

CULTURAL MODELS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: PERSPECTIVES OF SOCIAL WORK AND ANTHROPOLOGY STUDENTS

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This study employed a unique theoretical approach and a series of participant-based ethnographic interviewing techniques that are traditionally used in cognitive anthropology to examine and compare social work and anthropology students' cultural models of the causes of domestic violence. The study findings indicate that although social work students and anthropology students share understandings of a general model of domestic violence, social work students agree on distinctive elements of this model that anthropology students do not. These findings are important in better understanding the role social work education plays in developing social workers' understandings of the roots of domestic violence.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS A pervasive social problem that can demand attention from a variety of social service providers (see Pyles, 2006; Pyles & Postmus, 2004; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Social workers who come into contact with families who are affected by domestic violence can provide these families with hope by linking them with important services. Some research has found, however, that social workers hold biases and stereotypes about domestic violence (Danis & Lockhart, 2003; Ross & Glisson, 1991), and that they frequently fail to provide necessary services to victims (Eisikovits & Buchbinder, 1996; Kok, 2001).

Research has suggested that it is important to identify workers' ideas about the causes of and appropriate treatment for domestic violence in tackling these issues (Davis, 1984; Davis & Carlson, 1981). The aim of this article is to examine the cultural models of domestic violence shared by social work students and other social science students and to introduce methods with which to elicit and examine those cultural models.

Even when victims of domestic violence do not seek shelter or other services from domestic violence agencies, they often become engaged with the social welfare system in a

number of other ways, including when they need financial and other types of assistance (Brandwein, 1999; Raphael, 2001), or are faced with questions about the welfare of their children (Edleson, 1999; Kohl, Edleson, English, & Barth, 2005; Postmus & Ortega, 2005). Although recent progress in social policy has increased funding for and awareness of domestic violence, research continues to indicate that victims of domestic violence encounter a number of barriers in their interactions with human service professionals.

Research has found that even when domestic violence victims disclose their abuse status to their caseworkers, they often feel uncomfortable doing so (Busch & Wolfer, 2002; Saunders, Holter, Pahl, Tolman, & Kenna, 2005). Some welfare workers inappropriately screen (Levin, 2001; Postmus, 2000; Postmus, 2004; Owens-Manly, 1999) or otherwise fail to identify clients eligible for accessing the Family Violence Option (McNutt, Carlson, Rose, & Robinson, 2002) or similar programs that allow domestic violence victims to obtain waivers for time limits and other restrictions enacted under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (P. L. 104-193). Welfare workers also tend to underestimate the numbers of victims that apply for assistance (Kok, 2001) and sometimes provide inappropriate services when encountering victims (Brandwein, 1999). Some welfare offices have addressed this problem by placing domestic violence advocates in welfare offices and training staff to be aware of the barriers that victims of domestic violence face. These programs have met with varying levels of success (Kok, 2001), but are steps in the right direction. As profes-

sionals become educated about domestic violence, victims' challenges in accessing the services to which they are entitled should decrease.

Improving victims' access to services requires better understanding how professionals think about and approach domestic violence cases. One way to investigate this is to ask whether particular groups of professionals share ideas, ideas that might have been formulated on the basis of having undergone common training and therefore result in a professional culture. Answering such questions requires that we deconstruct the concept of culture. Recent research has pointed out the problematic nature of social work's usage of the term "culture" (see Park, 2005). Culture has been commonly understood in social work and other fields to be an all-encompassing term (D'Andrade, 1999), sometimes standing in for racial and ethnic characteristics (e.g., Hispanic culture), as well as aspects of the environment (e.g., office culture) (Park, 2005). Common to these descriptions of culture is the idea of sharing. For more than 100 years, anthropologists have debated the definition of culture, and in recent years, have developed techniques for systematically assessing it. Many cognitive anthropologists have come to agree that culture is best defined as shared knowledge among individuals in a group (D'Andrade, 1984; Shore, 1996). Such a definition allows for greater specificity in narrowing down, operationally defining, and measuring elements of culture. In this study, techniques traditionally employed in cognitive anthropology are used to identify the specific ways social work students think about domestic violence.

Cultural Models and Cognitive Anthropology

Anthropologists have theorized that cultural knowledge consists of a collection of models, or a set of interlocking schemas that guide individuals in interpreting and responding to their environments (D'Andrade, 1984). Each individual's model is thought to be composed of not only individual biographical and idiosyncratic information, but also that which is culturally transmitted, or learned, and therefore shared with other members of the cultural group (Shore, 1996). Thus, although sharing is central to understanding culture, this framework also accounts for individuality and thus, intracultural diversity (i.e., variability in shared cultural models within a social group) (Pelto & Pelto, 1975).

