Social Work in Ghana at the Intersection of Two Systems

Engaging traditional actors in professional practices

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Because the tortoise has no clan,
he has already made his casket.

Akan maxim

Abstract

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The objective of this study has been to investigate if and how traditional actors and practices are taken into account in contemporary professional social work in Ghana. A ten-week ethnographic field study was conducted in the Department of Social Work at the University of Ghana where the research objective was investigated from a perspective of social work education. Traditional actors refer to extended family members and traditional authorities, which are included in the traditional system. The traditional system was a social institution that protected and cared for the vulnerable in Ghana before colonialism introduced social work as a formal profession. In contemporary Ghana, the traditional system and the social work system operate as two parallel systems within the social work field. The coexistence of these parallel systems as well as researchers' request for more knowledge about how traditional actors and practices may be involved in professional social work in Africa were departure points for this study. The study employed a qualitative, social constructionism approach, interpreting the results within a theoretical framework consisting of social world theory, postcolonial theory and social constructionism. The empirical material consisted of 19 interviews with students and teachers as well as course outlines and participant observation at lectures. The main questions addressed were how students and teachers talk about traditional actors, practices, and professional social workers, as well as how they take traditional actors and practices into account when reasoning out social work interventions. The main findings of the study were that professional social workers and traditional actors can be seen as members of two subworlds existing in the larger social world of social work. Social workers have a hybrid position between the subworlds and an ability to handle cases from the perspective of social workers *and* traditional actors. They blend 'old' and 'new' ways to conduct social work, a process interpreted as localization. From rationales provided for taking traditional actors and practices into account, three models of explanation were identified: the cultural, practical, and structural models of explanation. Yet, it was suggested that the students and teachers primary reason for taking traditional actors into account in interventions is that social workers need to stay on good terms with traditionalists. To stay on good terms was interpreted as the social workers' strategy for gaining ground in the larger social world of social work.

Key words: Ghana, localization, the traditional system, the extended family system, international social work, social work education

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Acknowledgments

1. Introduction

Professional social work emerged in the Western world alongside the industrialization of the 19th century. Before social work was established as a formal profession, all cultures had their own ways of handling social issues and protecting and caring for the vulnerable in the society (Kreitzler et al. 2009; Midgley 1981). In pre-colonial West Africa, social issues were matters of the traditional system, a social institution of extended family members. The traditional system, based on kinship, was the foundation of social life. The members of the extended families were strongly bound to each other, and the extended family was the institution that secured its members' socioeconomic security and well-being (Apt & Blavo 1997:320; Kreitzler et al. 2009:146; Nukunya 2003:17, 68). The traditional system is often described as a single system that guided political, judicial, social, and religious functions in the society as well as norms, values, and the safeguarding of these (Evans-Pritchard & Fortes 1940; Goody 1957; Nukunya 2003; Radcliffe-Brown 1940). It was governed by traditional leaders at different levels, including chiefs and queen mothers, family heads, lineage heads, and community heads (Apt & Blavo 1997:320; Kreitzler et al. 2009:146; Nukunya 2003:17, 68). In the 19th and 20th century, along with the advent of the new social order that colonialism brought to Africa, the traditional system weakened. With industrialization and urbanization, social values changed and extended families and community members were dispersed. The traditional system was no longer guarding norms and social control, and new social problems began to emerge (Apt & Blavo 1997:320f; Kreitzer et al 2009:146).

To address the new social problems that emerged in Ghana with colonialism, colonial powers introduced British social work and the British welfare system. Western social work[1] was at the time believed to be universal and applicable all over the world (Asamoah 1997; Midgley 1981; Osei-Hwedie 1993). Ghanaian personnel, who performed the newly introduced Western profession, were sent to train in the UK. They later returned to work at social welfare institutions in Ghana, upholding Western structures and ideas that the colonial powers had introduced. This was the start of Western dominance in Ghanaian social work (Apt & Blavo 1997:320f; Kreitzer et al 2009:146).

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[1] By 'Western social work' I refer to social work as it is generally practiced in North America and Western Europe. It is to be noted that 'Western' and 'African' social work are neither exclusive nor homogenous.

In the 1940s, a school of social work was established in Ghana. Its objective was to train social workers in Ghana rather than in the UK. As national training expanded, social work became an academic discipline. Since 1956, social work courses have been offered at higher levels at the University of Ghana (Apt & Blavo 1997:328; Midgley 1981:63). However, research shows that the Western hegemony was maintained in Ghanaian social work education, and that it still prevails. According to Kreitzler et al (2009:154) Western knowledge is regarded as superior, and Western literature is used in classes. Traditional Ghanaian ways of handling social problems are not included in the curriculum. Instead, Western practices, values, and ideas are taught. Thus, as a result of the introduction of Western social work and welfare models in Ghana, Western professional social work and the traditional African system became two parallel systems.

1.1 Problem Description

Today these two parallel systems operate in Ghana. Despite the fact that social work exist as a formal profession, the traditional system still plays an important role in the society. Traditional actors[2], the people who comprise the traditional system, and professional social workers do a similar type of work in handling social issues. Services that traditional actors render are in Western societies mainly performed by professionals and welfare institutions. An example of this is the important role that the extended family plays when it comes to caring for and protecting the vulnerable in the society. It assists family members in need, gives advice, renders emotional and moral support in times of trouble as well as financial and material support. Chiefs continue to have political influence and guard traditional culture and customary law (Nukunya 2003:161f, 178). So, what does it mean to professional social work that there are two parallel systems performing similar work? How do social workers handle the parallel systems? The coexistence of these systems and the Western dominance in professional social work in Ghana is departure point for this study.

A collateral departure point for this study is an existing void in research on social work in Africa. Since the 1970s, research has centered on the critique of the Western hegemony and the presence of imported Western welfare systems and social work in Africa. Researchers have agreed that Western social work is not compatible with the African reality, pointing at the

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[2] The traditional system and its actors and practices are presented further in Chapter Two.

difficulties of using Western theories and practices to address social problems in Africa. It is said that social work needs to be localized, (Asamoah 1997, Apt & Blavo 1997, Kreitzler et al. 2009, Midgley 1981, Osei-Hwedie 1993) that is, be made "relevant to the social realities of local contexts" (Bradshaw & Graham 2007:93). Thus, problematic aspects of non-localized, Western social work in Africa are well-known, but researchers have pointed out a need to enrich the body of knowledge on social work localization, especially in regards to how traditional actors and practices may be involved in professional social work (ibid 2007:92, 103). Little existing research focuses on how African social workers actually make work relevant to local context on a day-to-day level. Furthermore, no research has thus far examined how traditional actors and practices are considered by professional social workers when they plan social work interventions. This work contributes to such knowledge.

The Relevance of Studying Ghanaian Social Work Education

This study concerns social work in Ghana. It does not focus on social work practice but on social work education, more specifically on the education at the Department of Social Work at the University of Ghana. By studying education instead of practice, this study is not limited to a specific social problem or to a specific type of organization. In addition, although it does not show actual behaviour and actions in practice, education influences practice (Payne 2006:55f). Furthermore, data gathered from education reflects values, notions, and truths of social work. Informants' accounts do not only provide information about a phenomenon, but also reveal perspectives (Hammersly & Atkinson 1995:124).

To examine how traditional actors and practices are considered in Ghanaian social work education is relevant not only to Africa and Ghana, but also to Sweden. To develop and refine professional social work, Swedish social workers may want to acknowledge other ways of handling social problems than those currently provided by formal Swedish social welfare institutions. By looking at Ghana and how the practices of traditional actors may be involved in professional social work, Swedish social workers can obtain a deeper understanding of social work in a multicultural society, see new perspectives, and make new interpretations of social work.

1.2 Objective of Study

The over-all research objective is to investigate if and how traditional actors and practices are taken into account in contemporary professional social work in Ghana. The issue is investigated from a perspective of social work education, by looking not only at how traditional actors and practices are presented at lectures and in course outlines at the Department of Social Work, but also at how students and teachers talk about traditional actors, practices and professional social workers, as well as how they take traditional actors and practices into account when they reason out social work interventions.

The following questions are examined:

- Do students and teachers consider traditional actors to be participants in the social work field, and if so, how do they talk about professional social workers and traditional actors?

- How do students and teachers take traditional actors and practices into account when reasoning out social work interventions?

- What rationales do students and teachers provide for taking traditional actors and practices into account when reasoning out social work interventions?

1.3 Limitations of Scope

This study is conducted at University of Ghana. It investigates the University's social work education and the way in which social work teachers and students discuss how they would take traditional actors and practices into account if conducting social work interventions in the field. The study does not include practicing social workers and it therefore does not suggest how traditional actors and practice are actually taken into account in social work practice. Furthermore, the study is based only on the view of social work teachers and students. Views and opinions of traditional actors are not included. The interventions of focus in the study are mainly casework interventions. Community work and developmental aspects of social work are only briefly included in the study.

1.4 Concepts and Definitions

Localization

The localization of social work refers to the process whereby social work is made relevant to the social realities of a local context (Bradshaw & Graham 2007:93). Bradshaw and Graham (2007:93) build on Walton and Abo-El-Nasr's (1988) ideas when they further define social work localization as "the pattern of social work education, practice, research, and/or social service delivery that is adopted or adapted from one culture to another". Cultural, social, political and religious contexts affect the definition of social problems and their solutions, which is why modifications must be made when transferring social work between cultures (Walton & Abo-El-Nasr 1988:135f).

The concept of indigenisation is in the literature often used interchangeably with localization. Like Bradshaw and Graham (2007:93), I do not use the concept of indigenisation, as different researchers apply it differently, and as it gives connotations to work with indigenous people, with which this study is not concerned.

Traditional Actors and Practices

The traditional Ghanaian system was a kinship-based system including extended family members and different traditional authorities (Kreitzler et al. 2009:146). In this thesis, I use traditional actors and traditionalists as collective titles to describe the people – family members, leaders and authorities – included in the traditional system. In the literature, there is no uniform way to name these family members and leaders. They are referred to either by their respective titles or as the traditional system. Nor was a uniform name used during my time in the field. Ways to refer to these people were by the person's respective title, as traditionalists or the traditional system. In this study, I do not use traditional system as it, as a concept, includes more than only actors in the system. For stylistic reasons I do not refer to the actors by each person's respective title.

In this thesis, traditional *practices* refer to activities carried out by traditional actors when they, as part of the traditional system, handle social issues. It is not, as in some literature, confined to denoting specific traditional rituals such as widowhood rites or female circumcision. The traditional system and its actors and practices are discussed further in Chapter Two.

Professional Social Work

In this study, professional social work refers to social work in Ghana – both education and practice.[3] That is, social work as taught at the University of Ghana and other formal educational institutions and social work as performed by professional social workers trained at a university or equivalent. Defining social work has always been controversial as it is a dynamic and non-uniform profession (e.g. Askeland & Payne 2008; Rowlings 1997:113). There is no exclusive or consistent way to define Ghanaian social work, just like there is non for Western social work, and variations exist within Ghanaian social work. Yet, professional social work in Ghana is often described as a combination of imported Western social work and pre-colonial traditional African systems (Asamoah 1997; Midgley 1981). This, together with the definition of GASOW, Ghana Association of Social Workers, here defines professional social work.

> Social work is a profession concerned with helping individuals, families, groups and communities to enhance their individual and collective well-being. It aims to help people develop their skills and their ability to use their own resources and those of the community to resolve problems. Social work is concerned with individual and personal problems but also with broader social issues such as poverty, unemployment and domestic violence (GASOW 2010).

