of social workers is not only limited to the UK but mirrors comparable approaches to tackling certain shortages amongst several developed countries. The idea of 'push and pull' factors asserts that the unequal structure of world markets explains the immigration of people from less powerful and poorer countries to more powerful and wealthier countries (Lee, 1966; Segal and Heck, 2012). Active recruitment from overseas and international exchange rates (Lyons, 2006 Lyons and Lawrence, 2009; Welbourne, Harrison and Ford, 2007; Walsh, Wilson and O'Connor, 2010) increased the UK's 'pull' factors, and these were enhanced by the surplus of professionals in some developing countries acting as 'push' factors (Yeates, 2009; Hussein et al., 2011). The possibility of higher standards of living, financial and political stability, better working conditions, and more family and professional opportunities elsewhere played a role in driving migration of social workers and others (Engelbrecht, 2006; Hanna and Lyons., 2016). In parts of Africa, western social work education is still measured as superior mainly as it makes it

easier for social workers to migrate to western countries and escape the difficult economic, social, and political conditions of their countries (Kreitzer, 2012). As part of the Bologna Declaration of 1999, EU states dedicated themselves to the “Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees” (European Ministers of Education, 1999, p. 3). This prompted continuing improvements in comparability of social work qualifications and a growing number of migrating social workers.

Migrant networks play a vital role in the decisions of prospective migrants. These prospective migrants rely on information and financial support provided by such networks which help newcomers to lower their migration and assimilation costs. Beine et.al. (2011) argues that the financial, legal, and social support, offered by networks existing in host countries, expand the benefits and lower the cost of immigration. The outcome of this is that migration flows create diaspora networks, and the networks will in turn enhance migration flow. Once a migrant enters the host country, they incur ‘private costs’. These costs are a variety of difficulties migrants encounter including finding employment, decoding foreign cultural norms, and adapting to new linguistic and social environment. Diasporas can reduce such costs by pulling resources together. These resources can be financial, technical or knowledge related. Migrants’ networks provide support to migrants before they leave and after they arrive in a host country. This aids newcomers’ assimilation in the destination economy, reduces uncertainty, and increases the expected benefits from migration (Beine et.al., 2011). Potential migrants tend to find locations where they can expect social support from earlier arrivals and appealing job opportunities. These networks are extended by services that aid the transfer of funds to families in the home country, two-way delivery of goods, measures for travel back and forth, and the importing of familiar food products, publications, and religious items. This rings true for many of our participants who share ‘state kinship’ with fellow migrants, and have reportedly drawn heavily on the support, advice and guidance provided by ‘networks’ formed specifically for this purpose. Several studies have emphasised some of the challenges that foreign

qualified social workers may experience when they migrate to other countries (Bartley, 2018; Brown, Bates and Keen, 2007; Brown et al. 2018; Devo, 2006; Hanna and Lyons, 2018; Lyons and Littlechild, 2006; White, 2006). However, most of these studies looked at transnational social workers as a homogeneous group. They also did not pay attention to the country of origin or the culture in these countries, and how might it affect the acculturation and integration of these social workers. This is the gap that this article is set to fill. Using an online questionnaire completed by migrating social workers from each of these countries, the aim of this study is twofold: (1) exploring the motivations for and the experiences of migration and integration, and (2) the role of culture and country differences in these motivations and experiences.

Methodology

The research project reported here used a mixed method approach which included an online questionnaire and semi-structured interviews as part of a triangulation design, though the qualitative element had overall a greater impact on the wider project (Creswell and Clark, 2006). Our participants were all either trained in one of the countries mentioned above and then migrated to the UK or trained in the UK and migrated to Australia. They were all practicing social work either in the UK or Australia, at least up to one year before taking part in the study. We recruited our participants using a variety of means including LinkedIn which enabled us to contact social workers directly based on where they trained and where they practice. Through Facebook we approached several active groups of migrating social workers in the UK. We also used our links with local authorities as well as snowballing. Those expressing an interest were sent our participant information sheet and a link to the questionnaire. Those indicating their willingness to be interviewed were invited for an interview. Altogether we had 243 participants completing the online questionnaire. Participants signed a consent form and the whole project received approval from XXX University's Ethics Committee. The questionnaire included a combination of closed and open questions. In addition to several demographical questions, other questions aimed to collect

information about the migration experiences, the challenges, and levels of satisfaction from living and working in the UK. To analyse our quantitative data, we used an interpretive and descriptive approach. To further clarify or add to the quantitative data as and when it is needed, we include parts from our qualitative findings.