To examine the structure of cultural models, cognitive anthropologists often employ techniques that avoid making assumptions about the content of any given cultural model. Instead, emergent techniques are used to elicit such content from a culture's participants. Some of the research methods drawn on to evoke such content are free listing, constrained and unconstrained pile sorts, ranking, and rating tasks (Weller & Romney, 1988). These techniques build on one another and allow researchers to gather progressively more structured information about how participants think about the given domain of inquiry. The first phase, "free listing," is an open-ended technique in which participants respond to the researcher's prompt, generating a list of ideas about the cultural domain in their own words. The second phase, "pile sorting," requires participants to organize their thinking systemati-

cally by creating categories of meaning. The final stages of rating and ranking tasks allow the researcher to adopt sophisticated analytic techniques to examine the data quantitatively, including cultural consensus analysis. Cultural consensus analysis evaluates the extent to which the data are considered cultural data, that is, shared, or are simply unique to an individual. The aim of all these techniques is to describe cultural meaning in the terms the members of a social group themselves use, and not to impose the understanding of the researcher on that group.

Cultural Consensus Analysis

The cultural consensus model, conceptualized by Romney, Weller, and Batchelder (1986) assumes that the content of cultural models can be determined by systematically interviewing participants. Cultural consensus analysis is a factor analytic-type technique that supplies three sets of results. First, it extracts the eigenvalues of a subject-by-subject correlation matrix; if the ratio of the first-to-the-second eigenvalue is sufficiently large (interpreted using a rule of thumb—that the ratio of the first factor to the second is at least 3.0), this indicates that there is sufficient sharing among individuals to conclude that they are using the same cultural model. Second, each individual's cultural competence is calculated, evaluating each person's level of sharing with the group model. Calculating a cultural competence coefficient enables the researcher to identify the "experts" in the group (i.e., those whose knowledge is closest to the group's aggregated or "average" knowledge). Finally, cultural consensus analysis reveals what is sometimes

referred to as the cultural answer key, that discloses what the culturally agreed-on, or "correct" answers were, or what the group members agreed were the components of the culture.

Consensus analysis is often performed using ANTHROPAC software (Borgatti, 1988). It is important to note that these analyses are not subject to the usual sample size requirements and assumptions of statistical analysis. In fact, many of these, such as the assumption of independence of observations, are considered inappropriate for cultural data, in which cultural participants are specifically assumed to share beliefs. Tests of violations of such assumptions have indicated that the use of small sample sizes does not jeopardize the use of statistics and subsequent interpretation of cultural data (Handwerker, Hatcherson, & Herbert, 1997).

Important insights about the connections between culture, health, and health behavior (Chavez, Hubbell, McMullin, Martinez, & Mishra, 1995; Chavez, McMullin, Mishra, & Hubbell, 2001; Dressler, Dos Santos, & Balieiro, 1996), culture and poverty, and culture and its effects on organizations (Caulkins & Hyatt, 1999; Jaskyte & Dressler, 2004) have been gained using the cultural consensus model. Until now, however, the model has not been applied to domestic violence research, and has been rarely used in social work.

Purpose of the Study

This study sought to identify elements of students' cultural models of domestic violence, to examine the structure of these models, and to evaluate the degree to which a cultural model of domestic violence is shared among

them. Examining social work students while they are undergoing training to become human service professionals provided a useful point of entry in understanding the extent to which social work training shapes their beliefs, as well as similarities and differences in how human service professionals might define and respond to domestic violence. A group of anthropology students served as a comparison group, under the assumption that, as social science students, anthropology students would have some understanding of domestic violence, but that their understandings would not be codified the way that social work students' understandings would be, given their status as service providers-in-training.

The study incorporated a framework for examining attitudes and beliefs to determine whether they constitute cultural models that has been little used in social work research, but has great potential for improving the understanding and measurement of person-in-environment. The concept of cultural models provides for a more detailed and person-focused analysis of domestic violence attitudes than has been previously attempted, and ultimately will provide insight into the ways in which social work education, policy and practice regarding domestic violence can be improved.

Method

Consistent with cognitive anthropology methodology, a series of standardized data collection techniques were used to examine participants' cultural models. These procedures are described in detail elsewhere (Weller & Romney, 1988), but focus on eliciting participants' beliefs about the causes of domestic violence.

Data were collected in three phases. Because each stage of the data collection involved a unique set of participants, techniques, and analysis, each will be discussed as a separate study. Only minimal descriptive information was collected from participants until the third phase of the research, when demographic characteristics became important issues in the analysis.

Phase 1: Eliciting Elements of the Domain

Participants and procedure. In the first phase of the research, participants generated the terms associated with domestic violence through free listing. The sample consisted of 25 advanced-standing social work students enrolled in a graduate level research course, all but one of whom was female. Participants were asked to list as many causes of domestic violence that they could think of, and write them on a blank sheet of paper.

Analysis. Participants listed a total of 29 different causes of domestic violence (see Table 1). One phrase, "poor education on appropriate behavior" was dropped because of its wordiness and lack of clarity, and a total of 28 terms were retained for analysis and use in subsequent phases of the research. The 28 items were analyzed to determine which terms participants mentioned most frequently, and which were most salient (i.e., how early in students' lists they appeared, indicating the terms' primacy) (see Table 1). The analysis indicated that financial difficulties, substance abuse, having witnessed abuse, stress, and power were both the five most often mentioned and most salient causes (those items

that are listed earliest), with more than 50% of the participants listing these terms.