Further, in this study, the term social work serves to distinguish professional social work from work of traditional actors. Social work does not include work of traditional actors, as this is how the term was used by my informants in the field. In addition, social work serves to distinguish Ghanaian social work from Western social work. In the thesis, professional social work refers to professional Ghanaian social work. When professional Western social work is discussed, the word 'Western' is included. Professional social work and social work are used interchangeably. Formal interview informants (booked interviews where an interview guide is used) are being referred to as social workers rather than as students and teachers at the Social Work Department. The reason for this is stylistic. This might give the impression that I discuss social work practitioners and social work practice as it is performed. As mentioned in the section on the limitations of scope, this is not the case.

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[3] There are different ways of categorizing professional social work. Common in Sweden is to distinguish social work practice from social work education and social work research (e.g. Berglind 1983; Soydan 1993). Payne (2006) sees social work as a three-way discourse where three views on social work connect with political view about welfare. International Federation of Social Workers instead describes social work as a system of values, theory and practice (IFSW 2010).

Western Social Work

In this study, Western, or imported, social work refers to social work as it is practiced and taught in the West. Also Western social work is problematic to define. There is no consistent definition of Western social work, and it is important to note that variations exist within Western social work as large as those between Western and Ghanaian.[4] However, Western social work is often described as having an individualist approach where the psychoanalytic heritage is visible and where case work is a major part of practice (Leighninger & Midgley 1997:11; Rowlings 1997:114). This is in contrast to most African social work. The mentioned factors, combined with IFSW, the International Federation of Social Workers', definition on international social work, define Western social work in this study.

> The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilising theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work (IFSW 2010).

Western, the West and the Global South

In literature about international social work, there are different ways of referring to the collective of countries formerly called First and Third world countries. Examples include Global North and Global South, Developing countries, Less and Least Developing countries or Western and non-Western countries (e.g. Askeland & Payne 2008; Bradshaw & Graham 2007). In this study, the West and Global South are applied. To be noted is that the West and Global South are dynamic and non-exclusive entities, with diversity within them.

In this study, Western countries or the West refers to countries in Western Europe and North America. That is, economically developed countries in the global North whose culture originates from European and North American models (Askeland & Payne 2008). Western or the West is used since it was used by informants in the field, and since it is used in most research about social work in Africa (e.g. Asamoah 1997; Apt & Blavo 1997; Kreitzler et al. 2009; Midgley 1981; Osei-Hwedie 1993). I do not use non-Western, as the prefix 'non' place

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[4] The question on whether social work shares a common professional identity all over the world has been widely debated and many different definitions of social work exist. For literature about international social work and social work identity see e.g. Cox & Pawar (2006); Mayadas, Watts & Elliot (1997); Payne (2006); Askeland & Payne (2008).

other countries in relation to the West and contributes to the othering of non-Western countries. The Global South is a more inclusive term, and the one used in this study. Global South refers to the poorer countries in the Global South, often former Western colonies. Global South does not include rich countries in the Southern hemisphere with a largely European and North American cultural origin, for example Australia (Askeland & Payne 2008).

1.5 Previous Research

In this section, the introduction's discussion of previous research is expanded. Presented research concerns post-colonial Africa, and the coexistence of, or clash between, Western and African values, theories and practices that followed colonialism. The coexistence of Western and African values and practices has been a focus of various disciplines such as anthropology, medical anthropology, social work, ethnic studies, and sociology (e.g. Anyiam 1987; Camaroff & Camaroff 1993; Ekholm-Freidman 1994; Evans-Pritchard & Fortes 1940; Goody 1957, 1977; Radcliff-Brown 1940; Twumasi 1979). Previous research on *social work* and the coexistence of Western and African values and practices centres on critique of the use of Western models and ideas in Africa. Research also emphasizes a need for localization and culturally appropriate social work. Among the most important works on this issue is *Professional Imperialism: Social Work in the Third World* (Midgley 1981). Other important research is for example Asamoah 1997; Apt & Blavo 1997; Bradshaw & Graham 2007; Kreitzer et al 2009; and Osei-Hwedie 1993.

There seems to be a recent decline in publications on African social work, localization and the coexistence of African and Western values and practices. Also international publications on the issue have diminished. Bradshaw & Graham (2007) did in a study analyse international social work abstracts in English from 1997 to 2004, focusing on localization and social work with indigenous groups. They divide the abstracts into three major themes: social and health problems, need for cultural sensitivity and adaptation, and colonization and its impact. Looking at research regarding cultural sensitivity and adaptation, as well as colonization and its impact, the numbers of published studies in 2004 was half the numbers published in each year of the late 1970s through the 1980s. Bradshaw and Graham (2007:93-101) also found that most research focused on the situation for indigenous groups in North America and Canada. Only 3% of publications examined focused on 'other countries' among which a few African were included.

Bradshaw and Graham (2007:102) states that "there is a small but important segment of the literature" in their study which features new ways of interpreting social work and focuses on how traditional practices may be incorporated in and contribute to professional social work. They further say that findings from this research suggest that traditional practices and rituals may be a resource in social work and that there is a need for further research on how extended families and communities can be incorporated in professional social work practice.

One study that includes traditional actors and professional social work is Linda Kreitzler's[5] et al (2009) study on social work education and training in Ghana. Although the question regarding incorporation of traditional actors in social work is a secondary matter in their research, their study seems to be the only published study on social work and social work education in Africa acknowledging the issue. In 2002 and 2003, Kreitzler et al (2009) conducted a one-year research project in the Department of Social Work at University of Ghana on how education and curriculums may be revised to be more culturally appropriate. The study states that students in the project feel they are losing their history and tradition. They have no knowledge about, or access to, African literature and research. In addition, the project raises questions about whether or not it is realistic or favourable to involve traditional actors and practices in social work, and about who should decide what cultural aspects should be considered in practice. Kreitzler's et al (2009) research recommendations are that the Department of Social Work and traditional authorities should collaborate to investigate how localized systems may be integrated in social work practice. How and if this recommendation has been put into practice is not mentioned in the study.

Thus, there is little research on social work localization and how social workers actually make work relevant to local conditions on a day-to-day level. Few studies focus on behaviour and actions in practice and even fewer studies focus on practice in Africa. I therefore use additional research on social work from countries outside Africa to highlight the most important aspects of my study.

Al-Krenawi & Graham's (2001) study focuses on how social workers in Israel include traditional Arabic practices in their everyday work. The researchers analyse the incorporation of cultural mediators, a cultural pre-social work tradition, in professional social work. The cultural mediators are interesting since their function seems to be similar to that of Ghanaian

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[5] Linda Kreitzler was a social work lecturer and researcher at University of Ghana from 1994-96 (Kreitzler et al 2009).

social workers. The cultural mediator brings professional social workers trained in Israeli universities, and members of a non-Western[6] Arabic community, together by his or her mediating skills. The project highlights two diverse canons: the professional and the cultural, where norms, values, and practices differ. When the social worker finds him-/ herself in a dilemma between the professional and cultural canon, he or she can meet with the cultural mediators to together develop intervention strategies and goals. The project concludes that traditional and social work approaches can be integrated successfully and promote the profession of social work.

Jayashree Nimmagadda and Charles D. Cowger's (1999) study of Indian social workers in an alcohol treatment centre investigates how motives and meanings guided practice behaviour and the social workers' actions. The study is interesting not only as it, like my study, investigates social workers' rationales, but also because Indian social work is Western-influenced (ibid 1999:263). Nimmagadda and Cowger's (1999) study highlights how cultural rationales and localized practice in the Global South can conflict with (Western) social work. It also shows how social workers adapt their social work-specific knowledge to local conditions, and how they use both cultural and work-specific knowledge to carry out their interventions in a way that works. The researchers found that cultural motives are predominant as directives for practice, even when they conflict with (Western) social work values. The Indian social workers render services like giving advice and reassurance because they consider it culturally appropriate and because "it works" (ibid 1999:268) in a local context. Some of the interventions were not congruent with Western models of practice, which caused a certain level of ambivalence among the social workers in relation to their work.

1.6 Organization of Thesis

In this chapter, I have given an introduction to the research problem, and presented concepts and previous research. Limitations of scope have been emphasized, as these affect the study.

Chapter Two provides background to the study. I here present the traditional social system, and how 'social work issues' were handled in Ghana before colonialism and the introduction of social work as a formal profession. The chapter also gives an overview of contemporary professional social work and social work education in Ghana.

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[6] The researchers' definition and use of the concept.

Chapter Three concerns methodology. Fieldwork as methodological *process* is described and discussed, as well as the analytical process and how different data is used in the analysis. In this chapter I give reasons for methodological choices, including choices regarding limitations of scope.

In Chapter Four I present theoretical perspective and analytical tools, and I relate the analytical framework to the focus of this study.

Chapter Five presents an analysis of how students and teacher talk about professional social workers and traditional actors. A reconstruction of the structure of the social work field is made, based on their accounts. This chapter serves as background to the subsequent analysis, as it provides the reader with information needed to understand the analysis in following chapter.

Chapter Six analyses how students and teachers take traditional actors and practices into account when reasoning out social work interventions, as well as the rationales they provide for doing so. The chapter starts with a presentation of how work is divided and organized, which is followed by an analysis of rationales, where three models of explanation derived from the empirical findings are presented. The chapter finishes by suggesting that the students and teachers primary reason for taking traditional actors into account in interventions is that social workers need to stay on good terms with traditional actors in order to gain ground in the larger social world of social work.

2. From Traditional System to Professional Social Work

2.1 The Traditional Ghanaian System

In order to understand social work in Ghana today, it is necessary to have knowledge about the traditional system and to understand how colonization, urbanization and industrialization made way for social work as a formal occupation in Africa. When talking about changing societies, it is important to hold in mind that neither pre-colonial nor contemporary Ghana are static systems. Even though colonialism brought foreign influences and involved drastic social change, change was an aspect also of pre-colonial Africa (Nukunya 2003:3-14, 109-112).

Today, Ghana is a democratic republic in West Africa; it borders Cote d´Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Togo and Gulf of Guinea. The population is estimated to be 23 million people, about 3 million of whom live in the capital of Accra. In 1821, Ghana became a British colony and in 1957 it was the first African country to gain independence. Historically, Ghana was a heterogeneous society; before colonization, the territory that today constitutes Ghana was comprised of four separate regions in which different tribes[7] lived and spoke diverse languages (US Department of State 2009). Ghana is still today a heterogeneous society. A number of tribes coexist, each with their own culture. Several local languages are spoken besides English, which is the official language.

Kinship and Family System

The behaviours and practices of relatives and family members as well as the principles ruling these, are usually referred to as the extended family system or the kinship system. In pre-colonial Ghana, *kinship* was the basis of social life, determining almost everything in the society. It organized groups and relationships and established property relations, political relations, economic and legal obligations, religious practices, social status and roles, etiquette and norms, rules, and duties and obligations (Nukunya 2003:17-40). *The extended family* was the most common form of family organization within the kinship, and remains so today. As opposed to a nuclear family – consisting of two parents with their children – the extended

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[7] A tribe is a group of people with the same language and culture (Nukunya 2003:211)

family is constituted by a large number of relatives who have far-reaching reciprocal duties, obligations and responsibilities. The family assists its members in need, renders emotional and moral as well as financial and material support. The duties of the extended family are a lifelong daily commitment. Each person is brought up to see him/herself primary as a member of a family and lineage[8] and is expected to honour family ties, share what he or she has with the other members, and contribute to family survival. The children's socialization and upbringing is an obligation of the whole extended family. A central factor in socialization is the responsibility of adults to serve as role-models for children, while children are taught to respect and obey elders. Thus, responsibilities of both adults and children help to establish and maintain social order. As adults, children have a wide-ranging responsibility to care for their aged parents. (Gyekye 2003:75-92; Nukunya 2003:49-52).