Results:

As mentioned, we explore here the data for each of the groups of migrating social workers separately, based on their country of origin, as we believed that the culture unique to each of the groups could contribute significantly to our understanding of their experiences. One exception is British social workers. This group includes also 5 Scottish social workers, and the rest were English. On this occasion, as the sample was very small and the differences minimal, we decided to present them as one group. This impact became very clear through the interviews, but it is clearly shown also when looking at the quantitative data collected. The first major difference is in the division between men and women in each of these countries.

Social workers arriving from countries like Australia, Canada, Romania, the UK, and the US, where social work is perceived as a feminine caring profession, the percentage of women participants ranged from 90% to 80%. The percentage of men was much higher among social workers migrating from India (82.9%) and Zimbabwe (60.9%). This can be explained by the higher percentage of men practicing social work in these countries (Addati, Cattaneo, Esquivel and Valarino, 2018; Fletcher, Pande, and Troyer-Moore, 2017; Understanding Gender Equality in Zimbabwe, 2020). These countries are more community oriented, and social work enjoys in them a better public image, also due to it being in great demand in countries such as the UK thus enabling migration. In India, the tradition of Gandhian Social Work seems to play a particular role in increasing the number of men inspired by the Gandhian social work ideal of being a selfless public servant (Das, 2012; Walz & Ritchie, 2000).

Table 2. Demographic statistics per country

	Total	Australia	Canada	India	Romania	South Africa	US	Zimbabwe	British SWs in Australia
Total number of participants	243	33	25	41	36	32	26	23	33
Female %	66.9	90.9	80.50	17.1	86.1	68.8	84.6	39.1	84.8
Years in the UK									
(Mean) %									
• Under 1 year	9.1	3.0	8.0	9.8	2.8	22.2	4.0	21.7	9.1
• 1-5 years	22.7	27.3	32.0	0.0	11.1	33.3	20.0	30.4	33.3
• Over 5 years	16.1	18.2	12.0	24.4	22.2	7.4	16.0	0.0	15.2
• Over 10 years	52.1	51.5	48.0	65.9	63.9	37.0	60.0	47.8	42.4
Areas of Practice %									
• Children and families	50.2	39.4	60	22.2	62.2	38.7	36.4	95.8	58.1
• Adult services	20.1	27.3	12	55.6	13.5	22.6	9.1	0.0	6.5
• Mental Health	11.3	6.1	4.0	11.1	13.5	9.7	45.4	0.0	6.5

• People with disabilities	6.7	9.1	4.0	5.6	2.7	22.6	0.0	4.2	3.2
• Other	11.3	18.2	20.0	5.6	5.4	6.5	9.1	0.0	25.8

As the figures in table 2 show, 55% and 52% of the social workers in our sample from South-Africa and Zimbabwe respectively have arrived in the last five years and 22.2% and 21.7% of them respectively arrived during the last year. This is compared with only 2.8% and 3.0% of Romanian and Australian SWs who migrated during the last year. Following Brexit and the separation of the UK from the EU, the number of migrating social workers from Europe is likely to diminish. In our sample, 65.9% of Indian SWs and 63.9% of Romanian SWs arrived more than 10 years ago.

Areas of Practice

Cultural differences between social workers from the countries we studied are also indicated through table 2. It shows that some of these groups tend to concentrate in specific areas of practice. For example, Zimbabwean SWs unreservedly (95.8%) concentrate in Children and Families services and so do 62.2% of Romanian SWs, 60% of Canadian SWs, and 58.1% of British SWs in Aus. On the other hand, 55.6% of Indian SWs work in Adult Services and 45.4% of American SWs are in Mental Health.

Hussain (2018: 127) point out that, “the higher stress level observed among children’s social workers and continued recruitment shortages partly explain overseas recruitment campaigns undertaken by local authorities for children and families social workers since the late 1990s”. From our data, it seems that social workers from Zimbabwe may prefer to work in this area and therefore endure these additional stress levels, though our sample is too small to make such inferences with certainty.