Phase 2: Identifying the Semantic Structure of the Domain

Participants and procedure. In the second phase of the study, a total of 40 students participated in the research. Of these, 24 were graduate-level social work students enrolled in a research course, and 16 were upper-division and graduate students enrolled in an anthropology course. Using the 28 terms generated from participants in the first phase of the research, participants in the second phase completed an unconstrained pile sort to examine how they organized their ideas about domestic violence. Participants were told that the terms they would sort were various potential causes of domestic violence (which primed them to categorize on this basis), and were told to place terms they believed were similar into piles together. Participants were told that they could make as many or as few piles as they liked. Once the terms were sorted, the researcher conducted open-ended group interviews with the participants, in which they were asked to give a name or theme to each of their piles that would explain why they had placed particular terms together in these respective piles.

Analysis. Pile-sort data were submitted to multidimensional scaling (MDS) techniques to identify the possible dimensions participants used in classifying the domestic violence terms (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1996; Kruskal & Wish, 1978). MDS transforms proximity data (i.e., ratings of similarity) to extract a visual picture of participants' groupings of terms. Stress values in MDS assess the

TABLE 1. Free-List of Causes of Domestic Violence as Reported by Social Work Students (N=25), by Frequency and Salience

Item	Mention Frequency	% Mentioned	Salience
Financial difficulties	19	76	.539
Substance abuse	18	72	.479
Having witnessed abuse	17	68	.398
Stress	14	56	.346
Power	13	52	.298
Anger	10	40	.181
Having been abused	7	28	.120
Low self-esteem	7	28	.093
Work-related stress	7	28	.182
Family-related stress	6	24	.151
Jealousy	6	24	.176
Lack of control	5	20	.087
Mental illness	5	20	.084
Unemployment	5	20	.136
History of abuse	4	16	.094
Low education level	3	12	.066
Isolation	3	12	.054
Poor communication	3	12	.077
Infidelity	3	12	.059
The culture of violence	3	12	.049
Poor coping skills	2	8	.021
Lack of respect for partner	2	8	.028
Marital problems	2	8	.071
Selfishness	1	4	.023
Unstable living conditions	1	4	.007
Unhappiness	1	4	.021
Anxiety	1	4	.010
Depression	1	4	.014

goodness of fit of a given dimensional solution; the higher the stress value, the poorer the solution's fit. In other words, a high stress value (greater than 0.20) indicates that the "mapped" MDS poorly represents the similar-

ities calculated in the original similarity matrix. A two-dimensional solution yielded stress values below 0.20 for the separate analyses of social work and anthropology students, as well as for their merged data.

Cluster analysis was performed next to identify specific groupings within the MDS boundaries (Hair et al., 1996). Generally, participants tended to group together items that were relevant to individual issues (e.g., depression, unhappiness, selfishness, substance abuse, mental illness). Other groups included personal history/experiences (including having been abused and having witnessed abuse), and issues external to the individual (e.g., money, work stress, low level of education). The relationships between the terms in the MDS and cluster analysis are represented in two dimensions in Figure 1.