Political and Judicial System

It is important to understand that in pre-colonial Africa political, judicial and religious functions were closely interwoven. To use today's distinction of these functions is somehow misleading, since in pre-colonial days they were all constituents of one single system. This system and its organization was built on kinship and lineage. Tasks, obligations, authority and executive power were determined by a person's position in the kinship (Evans-Pritchard & Fortes 1940; Goody 1957; Nukunya 2003; Radcliffe-Brown 1940). This is different from societies built on formal institutions where peoples' positions are separated from their position in kinship or private life.

Traditional African political systems are often categorized as either centralized or segmentary (non-centralized). In Ghana, both centralized and segmentary systems existed. Centralized systems were the most common and large tribes like Akan's, Ewe's and Ga's in the southern parts of the country had a centralized system (Nukunya 2003:67). That the centralized system was the most common can be noticed today. When speaking about the traditional system, most people in Ghana today seem to refer to a centralized one; so I will follow this nomenclature in this study. The distinction of centralized and segmentary societies is not central for the understanding of this study. However, I describe them separately not only because this is

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[8] Linage is a descend group found in one locality. Linage members have a genealogical tie originating from one known common ancestor. This is to be contrasted with a clan, a large group whose descend and ancestor is not clearly known (Nukunya 2003:19f).

customary in research on traditional African systems, but also because the tribes my informants belong to represent both types of societies.

Centralized societies had a centralized authority, administrative machinery and judicial institutions. The system was hierarchical in its order. In the centralized society the *chief*, or the king, was the highest authority. The chief's office was a single office and his duties and rights covered all aspects of the society. He was the head of the society's constituent parts; executive head, legislator, judge, supreme ritual head and chief priest (Radcliffe-Brown 1940:xxi). Below the chief, levels of authority were the queenmother, division, town, village, lineage, compound and lastly, the household as smallest unit. If needed, a case could move all the way from the household to the chief. The person right below the chief was the queenmother who was responsible for the women in the chiefdom. Every decision the chief made was required to be discussed with and agreed upon by the queenmother and the counsellors – the lineage heads and elders (Nukunya 2003:67).

The segmentary society had no centralized authority and was formed by local kinship constituted groups. Social control was based on the norms of the lineage and ties of kinship, common allies, and the complementary roles were factors keeping order and peace. The largest political unit was the lineages and the smallest was the family unit. The lineages had leaders at every segmentary process with the lineage head as at the highest position (Evans-Pritchard & Fortes 1940:5f; Goody 1957: 79-81, 98-103).

Thus, both centralized and segmentary societies were holistic systems where all parts of the society were interdependent. The interdependence and the holistic nature of the society were altered when colonial rule replaced the traditional system with those colonists brought from the West. This led to extensive alterations in the societal system and its order.

2.2 The Transition from Traditional System to Formal Institutions

The year 1900 is often regarded as the baseline for social change in Africa (Nukunya 2003:109). Around 1900, the colonial rule started to have influence on societal institutions in Africa. The introduction of formal institutions, formal classroom education, currency-based economy and Christianity were factors that greatly contributed to this change.

The establishment of formal institutions such as government and courts of law, made the chiefs lose their power as government and judge. Other parts of the traditional system including family heads, lineage heads, and elders of the decent group were also weakened. As the traditional system weakened, functions and positions it guided were altered. Norms and authorities depending on functions and positions in the traditional system lost their importance. In addition, the replacement of chiefs' courts with courts of law altered the traditional way of sanctioning norm violations. Christianity, which sometimes conflicted with traditional rites and customs, also made people turn away from their traditional beliefs. People were no longer guided by traditional rites, roles or norms, and they did not have to fear sanctioning from the traditional authorities (ibid 2003:113-116).

Roles and positions were further altered by the introduction of formal classroom education (ibid 2003:134-140). Education changed people's perspectives and outlook on the world. It made the European lifestyle fashionable, while simultaneously enforcing individualism and weakening the traditional structures, authorities and kin solidarity. This had consequences for family and the socialization process. Children were brought up by teachers instead of family members. Traditionally, children learned from the elders. Instead, the young and literate were now consulted and gave advice. This gave them a higher position in the lineage hierarchy – hence balance and relations between generations were disturbed. Apparently, this led to discipline problems and the dissociation of traditional obligations and duties within the linage.

With alterations in the kinship system, the extended family started to weaken and give way to the nuclear family. In combination with urbanization, currency-based structure and the fact that education could provide individuals with work and salary and thus independence, the importance of the traditional system diminished. The interplay of all these factors made social change far-reaching and profound.

2.3 Professional Social Work and Social Work Education in Ghana Today

New social problems appeared with the erosion of traditional support system structures. It was in this context the colonial powers introduced Western social work in Ghana, to help solve

problems that societal change generated.[9] In this section, professional social work in Ghana is described, starting with a historical outline.

As the traditional support system weakened, social help and support was no longer the issue of only traditional actors. Instead it became organized social work activities attached to the central government. In 1940, social work received official status as it was incorporated under the Colonial Development Act of 1940 (Apt & Blavo 1997:320). Many Ghanaians travelled to the UK to be trained as social workers. When they finished with their education, they returned to Ghana to work (Kreitzler 2009:146). Still today Ghanaian social workers go abroad to study to later return and work in Ghana.

Social Work Education

In 1946, the Department of Social Welfare and Housing was established in Ghana. Short after, one of the first African institutions for the training of social workers – The School of Social Work, Osu – was founded in Accra. Today, it offers a two-year sub-degree diploma programme in social work. Teachers are practicing social workers who work at the Department of Social Welfare (Apt & Blavo 1997:328; Laird 2008:388). The School of Social Work is one of many national institutions which train social workers. Perhaps most well known is the University of Ghana, founded in 1948. It is the largest and oldest university in Ghana with a current student population of nearly 30 000 students (University of Ghana 2010). English is the official language. The University campus is located outside the capital Accra.

The Department of Social Work at the University of Ghana holds a four year (Level 100-400[10]) Bachelor Programme in social work, established in 1987, and a Master's programme established in 2003. Students at Level 100 start with four different subjects, and each year they drop one subject. In Level 400 they do a whole year focusing on one subject, their Major. Social work students do two periods of fieldwork; long vacation fieldwork is done at Level 300 and concurrent fieldwork is done at Level 400. According to my informants, the department chooses what courses to offer. Every teacher writes the course outline for his/her class and submits it to the Head of Department who approves it. There is a National Accreditation Board

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[9] There were social problems in Ghana before the advent of the colonialism but there is no literature describing whether the 'classical Western modern social problems' like homelessness, addiction, etc. were issues before colonialism, or whether they were defined as problematic or deviant. The definition of what a social problem is, of course, likely to vary depending on time and location.

[10] The use of 'levels' is central among the students when talking about the education and life on campus. Level guides the students' positions on campus, in halls as well as access to rooms on campus. The students often referred to their level when introducing themselves to me.

to check standards on university at every department. The Department of Social Work received a good record on its last check. During my fieldwork 12 staff were employed, including the Head of Department, and approximately 800 students were enrolled at the Department.

Social Work Practice

Social workers in Ghana are employed in public, private, and voluntary organizations (University of Ghana n.d). Areas where social workers work include child welfare, youth welfare, family welfare, rehabilitation service, disaster relief, the welfare of destitute and community development (Apt & Blavo 1997:321-326). The governmental body responsible for social welfare issues is the Department of Social Welfare under the Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare (Government of Ghana 2010). There is no unifying judicial framework which guides the work of Ghanaian social workers. However, existing important judicial directives comprise chapter five of the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana – "Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms" (Republic of Ghana 2005). For example child labour is regulated here. Amendments to the constitution include, for example, the Domestic Violence Act (2007) and the Children's Act (1998).

CHRAJ and DOVVSU are, to social work, central governmental bodies which during my fieldwork were frequently mentioned. CHRAJ, the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice, was established in 1993. It exists "to enhance the scale of good governance, democracy, integrity, peace and social development by promoting, protecting and enforcing fundamental human rights and freedoms and administrative justice for all persons in Ghana" (CHRAJ 2010). DOVVSU, Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit was established in 1998. It is a unit under Ghana's Police Service with the objective "to prevent, protect, apprehend and prosecute perpetrators of domestic violence and child abuse" (Ghana Police Service 2010). Social workers can file complaints at both CHRAJ and DOVVSU.

GASOW, Ghana Association of Social Workers, was established in 1971 and works to develop, strengthen and unify the social work profession in Ghana (GASOW 2010). The association is a registered professional association affiliated with International Federation of Social Workers and is open for full membership for those who have completed at least Diploma in social work (ibid). During my fieldwork, informants described GASOW to be a fading organization and its function and role in Ghanaian social work today is not clear.

3. Methodology

In this chapter, methods and mode of procedure in the field are presented, and epistemological, ontological and methodological concerns that guided organization of, and decisions during, fieldwork are discussed. The chapter is constructed in such a way as to bring into light the *process* of conducted field work. At some points in the chapter, results gained primarily from initial participant observations are presented. This is done in order to motivate and make sense of following procedures in the field. I will also discuss implications and problems that arose in the field, including issues of reliability, validity and generalization which will be interpreted according to Kvale's (1997) postmodern perspective.[11] Following the custom in ethnographic studies (Spradley 1979:32), *informants* refers to all people in the field who contributed to my knowledge about focus of my study, including people who were involved in formal interviews, informal interviews, observations and everyday talk. Formal interview refers to pre-booked interviews where an interview guide is used. Informal interviews refer to spontaneous and non-formalized interviews with people in the field.

3.1 A Hermeneutic Approach and Social Constructionism

Choice of method has to be related to the problem investigated (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008:18). The flexibility of a qualitative approach combined with fieldwork is necessary to answer my research questions. The qualitative approach has traditionally been criticized for being too subjective, difficult to replicate and problematic to generalize (Bryman 2004:284f), but as Alvesson and Sköldberg (2008:18) states, these aspects are not always relevant or productive for research. Each method has to be applied from its own characteristics and in line with epistemological and ontological standpoints. Further, the study has a hermeneutic approach, as understanding, interpretation and meaning are central in the problem formulated. The hermeneutic approach recognizes contextual knowledge as central for understanding (Gilje & Grimen 2007:171-185).

Social constructionism as interpreted by Berger and Luckmann (1966) in their work *The Social Construction of Reality* is applied in this study. Central features in Berger and Luckmann's

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[11] There are other ways than Kvale's to interpret validity, reliability and generalization. Some qualitative researchers simply ignore it, claiming it belongs to a positivistic view on research. Others, like e.g. Lincoln & Guba (1985) apply their own concepts.

work are common-sense knowledge, constructions as conscious and unconscious, dialectic and institutionalised. Social constructionism is in this study both epistemology and sociological theory. That is, knowledge is seen as socially constructed, but social constructionism also serves as analytical tools that help us understand social phenomena – further presented in Chapter Four. Social constructionism has been criticized in many ways. It can be reduced to a theory-less approach unable to leave the individual level. With social constructionism as ontology, the social reality can be seen as construction only, invented by the viewer and without essence (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008:104f). Berger and Luckmann (1966) recognize the existence of an objective reality which may be translated into subjective reality and vice versa. Actor and structure are in a dialectical process. It is according to their interpretation that social constructionism is applied in this study.