Motivation for migration

We wanted to understand what motivated our participants' decision to migrate. Here too, clear differences can be observed between countries. The search for better opportunities for professional development was indicated as the most prominent factor for social workers from all countries apart of the US and South Africa. Remarkably, none of the US trained social workers mentioned it as a motivating factor, and for South African trained participants, it came second to the desire to improve their living standards. For American SWs, this response strengthens a general impression that for many of them, their migration to the UK was not viewed positively from a professional perspective. Wanting to improve living standards was the second most important factor for Indians, Romanians, and Zimbabweans. Joining a partner or immediate family member was mentioned by 28% of the British, 57% of the Americans and 41% of the Indian trained social workers. For Americans, this was the most prominent motivation. We know that many of our Indian participants joined their wives who were first to gain work permits in the UK as nurses. US and British participants also mentioned wider family connections that have been maintained over several generations. The motivations to travel and explore new places and experiences was for Australian social workers the most prominent factor - together with pursuing professional development. For Canadians, it came second. Many of the Australians and Canadians explained that Britain is on the doorstep of Europe which made traveling and exploring the continent easy and financially possible. Australian social workers were also the youngest group with 30% of them responding to the questionnaire – substantially more than any other group – under the age of 31. It is logical to assume that these social workers were more likely to return after they have travelled Europe. The search for a better lifestyle and quality of life did not feature at all apart from among 22% of our British trained social workers. They mentioned the warmer Australian weather allowing to spend more time outdoors and the more relaxed lifestyle with a better work-life balance. Wanting to travel and explore or migrating in the search for a better lifestyle and general quality of life seems to be much

We wanted to know if prior to migration, our participants had friends and acquaintances in the host country. 91.3% of Zimbabweans, 82.9% of Indians, 63.3% of Australians, 47.2% of Romanians, 46.4% of South-Africans, 32% of Canadians and only 4% of American said they did. On the other hand, 57% of Americans and 56% of Canadians indicated having other longer-term connections with UK residents, often family relatives. This finding sits well with our knowledge about the more communal versus individualistic character of the culture in these countries. Especially those arriving from Zimbabwe and India had a wider social network they could use. This finding also sits well with the migration network theory (Massey et al., 1993) that emphasises the place social networks play in enabling and supporting migration. It is very possible that for the Americans and Canadians participating, their partners or close family connections replaced the need to join or develop a networks of UK based friends and acquaintances.

A safe and welcoming migration destination: for some more than for others

When asked if they considered migrating to other countries, Canadians, Americans, Australians, and the British were the least likely to have had such considerations. This possibly emphasises the fact that migration between these countries is considered relatively easy and 'safe', especially for white people who share a language and assume cultural similarities. Contrary to these assumptions, our own study (xxxx, under review) and those carried out by others (Beddoe and Fouché 2014; Fouché et al. 2016; Hanna and Lyons, 2016; Hussein et al, 2010; Threlkeld and Mcpherson, 2018) show that this expectation is, to some extent, misguided. These studies found that social workers migrating between these countries, as well as their recruiters and line managers, underestimated the challenges involved.

Table 4. Statistics on considerations, employment before migration, and challenges in employment.

	Australia	Canada	India	Romania	South Africa	US	Zimbabwe	British SWs in Australia
Consideration of other countries (%)	27.3	20.0	56.1	44.4	53.6	12.0	60.9	36.4
Securing employment in social work before migration	10.4	52.2	34.3	70.5	56.0	40.9	82.6	40.0
Challenges in finding employment								
• Employers did not accept my qualifications and/or experience	16.0	22.0	56.0	30.0	27.2	15.3	0.0	0.0
• Discrimination	0.0	0.0	8.0	20.0	36.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
• Legal difficulties with obtaining right to work	12.0	0	12.0	20.0	9.0	0.0	25.0	6.0
• I had no problems finding employment	72.0	77.7	12.0	50.0	18.1	77.0	75.0	86.6

In response to the question whether they gained employment before or after migration, 82.6% of Zimbabweans and 70.5% of Romanians indicated they secured the job before migrating compared to only 10.4% Australians, 40.9% Americans, 40% of British, 48% of Canadians and 34% of Indians. In the case of Indians, the relatively low number of those securing a job before migration can be

explained by the fact that most of them came to the UK on a spouse visa after their female partners secured a nursing job. Arriving before securing a job indicates confidence in being able to secure a job. It seems Zimbabwean and Romanian social workers took a much more cautious approach, possibly based on the advice received through their networks. This is likely to indicate the greater difficulties facing Black and Asian social workers, as well as those from non-English speaking countries, in finding employment in the UK. While we didn't ask our participant for their race, all our ten Zimbabwean interviewees were black, and all the Zimbabwean trained social workers we were able to find and contact through LinkedIn, were also black. Through the semi-structured interviews, we realised the importance of race for understanding our participants' experiences. It further appears that not securing a job before moving to the UK incurred a heavy price, though this changed depending on the country of origin. Out of the 27 Indian social workers who did not secure a social work position before migration, 24 (88.8%) reported they had a range of difficulties in finding a social work position, including employers not recognising their qualifications and/or experience as valid, discrimination, and legal challenges related to obtaining the right to work. One Indian SW described their experience in the following way:

When I arrived, the GSCC had to validate my Social Work qualification; it took six months to complete. Then the GSCC changed the requirements for the registration process which took another 6 months (to comply with). When applying for jobs, the feedback from interviews was 'excellent interview but no Social Work experience in the UK'. But, consistent efforts for almost 4 years helped me to secure a Social Work job in the UK. However, I had to be 280 miles away from my family during my 1st Social Work job.

Similar difficulties were encountered by South-Africans, Zimbabweans and Romanians. Eight out of the 12 (66%) South-African SWs and eight out of the 11 (72.7%) Romanian SWs who didn't secure a position prior to migration reported experiencing a range of difficulties including employers not recognising their qualifications and/or experience as valid, discrimination, and legal challenges

related to obtaining the right to work. Generally, securing a position before arriving solved many difficulties for those who managed to do so. Trying to find work as a SW after arriving seems to raise many difficulties, especially for social workers from developing countries.

Hussein (2018) found that employers highlighted the stronger work ethic of transnational social workers and their willingness to work harder. However, several participants in our studies told us about situations where because of having their work visa tied to a particular employer, they were forced to accept significantly larger workloads compared to their colleagues, out of fear of losing their visa and work permit. The bureaucratic process required to replace the employer once already in the UK is very complicated and employers are not likely to go through it. According to some of our interviewees, this was knowingly used to pressure them to agree to increased workloads. It seems that the stronger work ethics reported by Hussein (2018) is something some employer demand of migrating social workers.

While the numbers of those not securing a job above are small, it is easy to see that the migration to the UK from Australia, Canada, and the US, or from the UK to Australia, raised fewer challenges for those who did not secure a job prior to migration compared to those arriving from India, Romania, and South Africa. With regards to South-Africa, many of the more recent migrants from that country are black. The most common challenge for social workers from these, as well as all other countries, was employers not accepting their qualifications and/or experience as valid and relevant. For South Africans, discrimination was even more common and for Zimbabweans, it was legal difficulties with obtaining right to work.

Adjusting, acculturating, and integrating

We asked our participants about the support they received when starting their 1st social work position in the UK. Australian, Canadian, and American social workers felt that the support provided

to them was either completely missing or lacking. As our literature review has shown, employers are often under the impression that the differences in practice between these countries and the UK is minimal and therefore might not be aware of the need to provide support. As we have also showed, SWs coming from these countries do experience significant cultural challenges (xxx, under review).

Table 5. Experiences at the destination country; Mean (standard deviation)

	Australia	Canada	India	Romania	South Africa	Zimbabwe	US	British SWs in Australia
Felt supported ^a	2.21 (.65)	1.96 (.84)	2.49 (.65)	2.43 (.73)	2.42 (.72)	2.52 (.67)	2.26 (.75)	2.38 (.66)
Professional satisfaction	1.9 (.75)	1.76 (.70)	1.69 (.75)	1.64 (.67)	1.71 (.69)	1.79 (.72)	2.3 (.73)	1.69 (.73)
Feeling happy about living in the UK/Australia ^c	4.09 (.87)	4.12 (.78)	4.19 (.70)	4.22 (.88)	4.10 (.79)	3.75 (.98)	4.26 (.61)	4.56 (.71)
Valued due to training and experiences abroad ^c	3.79 (1.02)	3.52 (1.19)	3.73 (1.04)	3.54 (1.09)	3.13 (.93)	3.58 (1.10)	3.61 (1.30)	4.22 (.87)
Formed a network of friends ^c	4.21 (.89)	4.4 (.76)	4.24 (.83)	4.24 (.83)	4.06 (1.06)	4.62 (.57)	4.17 (.98)	4.28 (.81)

^a Felt supported by workplace when starting to practice as a social worker in the UK. 1 = did not receive support, 3 = quickly integrated thanks to the support