Phase 3: Examining Dimensions of Meaning

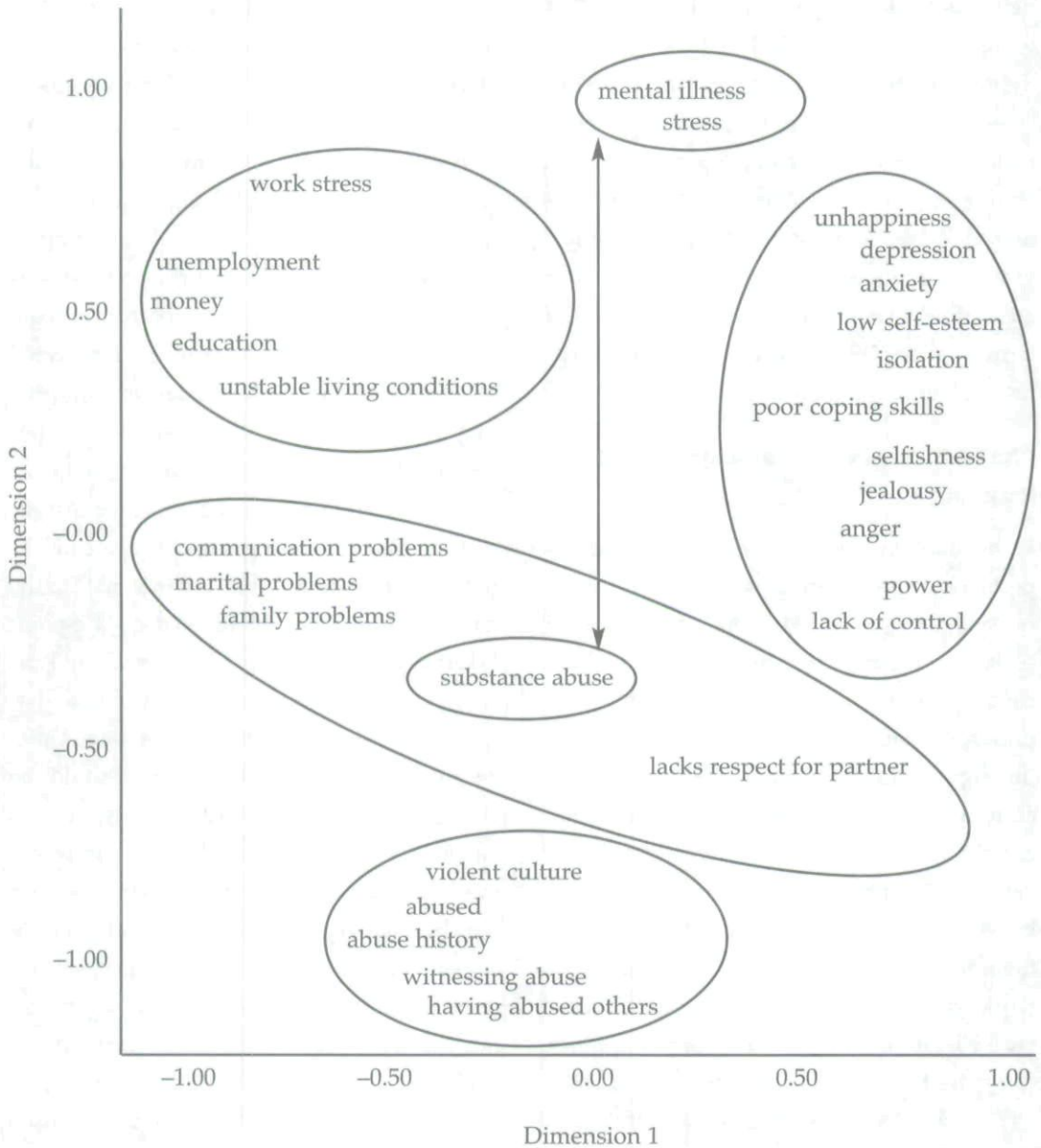
Participants and procedure. A total of 51 students participated in the rating/ranking phase of the research. Of these, 34 were master's-level social work students enrolled in a research course, and 17 were a mix of graduate and undergraduate students (11 graduates, 6 undergraduate) enrolled in a graduate-level anthropology course. The participants were mostly White (85.7%) and female (74.5%). Several significant differences were found between the student groups with regard to their demographic characteristics. More social work students (55.9%) reported having worked full-time in a human service agency (compared to 0% of anthropology students; $\chi^2(1, n=51)=15.14, p<.001$), social work students were significantly older ($M=29.7, SD=9.1$) than the anthropology students ($M=23.2, SD=4.3$), $t(48)=2.80, p<.001$), and because all social work students were graduate students but only one third of anthro-

pology students were, there was also a significant difference between the participants on the basis of class level. ($\chi^2(1, n=50)=29.97, p<.001$).

Four dimensions of meaning were taken from the pile sorts and their interviews for use in the third phase of the study. First, because it is a basic evaluative dimension, participants were asked to rank the importance of the causes of domestic violence. Participants ranked the terms from most to least important, where the most important cause was given a score of one, and the least important, a score of 28. Next, participants had indicated in interviews and in their pile-sort data that they believed some terms went together because they were either "inside" or "outside" of the victim or perpetrator. These were referred to in the third phase of the research as causes that were "internal and external" to the individual, and were evaluated on a 5-point Likert-type scale, where 1=*internal*, and 5=*external*. Other participants had noted that they had placed items in the same pile because the cause was one that could be changed. Thus, the third dimension was labeled "amenability to change," and was evaluated on a 5-point Likert-type scale on which 1=*not amenable to change*, and 5=*highly amenable to change*. Finally, because several items were mentioned that referred to mental health, the fourth dimension participants evaluated was "mental health issues." This dimension was evaluated using a simple 1=*yes* / 0=*no* choice format.

Analysis. The data analysis was conducted in two phases. First, cultural consensus analyses were performed separately on each student group to determine the extent to

FIGURE 1. Multidimensional Scaling and Clusters: Social Work and Anthropology Students' Understandings of the Relationships Among Domestic Violence Causes



Note. The axes of the figure refer to each dimension of the 2-dimensional configuration on which the multidimensional scaling of the terms was based. Though mental health and substance abuse were often placed in piles together according to cluster analysis, the terms are not well represented in space by a 2-dimensional multidimensional scaling analysis solution.

which each shared a model of domestic violence causes, and then on the entire sample's data to determine whether all students shared a model. Findings from the separate consensus analyses of the social work students revealed that they did, in fact, share a model of the causes of domestic violence on all four dimensions of meaning. Anthropology students, however, shared a model on only two dimensions: amenability to change and the importance of the domestic violence cause. The merged data revealed a pattern that mirrored the anthropology-only analysis (see Table 2); social work students and anthropology students

shared a model on the dimensions of amenability to change and importance, but not on the internality/externality of the causes or whether they were mental health issues. On the internal/external dimension and mental health issues dimension, social work students' levels of cultural competence were both less variable and higher overall than that of anthropology students. In fact, an examination of the error bars on these two dimensions, sorted by group, demonstrated that on the internal/external dimension, social work and anthropology students' competence levels overlapped very little, and on the mental health dimension, the