Preconceived notions

A hermeneutic approach regards preconceived notions as necessary factors for comprehension, as they reveal the approach and perspective of the study (Gilje & Grimen 2007:179). Preconceived notions are in this study seen as a lens for understanding how interpretations, choices and focus of study are results of the researcher's social and political position. My social position as a white, middle class woman studying social work at a Swedish university affects decisions and interpretations through the course of the study. I also carry a political agenda as I want to challenge discourses within Swedish social work. The choice of topic reveals an emancipatory interest, an expression of a will to challenge existing power relations and to show how Europe can learn from Africa. In addition to being a part of a political agenda, it is scientifically motivated to make research from an often neglected perspective (Eliasson 1995:30, 117). Seeing validation from a postmodern perspective, the political agenda I carry may be compared to pragmatic validation. A pragmatic validation requires acting upon interpretations and emphasizes how generated knowledge should result in change (Kvale 1997:224-227).

Pragmatic validity can be compared to Kvale's interpretation of generalization, applied in this study. According to Kvale (1997:209-212), generalization implicate that participants in the study are served by their participation and knowledge they gained through participation. A disadvantage of wanting a study to benefit those it involves is that critique might be softened. In this study, this issue is accentuated as Ghana is a country where it is inappropriate to criticize and question authorities (Kreitzler et al 2009:151). Furthermore, it is hard to be critical to the

Department of Social Work or people who enabled the study. That being said, there is no major critique that I consciously left out.

3.2 Selection of Setting

To select a setting for a study is often guided by what is appropriate for the research problem (Hammersly & Atkinsson 1995:37f). The research problem of this study is relevant to the entire social work field. Due to this, social work education, not practice, is investigated. To study practice would mean to limit the study to a specific section of social work (children, disabled, etc.) or to a specific type of organization (governmental or NGO). In addition, education affects practice. Knowledge, skills and values from academic learning are generally used when interventions are conducted (Payne 2006:55f). By studying education it is thus possible to get an indication, or view, of practice. Yet, it is to be noted that my informants' accounts are examined not only as sources of information, but also as revealing perspectives. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:124ff) see these two ways as equally important. Methodological issues regarding this are further discussed in section 3.5. Finally, selecting setting is a pragmatic decision (ibid 1995:37f). Conducting my study in a small and defined area such as a department at a university facilitated data gathering and the handling of complex empirical findings. Choice of country was also a pragmatic decision. Ghanaian social work has a comparatively long tradition as an academic discipline (Midgley 1981:63) and, as opposed to other African countries, there is research and overviews on social work and social work education in Ghana. This made preparations for fieldwork easier as I had access to information before arriving. The study was conducted at the University of Ghana as a former teacher of mine had established an exchange project there. This made it possible for me to get in contact with Dr. Rose Walls, who served as field supervisor during the study.

3.3 Fieldwork at the Department

Fieldwork in Ghana was conducted between January 26 and April 2, 2010 in the Department of Social Work at University of Ghana, Legon. This was my first visit in Sub-Saharan Africa. During fieldwork I resided on campus at the International Students' Hostel which meant I was able to take part in everyday student life.

During the first month of fieldwork, I tried to get a broad understanding of Ghana in general, and the social welfare system, political system and social work profession in particular, all of

which are important in ethnological research (Spradley 1979:69-77). I talked to various people; students and teachers from different departments and levels, people I made friends with, staff at the Department of Social Welfare and staff at the School of Social Work in Osu. The talks included what Spradley (1979:55-58) calls friendly conversations and informal interviews. I also participated in local activities with students and friends I made outside campus. During the first three weeks I wrote detailed field notes of my everyday life, but as I learnt more and things were not as new to me anymore, field notes became shorter. I also collected various documents which would help me obtain a contextual understanding of the object of study – course outlines, information sheets, the foreign students' hand-book, laws and acts, and time-tables. As is customary in fieldwork, (ibid 1979:69-77) my focus was narrowed after discovering the importance of certain institutions and practices in the field.

Access to the Field

Dr. Rose Walls is an American social worker and lecturer who has taught formally in the Department of Social Work at University of Ghana since 2004. During fieldwork, Dr. Walls was my supervisor and gatekeeper. A gatekeeper is a key person who is influential in the field and has the authority to open up or refuse access (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995:63-67). Dr. Walls introduced me to the Department, to Ghanaian social work profession and to Ghanaian everyday life. She gave me hands-on help and cultural knowledge.[12] I met her for supervision every week, which gave me an opportunity to, on a regular basis, check my plans for the study and data gathering, discuss ethical issues or just chat about social work.

Gatekeepers often have interest in and influence on a study (ibid 1995:66). Dr. Rose Walls was the person who provided me with initial information about the field. Since she, like me, is a foreigner, it was easy for me to understand and be influenced by her thoughts. I am therefore concerned with how her opinions influence my interpretations. With this in mind, I have made an effort to weigh and test her information and opinions against that of other people. A further aspect to consider is that her presence may also have closed doors, just as it opened others. Presumably she had an effect on the way my research was directed, its focus and mode of procedure, although it is hard to say in what ways.

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[12] She gave me access to the department by explaining practical arrangements that were necessary for me to consider, e.g. writing an introduction letter to teachers signed by the Head of Department (Attachment A).

Participant Observation

Along with my efforts to get a broad understanding of the field of study, I started to learn more about the Department of Social Work. From January 29 to February 19 I attended 15 lectures at Bachelor and Master's classes. Out of the 15 lectures, I attended five at Level 400. There were various reasons for this. Since the students at Level 400 had done both long vacation and concurrent fieldwork, and thus had experience from social work practice, it was fruitful to conduct formal interviews with them (cf. Hammersly & Atkinsson 1995:37f). Therefore, I wanted to be someone familiar to them to make a possible interview situation more relaxed. In addition, the choice was a pragmatic one, which also is common in fieldwork (ibid 1995:37f). Dr. Rose Walls taught core subjects at Level 400 and granted me easy access to students as she formally introduced me to the class.

Friendly conversations during participant observations are often used to gather data (Spradley 1979:58). Thus, in conjunction with attending various lectures, I had friendly conversations with students and tried to participate during interactive classes. The reason I attended lectures was to find out if traditional actors and practices was an issue brought up during classes, but also to gain an understanding of what social work education at University of Ghana was about. To in this way get a deeper understanding of context enriches understanding of the studied issue, as well as it can enhance quality of interviews (Kvale 1997:25-59). In my case, it also gave me enough understanding to be able to design an interview guide.

By mid February I started to get an understanding of what lectures were like. The issue of taking traditional actors and practices into account in professional social work had not come up, except in Dr. Walls' classes where the existence of the two systems, social work and traditional system, was mentioned. Although Western theories and ideas were predominant during classes, I heard no problematising of or comments on the Western impact in African social work. The application of theories and methods in the field was not mentioned.[13] As this was the case in all lecturers I had attended, it was not fruitful to continue observations. When data gathering does not provide new information, it is time to stop (Kvale 1997:98). Nevertheless, activities often vary over time in ways that influence social research (Hammersly & Atkinsson 1995:46). There is the possibility that discussions of traditional actors or of the application of theories would

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[13] Kreitzler et al (2009:157) did in their study interpret this as an effect of the lecturer's foreign training. They thought foreign training made teachers incapable of relating classroom teaching to Ghanaian practice realities. I would like to add that my experience from social work education in Sweden is that integration of theory and practice always is problematic.

come up as the semester progressed – when the students had learnt theories. But as I was in the very beginning of the semester I had no time to wait and see. I initiated formal interviews to get more in-depth knowledge about the focus of study.

Formal Interviews

On February 19, I stood in front of about 200 Level 400 students at one of Dr. Wall's core lecturers, asking if anyone was interested in participating in an interview about social work education in Ghana. I also passed notes with information about the study and my contact information (Attachment B). Four students registered for interviews that same day, four called me later on and two were found through snowball sampling. All in all, during the period February 23 to March 25, I did 15 interviews with five female and five male Level 400 students, and four interviews with four teachers from the department. To book interviews with the teachers, I visited them in their offices and asked for their cooperation. No teacher declined to participate, but some of the teachers were not possible to meet in person. Therefore I also wrote an information letter and asked them to contact me to book an interview (Attachment F). One teacher did so. All students and teachers volunteered to participate.

Five students were born in rural settings and five in urban. They were all raised in Ghana, although one of them was born elsewhere. Seven tribes were represented. Four of the students were 30 years or older. Four of them had worked as a social worker or in a similar profession. Three of them had parents who had gone to university. All but one had chosen for themselves to study social work. To distinguish this type of categories is important if they are relevant to the emerging analysis (Hammersly & Atkinsson 1995:50). At the time, I was not sure that the categories would *not* be of relevance for my analysis, why I regarded the variety within the sampling group as important. During the process of analysis I did not find any differences in accounts depending on category. With respect to confidentiality and the small number of teachers in the Department, I do not provide more detailed information about the teachers who participated in the study. Like all teachers at the Department, those I interviewed had a BA in social work or a similar subject, and the lowest degree was MPhil or Master. Some had their degree from Ghana, and others from abroad.

The interviews with students and teachers took place at different places on campus. I used a tape recorder in all interviews and all informants were given a small token of appreciation – a

glass filled with candy and pencils.[14] I did two rounds of interviews with students. Both rounds included semi-structured interviews where I used an interview guide (Attachment D & E). The first round was constructed as a vignette study. Vignette studies are often used to study assessments and decision-making in social work practice (Jergeby 2007:3-15). I used a vignette I had designed (Attachment C) – a short case describing a course of events including characteristics central for assessments and decision-making – in combination with 'ordinary' interview questions. Knowledge gained during participant observations was central for determining what information to include when I designed the vignette. To see whether I interpreted the cultural context appropriately I let Dr. Walls comment the vignette before interviews. I then held her comments in mind while interpreting the results. The vignette was used as a 'trigger', that is, to start a discussion and get the informants to reflect on their work and how traditional actors are considered in professional practice. During two interviews I did not use the vignette, but did instead discuss the same issues in semi-structured interviews. This was done in order to see if the vignette influenced the students' reasoning, something which must be considered (ibid 2007:26f). The results did not differ in a way that had impact on the analysis. Vignette studies have been criticized for not being able capture the actual behaviour of the informants (ibid 2007:39). I discuss this issue in section 3.5. In the second round I did five 30 minutes follow-up interviews with five students. The selection of informants for the follow-ups was based on my perception of whether they seemed interested in the topic and if they were willing to do another interview. I did four 30 minutes semi-structured interviews with the teachers using an interview guide (Attachment G). They did not include the case.

Triangulation and the Hermeneutic Circle

Triangulation, the combination of methods, is often used to provide a more complete picture of the area of research. Moreover, interviews are often seen as a necessary supplement for understanding observed situations (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008:179; Eliasson 1995:12). I found it fruitful to let two methods complement and enhance each other. During interviews I tested knowledge gained during observations, and I let observations verify or confirm knowledge gained through interviews.

Interviews were conducted in a way so that one informant's words deepened the contents of the next interview. I tried to understand how the words of one informant were connected to other

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[14] I had learnt from Dr. Rose Walls and Kreitzler's et al (2009:150) study that in Ghana, it is culturally appropriate to give informants a token of appreciation.

informants' descriptions, and previous descriptions provided me with context and allowed me to make interpretations of contents of current interviews. This allowed for the interviews to build upon each other which provided me with richer and more informative descriptions. This way of altering between detail and wholeness is sometimes called *the hermeneutic circle* (Gilje & Grimen 2007:187-189). Social anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1983) argues that the hermeneutic circle is central for ethnographic interpretations and the understanding of other cultures. In this way I strived to – what Kvale (1997:214-221) calls – *communicatively validate* gained knowledge. I forced knowledge claims to be negotiated, tested, and over and over be seen in a new light, constantly moving between different informants' claims and between the specific and the general. Through communicative validity I also tested *reliability*. Reliability is often seen as complicated in qualitative research, referring to notions of knowledge as static and objective. If knowledge is instead seen as situational and personal, reliability may be seen as tested through communicative validity and negotiated knowledge (ibid 1997:65).