^b Professional satisfaction in the destination country. 1=very satisfied, 3=very unsatisfied

^c1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree

Alternatively, we might interpret table 5 as indicating the fact that practitioners arriving from developed countries have higher expectations of what good support should look like. In any case, the outcome is that SWs coming from developing countries including India, Romania, South-Africa, and Zimbabwe were much more positive about the support they received. Another possible interpretation is that due to the discrimination some of those migrating from developing countries have experienced, they were more concerned to indicate their successful integration. Table 5 gives a good sense of levels of satisfaction. The most unsatisfied group seems to be American social workers and indeed almost a quarter of our American respondents mentioned their difficulties in adjusting to the local definitions and expectations from social workers compared to the more clinical focus of social work in the US.

When asked about the issue that made the strongest negative impact on them, 36% of American respondents chose the option 'I don't identify with the way social work is practiced in the UK'. Their qualitative answers expended on this issue. Here is one out of many such responses:

"I looked for work but found that most social workers are being hired for limited positions, primarily with child's services. There is also very much a stigma towards social workers in this country. In the US, we were competing for jobs with PhD level psychologists. There is a higher regard for US social workers... In the US, master's level (SWs) are hired for more clinical roles. I struggled to find my place here".

As a result of such tensions, quite a few of the respondents chose not to continue practicing as social workers in the UK and retrained as psychotherapists or psychologists to do work closer to what they used to do in the US.

We also asked our participants about their levels of satisfaction from living in the UK. As table 5 shows, of all the groups surveyed, British social workers in Australia are the happiest about living in the country of their destination. The least happy about living in their country of destination are

Zimbabwean social workers of which almost 40% were either indifferent or disagreed with the statement that they are happy living in the UK. One Zimbabwean social worker stated:

As soon as I open my mouth and people can hear my accent, there is a slight shift in perception. The worse for me was when a high court judge shouted at me "this is how we do things in this country!" during a hearing. I understood then that no matter what I will do, as soon as I open my mouth, I am already starting from a lower position".

This and many other similar answers indicate that Zimbabwean as well as other Black, Asian and those coming from developing countries including, for example, Romanians, experienced different forms of discrimination.

British SWs who migrated to Australia clearly come out as more likely than any of the other groups to be feeling that they are valued due to their experience and training gained in the UK, their country of origin. In that respect, the UK maintains its status, at least in Australia, as having a leading educational system and social work practice, which makes it easier for British migrants to integrate well and feel valued. Those feeling the least valued were South-African social workers, of which, as mentioned earlier, many were black. Table 5 also shows that Zimbabwean SWs were the most positive about the networks of friends they were able to create since moving to the UK. Considering the community orientation expressed by many of them during the semi-structured interviews, we might assume Zimbabwean social workers will attribute great importance to creating such networks in the country to which they migrated.

Second thoughts

We asked our participants about the factors making the strongest negative impact on their experiences as migrants and their answers are presented on table 6. Missing family and friends came up first for respondents from all countries apart for those arriving from the US for whom the inability to identify with how social work is practiced in the UK took precedence. For Romanians, Brexit

seems to have the greatest negative impact, but this also had a negative impact on Canadians and Americans.

Table 6. Frequency of mentioning the factors with most negative impact.

	Australian s in the UK	Canadian s	Indian s	Romanian s	South Africa n	America n	Zimbabwea n	British SWs in Australi a
I miss my family/ friends	31.3	28	40	17.6	32.1	24	69.6	51.5
I do not feel like I fit in	3.1	8	0	8.8	10.7	8	0	0
I do not identify with how social work is practised in the UK	15.6	20	5	0	10.7	36	4.3	15.2
Not enough	9.4	8	32.5	11.8	14.3	4	17.4	0

time for								
myself,								
socialisin								
g or								
making								
friends								
Brexit	6.3	28	7.5	50	10.7	24	4.3	6.1
None of	12.5	8	10	11.8	10.7	4	4.3	9.1
the above								
Other	21.9	0	5	0	10.7	0	0	18.2

Discussion and conclusions:

Previous studies exploring the migration of social workers, including those conducted recently, (Bartley, 2018; Brown, Bates and Keen, 2007; Brown et al. 2018; Devo, 2006; Hanna and Lyons, 2018; Lyons and Littlechild, 2006; White, 2006) homogenised those arriving from different countries into one coherent group. Following from that, researchers did little to compare between different groups of migrating social workers, either based on their country of origin or country of destination. There is also very little attention in the literature to the impact of the culture of the country of origin or country of destination on migration of social workers. Our study aimed to fill these gaps and explore (1) the motivations for and the experiences of migration and integration, and (2) the role of culture and country differences in these motivations and experiences. Migrating social workers arrive mainly from Commonwealth countries which have strong historical and contemporary links with the UK. This fact supports the Migration Systems theory. Our data shows the differences in the motivation for migration between migrating social workers from different countries. Whereas among those arriving from developing countries, improving living standards played a central role, for those arriving from developed countries, other motivations featured more centrally, including wanting to gain new experiences, travel, join an immediate family member, or the search for a

better lifestyle and quality of life. We also found that the ratio between men and women was significantly different between those arriving from India (17.1% were female) and Zimbabwe (39.1% were female) were more men practice social work, and those arriving from Western countries where the percentages were heavily leaning in the other direction. Our findings show a tendency among SWs from different countries to concentrate in certain areas of practice. The preference among our Zimbabweans participants to practice in Children and Families social work is likely to expose them to greater levels of stress. As American social work emphasises clinical skills and many practice as psychotherapists, 45.4% of the American social workers in our sample practiced in mental health though many described the transition as a process of deskilling. In line with the migration network theory (Beine et.al. 2011), the findings also show those arriving from more community-oriented countries were much more likely to have rich networks of friends and acquaintances they could lean on though those arriving from the US and Canada had either close family member or wider family connections they could turn to. Social workers from the US, Canada, Australia, and the UK were much less likely to consider migrating to other countries. We believe it emphasises the fact that migration between these countries is considered relatively easy and 'safe', especially for white people who share a language and assume cultural similarities, even if some of the differences are much greater than assumed. This greater confidence in migration among social workers from the US, Canada, Australia, and the UK is also indicated by the fact that they were also more likely to migrate before securing a social work job. This greater confidence proved to be well founded as compared to social workers from developing countries and countries where English is not the official language, our research participants arriving from Australia, Canada, the US, or the UK, had significantly fewer difficulties in securing a job after migration. This became a much more significant challenge from those arriving from other countries. Those arriving from developing countries experienced a range of challenges including discrimination. However, contrary to assumptions of social workers, employers and recruiters, the migration of American, Canadian as well as that of Australian social workers was not easy either (xxx, under review; Beddoe and Fouché 2014; Fouché et al. 2016; Hanna and Lyons,

2016; Hussein et al, 2010; Threlkeld and Mcpherson, 2018). In fact, American social workers were the least satisfied group from a professional perspective. There were many indications of this lack of satisfaction which motivated several of our participants to leave the profession or retrain as a psychotherapists or psychologists. The fact that despite mounting evidence highlighting the difficulties faced by migrating social workers, very little is done to better prepare new international recruits. This lack require serious attention.

The most satisfied group on several accounts were British social workers in Australia. Not only were they reporting on an improvement in their standard of living, but they were also the most satisfied professionally and the most satisfied from living in their country of destination. They were also the most likely to feel valued by their colleagues. These findings provide strong evidence of the challenges facing migrating social workers and the significant impact that the country of origin, the country of destination and their unique cultures have on the overall experience.

As part of this research and through qualitative methods, we identified several key differences between the cultures of these groups and the culture in the destination countries, the UK or Australia. Future research can quantify these differences. Future studies might also explore social workers' migration to and from other destinations, particularly other European countries from which relatively large numbers of social workers have arrived, possibly applying other research methods and theoretical perspectives. As we show here, the experience of social workers migrating from Australia to the UK is different in several respects to those migrating in the other direction.

Supporting migrating social workers integrate into each of these countries will require studying the impact of the culture of their country of origin and country of destination. **Considering the centrality of culture in shaping migration, methods used in anthropology – a discipline focused on culture – and particularly participant observations should be considered as it will allow examining embodied practices, which research participants can often be unaware of.** It would be important to identify what kind of support would work best and how and when it should be provided. Based on our findings, we stress the need to create induction programmes which are much more sensitive to the

specific characteristics of migrating social workers from different countries and help those planning to migrate to better prepare for the task. We suggest that such programmes aim not only to help migrating social workers better integrate but help them become the specialists within their employing organisation for dealing with migration related issues. Such an approach can help these professionals turn their migration experience into one of their key assets as professionals.

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