TABLE 2. Cultural Consensus Analysis for Social Work Students, Anthropology Students, and Full Sample: Levels of Agreement (Cultural Competence) on Four Dimensions of Meaning

Dimension	Eigenvalue Ratio	Cultural Competence		Competence Range
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Social Work Students				
Importance*	5.02	.58	.20	.17-.87
Internal/external*	2.89	.56	.22	-.05-.87
Amenability to change*	4.54	.55	.24	.09-.91
Mental health *	4.53	.51	.17	0-.85
Anthropology Students				
Importance*	.490	.53	.37	-1.0-1.0
Internal/External	2.37	.43	.36	-.50-.83
Amenability to change	2.45	.47	.28	0-1.0
Mental health	1.75	.46	.20	-.15-.78
Total Sample				
Importance*	4.95	.55	.26	-.42-.84
Internal/External	2.53	.48	.29	-.44-.83
Amenability to change	4.23	.51	.26	-.13-.91
Mental health	2.70	.45	.19	0-.88

Note. Possible Competence Range = -1.0-1.0. Asterisk (*) indicates sufficiently high competence to conclude a shared model exists.

two groups did not overlap at all. These findings further emphasize the distinctiveness of the two groups of students. Table 3 is a brief summary of the content of the cultural models—only the five highest- and lowest-ranked and rated terms on each dimension are listed except for mental health. The mental health issue column lists examples of terms participants evaluated as being mental health issues and ones that they did not.

Following the consensus analysis, PROFIT (PROperty-FITting) analysis (Carroll & Chang, 1964; Kruskal & Wish, 1978) was performed to connect the consensus results with the MDS representation of the similarities of the pile-sort terms, by determining whether

participants actually used the identified dimensions in their pile-sort ratings of the terms' similarity. PROFIT analysis assumes that data are distributed linearly and increase monotonically (Borgatti, 1994), as in regression analysis. The coordinates of the MDS are the independent variables in a regression analysis performed in PROFIT, and the attributes, derived from the consensus analysis answer key, are the dependent variables (Borgatti, 1996). PROFIT analysis yields several important pieces of information. First, the multiple *R* explains the overall measure of fit of a given attribute; a multiple *R* closer to 1.0 indicates a better fit. Next, coordinates are given that represent the head of an arrow of a vector

TABLE 3. Content of Cultural Model: Most and Least Important Factors by Dimensions of Meaning (Merged Data)

Most Important	Most/Internal	Most Amenable to Change	Mental Health Issue
Abuse history	Anger	Marital problems	Depression
Having been abused	Low self-esteem	Unemployment	Anxiety
Having abused others	Jealousy	Poor coping skills	Having been abused
Power	Anxiety	Depression	Unhappiness
Substance abuse	Stress	Communication problems	Having witnessed abuse
Least Important	Most/External	Least Amenable to Change	No Mental Health Issue
Anxiety	Work stress	Having been abused	Unemployment
Depression	Financial difficulties	Having abused others	Family problems
Selfishness	Unstable living conditions	Having witnessed abuse	Financial difficulties
Unhappiness	Unemployment	Abuse history	Power
Low education	The culture of violence	The culture of violence	Selfishness

that will run through the multidimensional space. This vector evaluates how well the attributes represented the pile-sort data. In the social work students' data the multiple R 's for three of the four dimensions of meaning were greater than .75 (see Table 4). For anthropology students, however, the multiple R 's were significant for only two dimensions: amenability to change and importance, consistent with the consensus analysis findings. Thus, the PROFIT analysis suggests that social work students made use of three of the four dimensions in their pile sorts, but only the amenability to change dimension and the importance ranking dimensions were used by anthropology students. Figure 2 displays the results of the PROFIT analysis on the MDS graph.