3.4 Language and Local Knowledge

Language is central in ethnographic studies as it is linked to local knowledge and understanding (Spradley 1979:17). Writing field notes and throughout the interviews I used words and phrases that the students and teachers themselves used in natural speech. I wanted to capture their reality in order to be able to make interpretations and understand meanings from a vantage point as close to their perspective as possible. This is central in ethnographic research (Geertz 1983:57; Gilje & Grimen 2007:176f; Spradley 1979:58f). I was, for example, careful not to use the words 'traditional' or 'traditional actors' before the students and teachers did so, as I wanted to discover their words and naming in order to interpret the meanings the words had to them. A part from this being an analytical choice, it was also an expression of an emancipative standpoint.

During the lectures I attended, teachers dictated and students wrote down what they said word-for-word. This facilitated my field note writing as I could transcribe verbatim. To avoid summarizing, in this way, increases the possibility of maintaining local meanings of words (Spradley 1979:71-73). During friendly conversations I also made an effort to use native language explanations – to encourage people to talk to me as they would talk to others in their cultural scene. I used ethnographic questions which include: descriptive (can you describe your activities at the Department?); structural, which relates to how the informants organize their

knowledge (what are the different activities of a social worker in Ghana?); and contrast questions (what is the difference between settling a dispute traditionally and in court?). Cultural ignorance can be a means to make people deepen their accounts (ibid 1979:58-68), something I frequently benefited from.

Sometimes I forgot to investigate whether the words the informants used had the same meaning to them as to me. For example, I discussed issues of 'client self-determination' without getting a feeling for whether the informants and I had a clear understanding of each other. When I discussed this with Dr. Walls, she said the obvious: "I think self-determination means something else to them than to you". I had not, with Spradley's (1979:19) words, acquired the ability to translate meanings of my culture into a form that was appropriate in theirs. But what I could say though, and the way I used the information, is that self-determination in Ghana is likely to mean something other than it usually means in Sweden.

3.5 The Process of Analysis

Analysing Field Notes and Documents

The major part of the analytical process concerning field notes and documents was done in the field, prior to interviews. In this study, documents serve as background information, except for course outlines which were analysed based on the research questions. Documents may, except for providing information about a phenomenon, also be interpreted as social products (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995:168). I started by analysing field notes and documents looking for themes related to the study's research problem. The data was ordered into categories, and the consistency between differed data sources was examined to find stable features. The results then served as guidance as I adjusted the research design for the next part of the study. I could for example not work on the supposition that traditional actors were taken in consideration in interventions, as they were not brought up during lectures.

Field notes and documents are not explicitly included in the final presentation of the analysis. Instead, they validate and contextualize data gained from interviews, allowing me to interpret the empirical findings in a way relevant to context. Though triangulation is sometimes criticized as a too broad approach (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008:179), this was not my experience. It was possible to put together the results from interviews, observations, and documents in order to form a whole, rich picture of the field – except for one issue. Why

traditional actors were not mentioned during lecturers, as opposed to in interviews, has not been examined. I regard the time spent during lecturers as too limited to make further points or analysis about this matter. I cannot exclude the possibility that traditional actors and practices were introduced later during the semester.

Analysing Formal Interviews

To work on the material in field and develop analytical ideas is important for progress (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995:191). My interviews were therefore transcribed immediately after they were conducted. This gave me the opportunity to check what did and did not work in the interview. It also gave me the opportunity to do an analysis, although superficial, and test it in the next interview. I did literal word-by-word transcriptions of the interviews in a rather detailed manner, since I did not want to risk excluding information which later would prove to be relevant. However, I did not include small words (e.g. 'hmm', 'ah') in the transcription, as small words are less significant if the study is not linguistic or psychological (Kvale 1997:156). But the choice was also practical, as I was forced to cut down on the number of working hours. To exclude information that is not needed for the analysis is necessary in field work (Hammersley & Atkinsson 1995:206).

During the analytic process back in Sweden, I continued to stay close to the social workers' accounts. The process was started in an inductive way, where take-off for the analysis is the empirical findings and where theoretical connections build on the empirical findings (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2007:54ff). Inspired by Qualitative Content Analysis (Elo & Kyngäs 2008; Graneheim & Lundman 2003), I moved from the specific to the general and tried to see the larger picture, its patterns and themes. Notes and headings which covered all aspects of the content were written, a process called 'open coding' (Elo & Kyngäs 2008:109f). Categories and sub categories where then created. During this process, I kept the initial research questions and themes interpreted in field in mind. This resulted in a mix of new and old categories. Then a more abductive analytic process began – a process where empirical findings and theory are applied dialectically (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008:54-65). The empirical findings yielded new meanings as I started to think in theoretical terms. Next, I went back to the data, whereby I discovered ways to adjust or complement earlier categories. Both empirical findings and the theoretical framework were repeatedly reinterpreted without losing the original words of the informants. The structure of the social work education field with its subworlds, for example,

was inductively derived from empirical findings. Through the theoretical concept of social worlds, the empirical findings were deepened.

First and Second Order of Constructions

This study is built on informants' constructions of how they would act in a hypothetical situation. Schütz's (1967) distinction between first and second order of constructions is therefore a relevant tool for understanding the analysis. Geertz (1973:9) explains that "what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to." When studying first level constructions, the local may be revealed and interpreted. First level constructions make us see what the social workers take for granted in their world and what they use to be able to function in it: values, notions or, truths. Also their local theories – for example why the couples in the study's case act the way they do – give an understanding of the world as they see it (Aspers 2007:42-44; Schütz 1967).

Second order constructions build on first order constructions, but are created by the researcher. Second order constructions are abstracted and reduced by the researcher from empirical findings. These theoretical constructions are reduced as they are ideal types, the sum of different aspects of the empirical findings. Yet, they must not lose contact with local meaning (Aspers 2007:42-44; Schütz 1967). Developed second order constructions were here done in an inductive/abductive way. This means that the analysis presented here is the result of second level constructions building on first level constructions, interpreted and influenced by me as a researcher and with a theoretical framework applied.

However, to see accounts as constructions does not exclude that they can tell us something about the phenomenon to which they refer. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:124ff) states that accounts can be examined in two ways – as information and perspective. The informants' accounts can also give us an idea of the social work field as seen from the perspective of social work education.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are present throughout an entire study – in daily fieldwork as well as when arguing for decisions and considerations concerning methods and analysis. Ethics is more than just the adaptation of a single set of rules and regulations, especially considering the variation and complexity of field work (Spradley 1979:35). As a Swedish researcher funded by

SIDA, Swedish law regulates my research. To supplement the law I have applied the Swedish Research Council guidelines (2006) and those of the Association of Social Anthropologists – ASA (2009), particularly suited for fieldwork and research conducted in foreign countries. I have also turned to colleagues, fellow students and supervisors for advice, as well as to the local population in Ghana in order to get a culturally appropriate perspective of the issue at hand.

I have been open with the purpose of my stay in Ghana as well as the role and task of research, as honesty is central (The Swedish Research Council 2006:19). This is specifically important in fieldwork since the informant-ethnographer relationship may be confused with other relationships (Spradley 1979:26). Before every interview I informed all students and teachers about the purpose and contents of the study as stated in SFS 2003:460 § 16. As confidentiality is another central ethical issue (The Swedish Research Council 2006:19), I informed the informants about confidentiality and asked for permission to use a tape recorder. In the thesis, there is no detailed information about the informants, since this might jeopardize confidentiality. The final thesis will be made available to students and teachers at the University of Ghana. Spradley (1979:39) asserts that making the final report available to the informants will influence how it is written. Presumably this makes me more careful when interpreting the informants' accounts, and more aware of the final product's impact on the field.

Not only informants should be considered while discussing ethics (Spradley 1979:32). To do fieldwork requires an extra consideration of the supervisor's role (ASA 2009). I have been careful not to leave responsibilities that are mine to Dr. Rose Walls. In the thesis, information from everyday discussions, not considered supervision, is not included. In general, I have striven to not let my research disturb Dr. Walls' position in the field. ASA (2009) states that fieldwork "raises special ethical […] issues, relating to […] political interest and national political systems". I look upon this statement primarily from an individual perspective. I have, for example, not explicitly quoted or used information gained from individuals at public authorities like the Department of Social Welfare, although they were aware of the objectives of my visit. Ghana is a democratic country, but I do not have enough insight into their national status to be able to determine what could be harmful to an individual.

4. Analytical Framework

4.1 Social World Theory

The focus of this study is professional social work and traditional actors and practices. The analysis is based on a combination of Anselm Strauss's social world theory – emanating from symbolic interactionism and the Chicago School (Strauss 1993:209) – and interactionist Tomatsu Shibutani's theory on social worlds, reference group, and perspective.

Central in social world theory is the idea that actions are embedded in social relations and interactions. It is not possible to carry out a course of action without interaction with others. How actors interpret situations and phenomena depend on their *perspective*. Perspective is an outlook on the world; "what is taken for granted about the attributes of various objects, events, and human nature" (Shibutani 1955:564) through which phenomena are interpreted and attributed meaning. A group of people who share the same perspective share membership in a *social world* or *subworld* (Shibutani 1955:564f; Strauss 1978:237, 1993:41, 212). In this analysis, traditional actors and professional social workers are suggested to be members of different subworlds in the larger social world of social work. Subworlds are created as social worlds *segment* into smaller units, and they have their own specific ideologies and activities (Strauss 1978:236). Members of social worlds or subworlds share not only perspective, but also resources, ideologies and commitment to certain activities. This makes them construct common ideas on how to handle their work (Shibutani 1955:564f).

Another central aspect of social world theory is that the same phenomenon can be interpreted differently, as different persons may look out on the world from diverse perspectives. Also, the same person can look out on the world from diverse perspectives. Shibutani (1955) uses the concept of *reference group* to describe "that group whose outlook is used by the actor as the frame of reference in the organization of his perceptual field" (ibid 1955:565). A person can use different reference groups. In this analysis, the concepts of reference group and perspective serve to show how social workers look at and handle social work cases both from the perspective of traditional actors and professional social workers, that is, they change reference group. Perspective can be taken from a standpoint and group where the person is *not* a member (ibid 1955:565), for example when the social workers look out on the world from the perspective of traditional actors. This is in comparison to George Herbert Mead's (1934:154ff)

concept of *the generalized other,* which represent the shared attitudes of the group to which a person belongs. Through the generalized other, a person looks upon himself as an object (ibid 1934:154ff). This may be compared to perspective, which is the subject's outlook on the world as an object.

Contrasting or conflicting social worlds may lead to complexities of perspectives (Strauss 1993:41ff, 226). While Mead (1934) does not pay much attention to the possible dilemma of a person participating in incompatible worlds, Shibutani (1961:575f) acknowledges this somehow problematic position. He uses the sociological concept *marginal man* to describe people who "stands on the border between two or more social worlds but are not accepted as full participants in either" (ibid 1961:576). In this analysis, the concept of marginal man serves to illustrate the position of professional social workers – on the border of two subworlds. Marginal men are the people who embody inconsistencies of a pluralistic society. They can take the perspective of worlds and subworlds which hold contradictory values or norms, which causes difficulties for them (ibid 1961:575f).