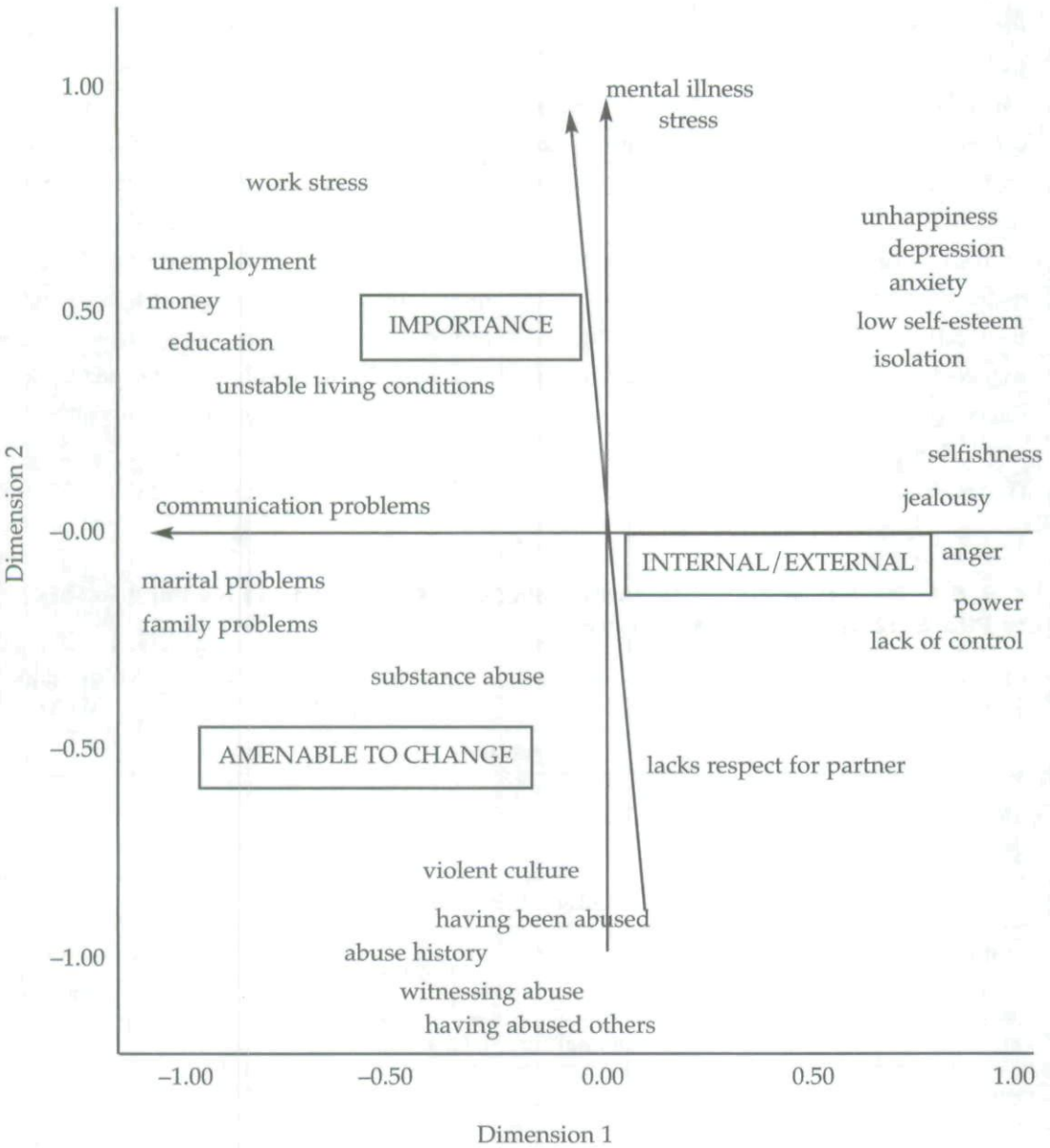
Dimension independence. The next step in the analysis was performed to determine the different dimensions' relationships to each other. The answer keys were correlated to test the extent to which the dimensions were independent of one another. The correlations for anthropology and social work students' answer keys mirrored each other, and so will be discussed in general terms. The internal/external dimension was unrelated to both importance and amenability to change, but was moderately negatively related to mental health ($r=-.39$ for social work, $r=-.46$ for anthropology). Meanwhile, mental health was somewhat negatively related to amenability to change ($r=-.26$ for social work, $r=-.22$ for anthropology) and importance ($r=-.22$ for

TABLE 4. PROFIT Analysis: Understanding How Dimensions of Meaning Relate to Pile-Sort Data, by Student Type

Measure of Significance	Social Work Students ($n=34$)	Anthropology Students ($n=17$)	All Students ($N=51$)
Importance			
Multiple R	.79**	.73*	.82**
R^2	.63	.53	.67
Internal/External			
Multiple R	.83**	.43	.78**
R^2	.69	.18	.60
Amenability to Change			
Multiple R	.76**	.72**	.80**
R^2	.57	.52	.63
Mental Health Issue			
Multiple R	.30	.15	.35
R^2	.09	.02	.20

Note. * $p<.01$, ** $p<.001$.

FIGURE 2. PROFIT Analyses: How Participants Used Dimensions of Meaning in Organizing Their Beliefs About Domestic Violence.



Note. Causes of domestic violence located closest to the arrowhead were estimated to have a higher degree of the given dimension of meaning.

social work, $r=-.28$ for anthropology), but there was a moderately positive correlation between importance and amenability to change ($r=.52$ for social work, $r=.77$ for anthropology). None of these correlations are strong enough to threaten the independence of the dimensions, but do point out some interesting relationships among them. Specifically, terms that were ranked as most important were rated as less amenable to change and were likely to be evaluated as mental health issues (recall that a ranking of 1 in importance indicates high importance), and terms that were considered mental health issues were rated as less amenable to change, and more as internal causes of domestic violence.

Examining the distribution of sharing. The next step in the analysis was to examine how sharing in the sample was distributed, that is, whether there were characteristics other than student group that predicted sharing. Significant demographic characteristics of the sample—gender, age, year in school, and hav-

ing worked full-time in a human service agency—were entered into multivariate GLM analyses as covariates, using competence coefficients from each of the four merged data sets as the dependent variables, and student type as the main independent variable (see Table 5). Findings revealed a significant main effect of gender on the importance dimension; being female predicted having significantly higher competence, and a significant main effect of student type for the internal/external dimension; social work students had higher competence. The analysis of the amenability to change dimension revealed a significant main effect of working in a human service agency; students who had not worked in a human service agency had significantly higher competence. On the mental health dimension, no variables exerted significant main effects, but student type was marginally significant ($p=.09$), and reached traditional levels of significance when nonsignificant variables were dropped from the model, with social work students demonstrating higher competence

TABLE 5. F-Tests, Multivariate General Linear Model for Dimensions of Meaning

Variable	Importance ^a	Internal/ External ^b	Amenability to Change ^c	Mental Health Issue ^d
Student type	.01	5.38**	1.05	3.03*
Gender	12.34***	.01	2.57	.13
Age	2.43	.02	2.28	1.04
Graduate student	.38	.10	.01	.19
Full time student in a human service agency	1.73	1.04	4.58***	1.37

Note. * $p<.10$, ** $p<.05$, *** $p<.001$.

^a $R^2=.31$.

^b $R^2=.19$.

^c $R^2=.16$.

^d $R^2=.19$.

than anthropology students on this dimension. While these findings are interesting and consistent with previous analyses, the low R^2 values on each of the dimensions' models suggest there are factors that remain unaccounted for, so the results should be interpreted with some caution.

Discussion

This study was undertaken to examine and compare cultural models of domestic violence of social work and anthropology students. The research employed a new and person-focused framework to gain an understanding of how social work education prepares students to deal with domestic violence. The findings represent a significant step toward understanding the development and maintenance of human service professionals' beliefs about domestic violence, with the ultimate goal of improving the delivery of services and eliminating barriers victims face. The data collection worked to uncover participants' beliefs about the causes of domestic violence because service providers' beliefs about the cause of a person's predicament tend to predict their responses to that person (Corrigan & Watson, 2003). Identifying such beliefs could, in turn, help explain some of the difficulties domestic violence victims report in dealing with service providers.

A Cultural Model of Domestic Violence

The evidence in this study is consistent with the notion that anthropology and social work students share a cultural model of domestic violence, but that social work students make

finer gradations among some elements of that model. The findings indicated that on the dimensions of importance and amenability to change, social work and anthropology students demonstrated strong agreement, providing evidence for the existence of a folk model of domestic violence. Folk models are "tacit forms of knowledge" that are "more conservative than scientific theories and are more resistant (though not completely resistant) to empirical disconfirmation" (Shore, 1996, p. 65), shared among individuals, and implicit (D'Andrade, 1987). As noted earlier in this article, simple sharing of particular ideas is only one piece of the cultural model puzzle; rather, the extent of sharing and departures from that sharing (intracultural diversity) are also important. Specifically, in this study, two background characteristics, having experience in a human service agency, and gender, moderated the extent to which the students shared ideas on amenability to change and importance.

That those participants who had not worked full-time in a human service agency had the highest levels of agreement on the amenability to change dimension explicitly points to the relevance of nonexpert knowledge (i.e., folk knowledge) in interpreting the possibility of change in domestic violence situations. It may be that those with experiences in human service agencies recognize either a greater or lesser number of possibilities for intervention effectiveness. The finding that women demonstrated more agreement on the importance dimension is consistent with previous domestic violence research that has found gender differences in attitudes (see Worden & Carlson, 2005; Carlson & Worden,

2005), but should be interpreted with caution since few men participated in this study. Here, abuse history, having witnessed abuse, and having abused others were considered to be both the most important causes of domestic violence and also the causes least amenable to change, suggesting that the students were skeptical about the efficacy of domestic violence interventions.

A Professionally Elaborated Model of Domestic Violence

While this study's findings indicated that social work and anthropology students share a folk model of domestic violence, they also indicated that social work students' understanding was unique, based on their consensus on two dimensions: (1) the extent to which they thought causes of domestic violence are internal or external to the individual, and (2) whether they believed those causes are mental health issues. Social work students also used these dimensions in explaining their categorizations of domestic violence causes in a way anthropology students did not. Such a unique understanding might be understood as social work students' making finer distinctions, or elaborating on elements of the folk model.

In the course of their education and training, social work students become attuned to aspects of the interaction between a person and his or her environment, aspects that are likely to include understandings of mental health issues, and issues that are internal to the individual (i.e., contributed by the person), as well as those that are considered external but still part of the person's environment. Social work students' training is

undertaken in the context of the classroom and "book learning," as well as through learning and practicing clinical skills. Thus, it is logical that social workers might have a more refined understanding of the relevance of mental health and the internality/externality of domestic violence issues. Human behavior in the social environment, a core course in social work curricula, focuses explicitly on factors, both internal (in the individual) and external (in the environment) as causes of behavior. At the same time, many social work programs offer course electives in psychopathology and mental health, offer concentrations in mental health, and infuse mental-health concepts into their generalist coursework. With these considerations in mind, it might not be surprising to find that social work students share ideas on particular dimensions of meaning.