When analysing how traditional actors and practices are taken into accounts in professional social work, Strauss's (1978, 1993) concept of *intersection* is central. The analysis shows that the two subworlds intersect. In the process of intersection*,* perspectives and social worlds meet and difference of perspective is often enhanced. Processes of intersection are often required for the transmission of information, resources, technologies, or skills between worlds. The members have to find a common way to go about their shared business. In this way, processes of intersection may tie parts of the society together (ibid 1978:237, 1993:217f). This analysis further includes problematic aspects of intersections. According to Strauss (1993:43f, 226f), as social worlds or subworlds intersect in a problematic situation, an *arena* arises. Disagreement over an issue, its goals and means, negotiations, and debates are features of arena. Arenas are likely to rise when disagreements are not settled quickly between the members of subworlds. When this occurs, the members have to decide whether to stay in the arena or whether to leave. When an arena has arisen, members of subworlds may claim value and jurisdiction over a domain through the process of *legitimation* or *authenticating* (ibid 1978:238; 1993:217). The segmentation into subworlds most often involves these processes, as subworlds need to define themselves and build a legitimate core activity to justify their existence. To claim authenticity is to consider activities of one subworld more representative of the larger social world than activities of the other. Setting standards, challenging boundaries, distancing the subworld from others are legitimating processes.

4.2 Postcolonial Theory and the Social Construction of Reality

In this study, social world theory is complemented with concepts from postcolonial theory. Whereas social world theory and its concreteness allows the analysis to stay close to "real life" (Strauss 1993:49), postcolonial theory[15] offers a structural and critical approach. Central in postcolonial theory is how images and knowledge of the West and Global South are constructed in *binary oppositions,* like traditional/modern, illiterate/educated, or African/Western.[16] Binary oppositions shape our understanding of the world and (re)produce colonial structures and hierarchies (e.g. Fanon 1967; Loomba 2005; Mudimbe 1988, 1994). Valentin Yves Mudimbe (1988, 1994) argues that Africa is captured in an everlasting otherness, seen as traditional, uncivilized, and agrarian, whereas Europe is seen as modern, civilized, and industrialized. In the analysis, the concept of binary oppositions serves to analyse students' and teachers' descriptions of the subworlds. The analysis suggests that it is possible to interpret their descriptions as influenced by colonial images.

However, this suggestion is deepened and revised by introducing Dirlik's (1994) concept hybridity in the analysis. Dirlik criticizes postcolonial theory for being deterministic, and he moves away from structural determination and explanations as he questions binary oppositions as exclusive and stable.[17] Central in the critique are hybrid positions, that is, *hybridity* or in-betweenness. According to Dirlik, the hybrid subject – someone who cannot be defined as belonging to one or the other category – question the static and deterministic character of binary oppositions. Central to his argument is that a hybrid position is locally defined, whereas binary oppositions are structurally defined. He states:

> [A]lthough First and Third World positions may not be interchangeable, they are nevertheless quite fluid, which implies a need to qualify if not to repudiate binary oppositions in the articulation of their relationship. Hence local interactions take priority over global structures in the shaping of these relationships, which implies that they are better comprehended historically in their heterogeneity than structurally in their fixity.

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[15] 'Postcolonial' has been designated to a multitude of meanings. I will not here immerse in a discussion about meaning and contents of concept. With postcolonial theory I refer to what is accounted for in this chapter.

[16] To place categories as theoretical opposites, e.g. advanced-primitive, white-black, reason-emotion, where one of the categories is seen as superior, is a well-known phenomenon in ethnographic, and other, descriptions of the world (e.g. Derrida (1973; 1976; 1978), Douglas (1966) Lévi-Strauss (1961).) British social anthropologist Jack Goody (1977), especially known for his works in Africa, sees the problem with binary categories as ethnocentric and rooted in a we/they relationship "almost as if human mind themselves differed in their structure like machines of an earlier and later design" (Goody 1977:1).

[17] Other critics are e.g. Ahmad (1992) or Babha (1983).

These conclusions follow from the hybridness or "in-betweenness" of the postcolonial subject that is not to be contained within fixed categories or binary oppositions. (1994:336) [18]

Dirlik's hybridity allows for local interactions to challenge structures as determinants. In this analysis, the social workers' suggested actions uncover a hybrid position of the social workers. Just like the concept of marginal man, hybridity serves to point at the fluid and non-exclusive aspects of the subworlds with its members. The concepts of marginal man and hybridity both represent in-between positions, but whereas the marginal man is caught between social worlds and not accepted as a full participant in either (Shibutani 1961:578), the hybrid subject affiliates with both worlds (Dirlik 1994:335f).

At the same time as I use hybridity to point at structures as non-determinant, I recognize a dialectical relationship between actor and structure. I use Berger and Luckmann's (1966) concepts of internalization and socialization to analyse the dialectical relationship between actor and structure and how the subworld of social workers also includes features of the subworld of traditional actors. *Internalization* is a process through which a person develops a basic understanding of 'the way things are' in a society. Through internalization, a person incorporates other peoples understanding of the world into their own consciousness. This occurs through the process of *socialization*. *Primary socialization* takes place in childhood and reflect attitudes of the child's significant others (cf. Mead 1934). The child internalizes the world of the significant other's as the only existing world. Because of this, the world internalized in primary socialization is deeply and profoundly embedded in people's consciousness. *Secondary socialization* is not as profound, as the world of the first socialization – which is both basic and significant – is already present. Secondary socialization is institution-based and involves gaining role-specific knowledge often attached to labour (Berger & Luckmann 1966:149-166).

After presenting the analytical framework consisting of social world theory, postcolonial theory and Berger and Luckmann's (1966) theory on the social construction of reality, I now present my analysis of the empirical findings.

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[18] The middle position of African people is a well known issue. As early as 1903, W.E.B. Du Bois wrote in his *The Souls of Black Folk* about what he called the 'double consciousness' of the souls of African Americans. He saw African-Americans as living in two separate worlds – the African and the American.

5. Analysis Part One – The Social Work Field

The following two chapters present the results and analysis of how traditional actors are taken into account in professional social work. The analysis is based on social work students' and teachers' accounts of how they would act if conducting social work interventions in the field. These accounts are examined in two ways – as perspective and as information (see Hammersley & Atkinson 1995:124ff). The main analytical point is to reveal values, notions and truths of social work. The social workers' accounts, their first level constructions (Aspers 2007:42-44; Schütz 1967), are part of the world they describe, and thus tell us something about their perspective – how they understand and experience the world. However, that the main analytical point is to reveal social work perspectives does not exclude that accounts also can be used as information (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995:124). The social workers' accounts are one source of information among other sources, which provide (subjective) knowledge about the social work field, its actors, activities and organization.

What further has implications for the analysis is that the social workers construct images of *both themselves and traditional actors*. Thus, not only how the social workers want to be perceived, but also how they want me to perceive traditionalist, may affect their accounts. As a social worker, I am an ally – someone who is alike and whose perspective is close to theirs – as opposed to traditionalists. In addition, as both traditional actors and social workers are described from a social work perspective, descriptions and constructions of them differ. Social workers are described from an *inside* perspective whereas traditional actors are described from an *outside* perspective. Descriptions differs since the social work students and teachers have, as members of a social work group, insight into and inside knowledge about social workers and their world. They do not have this kind of knowledge or understanding about the traditionalists, which follows that traditionalists are described from a distance by outsiders.

In the analysis, the informants are seen as collective. As their accounts form a univocal picture of the social work field, the analytical point is not to display views of individual informants, but rather through their collective accounts to present the social work field, actors, and processes. Yet, to avoid making the analysis to impersonal, I have chosen to use (fictitious) names when presenting quotes.[19] A larger part of the quotes in the analysis are connected to the case used

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[19] The informants are: Adwoa, Abena, Akua, Yaa, Afia, Ama, Akosua, Aasiya, Tika, Kwadwo, Kwabena, Kwaku, Yaw and Kwame. To name the informants I have used the Ghanaian *day names* in Akan (except for

during interviews. For a reader to have knowledge about the contents of the case gives a better understanding of the analysis and quotes presented. The case is about a husband, Kofi, and wife, Joan, and problems regarding domestic violence and child rearing/child abuse. In the case, the social worker has to make a decision on whether to settle the problem within the family or to turn to formal authorities. The case can be found in Attachment C.

The first part of the analysis, Chapter Five, concerns the first research question – if traditional actors are considered as actors in the social work field – and how students and teachers talk about social workers and traditional actors. This chapter serves as background to the subsequent chapter as it presents the social work field and its actors. From the social workers' accounts, I reconstruct the structure of the social work field and suggest how traditional actors and professional social work can be seen as members of subworlds in the larger social world of Ghanaian social work. Based on the social workers' descriptions, I present features of the two subworlds – the Subworld of Traditional Actors and the Subworld of Social Workers. I suggest that the subworlds are constructed as binary oppositions, and using postcolonial theory I suggest that they reflect colonial notions. The traditionalists are associated with Africa, tradition, and illiteracy, while the social workers are associated with the West, modernity, and education. The image of subworlds as opposing and exclusive, however, is sometimes altered. When the social workers describe how they would handle social work cases, they sometimes seem to handle them from a traditionalist's point of view. Using the concepts of hybridity and marginal man, I suggest that social workers are able to adopt the perspective of both subworlds, and thus place themselves in a hybrid position between the two subworlds. That is to say, they are marginal men – at the same time traditionalists and social workers. Their hybrid position calls for a challenge to the ideas of binary oppositions as exclusive and stable and colonial structures as determinants.

5.1 The Social World of Social Work

Early during fieldwork, it became apparent how the students and teachers repeat certain words and sets of phrases when talking about social workers and actors in the traditional system. The same words and phrases reappear in the students' and teachers' accounts, painting a unison picture of the social work field and its participants. Their common way of relating to the world makes it possible to talk about a 'social work perspective'. People with the same perspective

Aasiya and Tika). Every Ghanaian has a day name, that is, a name depending on the day born. Mostly these names are used as middle name.

define situations the same way and they have an ordered view on events and human nature (Shibutani 1955:564). The social workers account for a specific order of things when they describe the social work field, and they seem to have a joint way of perceiving and interpreting what they see. Common among the social workers is that they define themselves and their work in contrast to traditional actors. Afia, one of the social workers, is an example of how this is done. She describes why she does not consider family heads as professional social workers, although, she points out, family heads and social workers do more or less the same work and are actors in the same social work field:

> [T]he family heads are just playing their traditional role by trying to settle disputes among the people, which literally makes them do the work of a social worker but does not make them a social worker.

Like the other social workers, Afia's statement points at an understanding of professional social workers and traditional actors as two separate subworlds. Her statement covers two central defining and delimiting features of subworlds: *activity* and *work foundation*. She describes 'settling disputes' as a social work activity performed by traditional actors. She describes the foundation of the traditionalists' work to be them 'playing their traditional role'. These examples are common among the informants. Ideology, activities and technologies (ways of carrying out activities) are features defining and separating social worlds and subworlds (Shibutani 1955:565; Strauss 1978:236). In this case, work foundation is closely related to ideology. The disparate ideology, activity and technology among social workers and traditionalists are frequently mentioned in interviews. Activities specific for professional social workers are described to be, for example, work associated with laws and regulations. Formal education instead of traditional roles comprises the foundation of the work.

Shibutani (1955:566f) emphasizes community systems as something holding social worlds and subworlds together. Values, symbols, and discourses that develop in associational structures form effective communication and argots which constitute borders of social worlds and subworlds. The social workers give examples of how effective communication and understanding shape their subworld. This process come of specific values (codes of ethics obligatory to follow for professionals only); symbols (laws and acts; only the professionals are obliged to report domestic violence to DOVVSU (Domestic Violence Act 2007: item 6)); and associations (GASOW – Ghana Association of Social Workers – university educated members only) of professional social workers. The values, symbols, and associations tie their subworld

together, and form borders that exclude traditional actors. The social workers account for a mutual understanding developed through these common features, separating them from traditionalists and their way of relating to and going about social work business.

Despite their differences, there are reasons to consider the two parties as subworlds in a larger, common social world of social work, instead of as two separate social worlds. The type of problems addressed is a feature which could be perceived as holding the subworlds together. Serving common clients also unites the two subworlds. A large part of GASOW's formal definition of Ghanaian social work covers both the work of traditional actors and that of professional social workers. Actors in both subworlds are, for example, concerned with "individual and collective well-being" and with "social issues such as poverty, unemployment and domestic violence" (GASOW 2010). Furthermore, the social workers explain that both subworlds perform social work and act in the same field. The connection between social workers and traditional actors and their common features makes it possible to see them as subworlds in a larger social world.

5.2 The Subworlds of Professional Social Workers and Traditional Actors

Through the way social workers talk about themselves and traditional actors, an image of two subworlds ordered as binary oppositions takes shape. Features of each subworld are in their descriptions contrasted and often hierarchically ordered. 'Science' is, for example, contrasted against 'superstition', and is considered more favourable than the latter. Constituents of the subworld of professional social work are associated with something new and Western-influenced, while the subworld of traditional actors is associated with African tradition. Below I present constituents of the subworlds, reconstructed from descriptions of the professional social workers. The features presented reflect the words used by the social workers.

The Subworld of Professional Social Workers	The Subworld of Traditional Actors
Formal institutions	Informal institutions
Social order maintained by formal constitutional law and formal institutions	Social order maintained by informal social control, personal relations, norms and tradition
Educated	Illiterate, non-educated
Christianity	Islam, other religions
Science	Superstition, spiritualism, religion (not

	Christianity)
Western	Pre-colonial/traditional African, Ghanaian
Modern	Traditional
Urban	Rural
Global	Local
Advanced	Developing
Care of the rights of women and children	Suppression of women and children
Now (present)	Then (past)
New, strange, unfamiliar (to the Ghanaians)	Old, well-known, familiar, safe (to the Ghanaians)
Have resources and formal institutions	Lack of resources and formal institutions
Neutral (objective), confidential	Take sides (subjective), non-confidential
Culturally sensitive (see issues from the clients' perspective)	Culturally insensitive (see issues from their own perspective)

When the students and teachers describe traditional actors, they sometimes refer to them as African or Ghanaian, possibly reflecting an Africa unaffected by colonial influences. They are seen as having an outlook on the world from a perspective of the old times. They are described to be, for example, community leaders, religious leaders (except for pastors and reverends belonging to Christian churches), family heads, extended family members and chiefs. The social workers explain that traditional actors are "playing their traditional role" when they perform their services. Traditional actors give emotional, moral and financial support, settle disputes, give advice, mediate, and function as legislator and court, for example. Most prominent in the social workers' accounts is how traditionalists are described as non-educated or illiterate. Therefore, the social workers mean, the traditional actors see things from a point of view that is not really accurate, or at least not scientific. They are described as applying superstitious or spiritual explanations and solutions while handling social work problems. Social worker Tika phrases it like this:

[E]specially when someone gives birth and the person is an autistic person […] it is difficult. In the traditional setting they go and kill that child. They attribute it to spirits so they go and kill the person. But if we have social workers around to talk, they know it might be from this, it might be from that, and then they begin to accept.

In addition, the social workers say that the rights of women and children are violated, or at least neglected, by the traditionalists. They often associate this with an old or uneducated way of being. The social workers explain that traditionalists exercise their power as traditional leaders

to maintain social control. The social workers allege that with social control and traditional norms as a societal base, traditionalists do not use services of formal institutions such as police or formal courts. Earned respect and familiarity are instead the important tools for governing and making people listen to the words of the leaders.

To be a professional social worker, according to the students and teachers, is to be a modern person who embraces new and developed aspects of the Ghanaian society and influences from West. From the social workers' descriptions, a subworld where social workers are above all associated with education and enlightenment is reconstructed. Some social workers suggest themselves as being enlightened because they recognize new Western influences. They say that they, unlike the traditional actors, know and act on the fact that "the world is now a global village". Being educated also makes them see things from a scientific and professional point of view, they say, as well as being those who know how to apply the law. Social worker Kwabena shares his view on differences in work:

> [When] the social worker […] comes in, the work will be different. His counselling is professional. And secondly when it comes to applying the rules, the law, a social worker will be better [than a traditional actor].

The social workers describe how their way of being and looking out on the world, may be acquired through education or through exposing oneself to the world outside Africa. Their perspective is described to be more common in urban settings where influences from other parts of the world are tangible. Social workers are described to involve formal institutions in their work, such as police, social workers or courts who work by constitutional law. These institutions are described as neutral, that is, their workforce does not take sides and knows how to keep their work confidential. Social workers explain themselves as having the ability to see things from another person's point of view – they are culturally sensitive. They know that they cannot handle things by their own personal opinion, or like social worker Akosua phrases it:

> [A]s social worker you must separate your personal believes from your professional believes or values. That is one of the most important things.

The accounts of social workers reveal that being a social worker means knowing that in these days, gender equality is something to strive for, just as women's and children's rights must be emphasized and acknowledged. The social workers describe how they ally with police,

reverends or pastors from the Christian church, and sometimes other educated Ghanaians, in their work.

5.3 The Hybrid Position of Social Workers

Through the way the social workers talk about themselves and traditional actors, I have reconstructed two subworlds which reflect colonial images of Africa and the West as binary oppositions. This construction has implications for power relationships, as binary oppositions are hierarchical in their order. Binary oppositions are crucial for constructing otherness, putting Africa in the periphery, and placing the West in the centre (e.g. Fanon 1967; Mudimbe 1988, 1994). By constructing a relationship between the subworlds connoted to colonial images, the social workers place themselves in the centre, thereby 'othering' traditionalists. They associate themselves with being modern, educated or western, while traditionalists are considered the opposite. Western writings of Africa often connote objectivity, facts, or truth with the West, and connote Africa with culture and subjectivity (Loomba 2005:46). Thus, by constructing traditionalists as others, the social workers also reconstruct *Western* representations of Africa, as they themselves become a symbol of West. The social work perspective is a Western perspective, looking at Africa as 'the other'.

Today, Africa is not formally dependent upon the rule of Western countries. The type of dependency Africa faces today is economical and by some accounts cultural. This is often referred to as neo-colonialism (Loomba 2005:12). To have an outlook derived a Western perspective, as do African social workers, may be interpreted as cultural dependency or neo-colonialism. Taking a Western perspective, the social workers construct images and representations reproducing colonial images of the West and Africa. When discussing the study's case, Afia's statement reveals how the social workers' way is considered preferable as binary oppositions are constructed. She says her task as a social worker in the case would be to educate the traditional actors when she sees that their decisions are unhelpful:

> I can be part of [the case] because perhaps during the sessions that we are having with the traditional people, there might be some decisions where the traditional head would like to take, that I see would not might really help the people [clients]. So I would educate them and explain to them why I think they should allow this, or why I think they should do this.

The image of social workers as superior and in opposition to traditionalists, however, is sometimes altered. When the students and teachers describe how they would handle social work cases, they seem to be able to take on also the traditionalists' perspective. In other words, they simultaneously participate in more than one subworld (Shibutani 1955:564f, 1961:575; Strauss 1993:209-223). The social workers can shift perspective and look at cases from both the perspective of the traditional and the perspective of social work. Kwabena is an example of how a social worker reason out a case from the perspective of the subworld of traditional actors. He discusses what to do in the study's case after the father hit his child. The father's behaviour is considered maltreatment in the subworld of social workers, but child rearing in the subworld of traditional actors:

> I do not think the police should come in now. You see the man hit the child and it was really bad. If it was in Europe or North America it would be a problem for the man. But in Africa […] it is like something treated lightly. [---] Because of our culture a man can even slap his child […]. Culture will see nothing wrong with it.

As is customary in the subworld of traditional actors, Kwabena does not want the police to be involved. At the same time, he is aware of how this differs from the values and norms of social workers, in the quote connoted to the West. That Kwabena is able to understand and use values and norms of both subworlds reflects his ability to shift perspective. He is taking traditionalists' norms and values into account when determining how the case should be handled. Using Shibutani's (1955:565) concept, he uses traditional actors as reference group.

The social workers' position as persons standing on the border of two worlds, or as participants in two worlds, may be compared to the Arabic cultural mediators in Al-Krenawi and Graham's (2001:665f) study of social work in Israel. As presented in previous research, a cultural mediator is knowledgeable of both the professional and cultural canon, among which norms, values and practices differ. Just like the Ghanaian social workers report themselves as doing, the cultural mediator can bridge the gap between a cultural and professional canon. Kwame is an example of this. Just like Kwabena, he explains how he would handle a case where the parents hit their child:

> I can go in now, based on my traditional knowledge to see how best I can draw [the parents'] attention to the fact that things are no more as it used to be, but such cases are criminal cases and we have laws in the country that could deal with it. [---] In this case

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you are trying to use your professional expertise to disabuse their mind about traditional upbringing of children.

In Al-Krenawi and Graham's (2001) study, cultural mediators were brought into social work practice, functioning as mediators. In the quote above, Kwame rather describes *himself* as mediator. From the perspective of a social world framework, we can see that Kwame takes the position of a *marginal man*, that is, he embodies the inconsistencies of a pluralistic society (Shibutani 1961:576f). He uses his participation in multiple social worlds and traditionalists as reference group to handle the case in a satisfying way. Like cultural mediators and his fellow social workers, Kwame possesses what Al-Krenawi and Graham (2001:672) sees as an important mediating skill – the ability to shift perspective. Kwame shows how this understanding makes him capable of handling the case in a way to which the client can understand and relate. From the perspective of a traditionalist, as understood by himself, he explains to the clients how the society functions today – the social work perspective. In this way he takes the norms and rules of both subworlds into consideration, and positions himself somehow in the middle of them, capable of taking the perspective of both.

The concept of marginal man may be compared to the postcolonial concept of *hybridity*. Like marginal man, it refers to an in-between identity and position (Dirlik 1994:336; Loomba 2005:145ff). The social workers' hybrid position challenges binary oppositions as exclusive and stable, and show how social workers do not exclusively take perspective as members of the subworld of social work. Instead, it is possible to simultaneously see things both as traditional actor and social worker. By taking on multiple perspectives, the social workers reject subworlds as fixed categories and binary oppositions, or at least questions them. Like Dirlik (1994:336) suggests, the hybrid position allow local interactions to "take priority over global structures in the shaping of […] relationships". Through their alleged actions, the social workers show how colonial structures can be altered and challenged. They do not account for this hybrid position as problematic but seem to look to it as a resource. Dirlik's hybridity may therefore be more accurate to use than the concept of marginal man. Shibutani's (1961:578) concept is problem-oriented, presenting marginal man as caught in a severe dilemma and unaccepted by his group members. This problematic situation is not recognized by the social workers. Yet, some social workers describe a feeling of sometimes being caught in a dilemma between values of different subworlds. According to Shibutani (1961:578), dilemmas may become accentuated in situations of choice. As the marginal man has to make choices which interfere with norms and values of one world, the choice will often displease members.