It is tempting to conclude, based on these findings, that this research has revealed a unique professional cultural model of domestic violence among social-workers-in-training. A few issues must be considered before such a conclusion can be drawn, however. First, a cultural model is a complex structure, composed of a network of schematized representations. As such, capturing that model by measuring only a few dimensions of an issue as multifaceted as domestic violence is probably unrealistic. Second, the fact that all the student participants shared understandings on particular elements of the model indicates that social work and anthropology students' understandings were not completely different. This might not be surprising because both were students in the social sciences and therefore could share

ideas on that basis. Third, because the social work students had not yet received their professional degrees, it is unclear whether the model applies to professionals in practice. The social work students' understandings might be better described as elaborations of a folk model of domestic violence that could either be the result of their professional training, or the folk model could be a simplified version of a professional model. Future research on the models employed by professional social workers would be well-positioned to clarify this issue.

The existence of distinct professional models of domestic violence is certainly plausible, given different professionals' disagreements about the causes and appropriate handling of domestic violence cases (Davis, 1987), even while the mechanisms by which such a model exerts its influence remain unclear. Little research has been conducted on social workers' professional socialization (Barretti, 2004), and thus how specific domestic violence education and training are manifested in practice is uncertain (Tower, 2003). It is important to note, too, that even if social work students share ideas about domestic violence as a result of their social work education, such sharing is not entirely unproblematic. Specifically, Danis and Lockhart (2003) have noted that when social workers focus on individual and mental health issues as causes of domestic violence, they risk engaging in victim-blaming behaviors and further traumatizing their clients. To avoid this, researchers have suggested that it might be useful to integrate domestic violence education into practice and core courses in the social work

curriculum (see Begun, 1999; O'Keefe & Menen, 1998).

Strengths, Limitations, and Directions for Future Research

This study is one of the first to employ the cultural consensus model to understanding the effects of social work education on students, and as such, works to improve the social work research knowledge base on the subject of culture. The study is also the first of its kind to use the cultural consensus model in studying domestic violence, and thus makes a significant contribution to the literature in the area. The cultural consensus model, a unique, theory-centered approach, is a natural fit for social work because of its focus on the person-in-environment and use of open-ended participant-centered methodology. This study, consistent with the methodological techniques of cognitive anthropology, used a mixed-methods approach in achieving its goals, allowing stronger conclusions to be drawn (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003).

While the findings of the research are provocative and suggest that social work education has a unique impact on the beliefs of its students, the study findings should be interpreted cautiously. The comparison group of anthropology students was small and heterogeneous (their class levels were mixed), and the social work and anthropology group sample sizes were unequal. Before we can conclude that social work uniquely influences its students' cultural models, future research should investigate the models of students from a number of different fields, including a variety of professional programs, the sciences,

and liberal arts fields. Such research would also lend more credence to the existence of a folk model of domestic violence. This study should also be replicated in other areas of the country and with larger sample sizes to improve its generalizability.

Other limitations to this research should be noted. First, anthropology students did not complete separate free lists of domestic violence causes; instead, they worked from those generated by the social work students. Thus, there is no way to know whether anthropology students were working simply within a social work framework, or whether they would have generated different terms altogether. Second, background characteristics were not collected at every stage of the research. Although such data were not used in analysis until the final phase (and therefore not collected until then), they might have been useful to better understand the background of those completing the earlier stages of the study. Finally, information about students' exposure to domestic violence course content or personal experiences with domestic violence was not collected. Previous research suggests that this is an important consideration in fully understanding how people conceptualize and deal with domestic violence (see Collins, 2005; Goldblatt & Buchbinder, 2003; Nabi & Horner, 2001), and should be included in future research.

An additional issue with these data concerns the perpetual chicken-and-egg problem; that is, it is unclear whether students who enter social work programs are different upon program entry, or whether their social work education shapes their attitudes and beliefs.

Recent research has begun to uncover the special influence social work education has on students. One study examined students at the beginning and the end of their social work education and found that social work education influences attitudes toward women (Black, 1994). Future research replicating this study could sort out this dilemma by examining students at different points in their social work education; that is, measuring students' beliefs at both the beginning and the end of their professional education. Such a study would provide insight into the contribution social work education makes to its students' professional development.

If future research finds unique cultural models among social work students, it will be important to identify the particular aspects of social work education that facilitate the formation and maintenance of such a model. The developmental trajectory of such models also needs to be addressed, as well as the extent to which they are amenable to change through training. This issue is especially important to programs seeking to improve services to domestic violence victims and to remove barriers to service.

Conclusion

This study's use of a new method of studying attitudes and beliefs provides significant hope for better understanding the problems domestic violence victims encounter in their interactions with social service professionals. Specifically, identifying how professionals-in-training conceptualize and respond to domestic violence should help lead to educational models that improve service delivery. Such

changes would assist victims of domestic violence and their families in rebuilding their lives, preventing social service systems and the professionals who work in them from being hindrances to progress.

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