6. Analysis Part Two – Social World Processes

This chapter centres on the two last research questions. I analyse how traditional actors and practices are taken into account in interventions discussed by social work students and teachers, as well as the rationales students and teachers provide when reasoning out work. The chapter begins with a section about social change, as social change is central in the accounts of the social workers. This change seems to imply a transition from old, African ways of being to new, Western or globalized perspectives. The analysis reveals that the students and teachers think that the fact that Ghana is a country in transition, has to be considered in social work. Social workers must blend 'old' and 'new' aspects of the Ghanaian society in order to perform their work in a good manner, they say – a process here interpreted as localization.

The subsequent section describes the intersection of subworlds and how work is divided between professional social workers and traditional actors. It reveals that the division of labour is between *actors* and *practices*. Work can be organized so that traditional actors and social workers work on the same case, although in separate ways; they are actors on the same ground, but their actions and activities are different. Other social work cases involve traditional methods and technologies, but not traditional actors. After presenting work organization, I return to the question about identity. I use the concept of socialization to analyse how the students and teachers in some cases look upon and discuss cases from a traditionalist point of view. They then leave the framework of social work to instead reason as if they were members of the subworld of traditional actors.

In next section, I suggest that the rationales of the students and teachers' can be divided into three models of explanation. These are the cultural, practical, and structural models of explanation. The models are second order constructions, analytically derived from the empirical findings. Localization, or making work relevant to the local context, seems to be an important factor of their rationales. When they make decisions, the social workers reflect upon and define the given situation and its context. The three models are interrelated, as the social workers take in account aspects of all three when reasoning out how they would handle cases.

The last section suggests that the social workers struggle to gain ground in the larger social world. To gain ground seems to be a primary reason behind the students and teachers' rationales for considering traditional actors in their work; their purposed actions are strategic.

The social workers have to struggle to ensure that their profession is appreciated and wanted in Ghana. In this process, traditional actors can help since they are listened to and well-known by the Ghanaians. In the analysis, the question of child rearing is used as a case in point as arena processes are analysed to identify strategic actions of the social workers.

6.1 Social Change – Blending 'Old' and 'New'

Adwoa: Now things are changing here in Ghana.

During my time in field, people often described Ghana as a changing country. In practically all discussions about Ghana, they talked about a country in transition, about social and economical development, and about adaptation to a Western style of living. This was also true of the social work teachers and students. They explain that the current transition Ghana is undergoing affects social work practice and has to be taken into account in order to perform social work in a satisfying way. Aspects of both 'new' and 'old' Ghana have to be taken into account when conducting social work interventions, they say.

What the social workers refer to as 'new' is consistent with features of the subworld of social workers. These new aspects of Ghana connote globalization, westernization, and urbanization. According to them, influences from West, urbanization, globalization, migration and the advent of Christianity are root causes of the change Ghana is undergoing. An example of a 'new' value that, according to the social workers, is being introduced in Ghana is that women and children should not be maltreated by their husbands and fathers. Kwame, for example, asserts that the government makes sure that the traditional system is "seen in the light of the modern life style", pointing to the passing of laws and declarations intended to safeguard interests of women and children. The social workers see themselves representing 'new' aspects of the society, while the traditional actors often are described as preserving 'old' perspectives and traditions.

According to Nimmagadda and Cowger (1999:262), the industrialization of the Global South pronounces Western influences and derogates local knowledge and tradition. When the social workers talk about the change Ghana is undergoing, they describe how 'old' aspects and perspectives have to give way for what is 'new'. In line with what Nimmagadda and Cowger express, the social workers sometimes emphasize and value Western influences. However, this does not mean that the social workers devalue or forget the old. According to them, old ways of being are not merely replaced with new. That is, the process of change does not seem to be a

linear process, which social change rarely is (Gusfield 1967:351-354). Adaptation, not replacement, is what characterizes social change. Changing societies are a mix of new influences and old traditions (ibid).

As the students and teachers talk about social work, adaptation is particularly noticeable when they reason out how social work interventions should be conducted. Both 'old' and 'new' values and practices are adjusted and adapted to fit the specific case. Before they suggest how to act, a careful examination of the benefits of using old or new values, methods or ideas is made. Afia instead suggests how new, Western, practices and values of professional social work may be considered in social work interventions:

> I think it might not be all, but some, some can be very relevant. [---] If it is something that is good. I do not like the idea of impacting bad things into the community – making them change their good to the bad. But if you think it is good, and you are adding up to what they have, I do not see any problem with it.

Adwoa suggests how old values are considered on a structural level:

> Social workers and policy makers are not removing all the traditional values away. They are maintaining the good ones and then either reshaping or moving the bad ones.

Adjustment and adaptation is here interpreted as localization, the process by which values, methods and techniques from different cultures are blended to fit the local socio-cultural context (Bradshaw & Graham 2007:93; Nimmagadda & Cowger 1999:263). The students and teachers describe how they localize social work practice, how they reformulate and modify 'old' and 'new' to suit local context. They seem to see this not only as a necessary, but often a welcomed process. The new influences cannot be stopped by social workers, but to decide how to use these influences in combination with what already exists seems to be up to each social worker.

6.2 Intersection of Subworlds – Organizing Work

While last section interpreted localization of social work as the social workers efforts to blend and adapt 'old' and 'new' aspects of the Ghanaian society, this section focus on localization as the involvement of traditional actors and practices in social work. What the social workers describe as old and new aspects of the Ghanaian society seem to be consistent with the

subworlds of traditional actors and the subworld of professional social workers. To blend old and new thus involves blending of subworlds as well as interaction between members of the subworlds. Traditional actors are, according to the students and teachers, involved in professional social work. They are described to work parallel to, or together with, social workers. In other words, social work involves an *intersection* of members of the subworld of social workers and traditional actors. According to Strauss (1978:237; 1985:86), the intersection of subworlds brings together specialized actors as well as specialized skills, technologies and activities from both worlds in to a work site. Kwadwo gives one example of what an intersection may look like:

> [The traditional actors] can complement in terms of conflict resolution, especially when the professionals are able to broker peace. Then they can step in to maintain, or to ensure that what we done is sustained. [---] They can be assisting the social workers.

Kwadwo suggests how the traditional actors can step in and act during conflict resolutions to ensure that brokered peace is sustained. He explains this to be done in a complementing way, together with the social workers. When subworld intersect and actors are engaged in the same type of work, like Kwadwo describes, a division of labour usually takes place. The division of labour applies not only to *actors* but also to *actions* (Strauss 1985:72, 78). To distinguish between activities, or tasks, and actors who perform them is significant to understanding social work as the social workers describe it. Thus, to involve the subworld of traditional actors in professional social work does not necessarily mean to involve actors. It may also mean to bring in activities or methods.

Involving Actors and Practices

In some cases, as described by the students and teachers, work seems to be organized so that traditional actors and social workers work on the same case but in separate ways. They are actors on the same ground, but their *actions and activities are different*. To organize work in this way can be done in different ways. A frequently described organization is to have different actors come in at different stages in the case. These cases seem to follow a certain process with exact stages. The workers explain how the first stage involves the work of social worker and nuclear family. If their efforts are not enough to handle the problem, the extended family or other traditional actors may be involved. If the case still is not solved, and if it is serious, it can

be sent to the police. Akua's way of reasoning out a case regarding marriage problems and abuse is an example of what this process can look like:

> [I]n the first place I will do my paths. I will sit the two down [husband and wife] and mediate between them […] [A]t the end of the day, if I realize that it bears no fruit, I will maybe consult the family of the guy – that this is what is going on in the family, in the marriage – so what are they also going to do to solve it? I tell them, and probably they will sit their son down and advice him. If they do, and it also does not succeed, then I will carry it out to the police.

Another example of when traditionalists and social workers work on the same case, but in different ways, is Alternative Dispute Resolution. In cases of dispute settling, which some social workers describe, clients can decide whether to go for the traditional way of settling the dispute - Alternative Dispute Resolution – or whether to settle the dispute in formal court. In Alternative Dispute Resolution, the case is solved by traditional actors within the family or community, and social workers are not part of the case. The social worker activities are instead to prepare clients for decision making of how to handle their problems by displaying available alternatives and giving advice.[20] Some of the students and teachers, however, describe how they would stay in the case even if the clients decided to choose Alternative Dispute Resolution. They explain how they would monitor it from a distance until they know the traditional actors can manage on their own. They would assess the work of the traditional actors, and afterwards fill in the gaps in their work.

In cases of dispute settling, then, a process of intersection takes place. The case involves actors from both subworlds, which means that activities have to be distributed. Distributions are often negotiated, but also imposed, requested, delegated or assumed without request or command (Strauss 1985:79). Judging from descriptions of social workers, activities seem to be assumed without request or command from any actors involved. What determines the activities of actors is instead clients' decisions on how they want the case handled. The clients' will guides who will be involved in the case. Some social workers, however, describe how they would adopt the task of monitoring the Alternative Dispute Resolution. This may be interpreted as a way to exercise power. By monitoring, thereby making themselves inspectors, the social workers claim

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[20] The mere fact that advice-giving is described as a part of the social work can also be seen as an example of integrating activities from traditional actors in social work. Giving advice is usually not a part of (Western) social work practice with its emphasis on individualism and client self-determination (Askeland & Payne 2008:6; Nimmagadda & Cowger 1999:267), something I discuss further in next section.

a position to which the traditional actors are *accountable*. To be accountable is to be responsible for carrying out the work – how, when and where – and quality of the work (ibid 1985:80f). Since there is no existing higher supervisory authority for traditional actors, that position is free for social workers to claim. Accountability is always controlled by someone in a higher position. By monitoring, the social workers thus put themselves in a higher position. As more accountability generally means more authority (ibid 1985:80), the monitoring task implies a climb in hierarchy for social workers.

Involving Practices but not Actors

Other types of cases involve traditional methods and technologies but not traditional actors, though this seldom figures into the workers' descriptions. Kwame shares experiences from a domestic violence case he took part in at DOVVSU, Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit. Social workers and other formally trained staff used traditional methods and knowledge about domestic violence to handle the case. This was done *without involving traditional actors*. The social workers were talking separately with the two parties, reminding them of their respective duties as husband and wife, determining who is at fault, making them apologize to each other, and lastly educating them on laws on domestic violence. By doing this, traditional practices are brought into social work without involving traditional actors. The same type of method – to separately talk to involved clients and remind them of their duties as family members – is described as localized practice in Nimmagadda and Cowger's (1999:271) study on Indian social workers.

Methods and technologies constitute profound divisions between members of a profession (Bucher & Strauss 1961:250). Usually they reflect disagreements of the actors involved and specialization often depends on evolvement of new methods and techniques. In this study, however, methods do not seem to reflect divisions or disagreements between traditionalists and social workers. Instead, traditional methods are being taken over by social workers, and used as if they were their own. Furthermore, to bring in methods of the subworld of traditional actors expands the social workers' repertoire and thus gives them opportunities to serve more clients. It offers a greater variety of interpreting and handling social problems, and makes it possible to adapt the work to the client at hand. Also possible is that by taking over methods, social workers claim jurisdiction over features earlier designated to traditional actors. This may expand their power and territory in the common social world. To, like in the previous section,

relate the social workers' actions to power and expansion of territory may not be far-fetched. In the final section I develop the analysis on this matter.

Actions as Expressions of Identity

To use methods and technologies of the traditional actors may not only be explained as a way for social workers to expand power and territory. At times, their purposed actions seem rather to express a genuine belief or inner identity. On these occasions, the students and teachers no longer seem to see themselves as social workers who would use traditional practices. Instead, they seem to leave their social work group affiliation, to look upon the situation from a traditionalist perspective only. They both look at and describe their possible actions in the situation as if they were members of the subworld of traditional actors.

This is particularly obvious when the social workers argue for how to act in a domestic violence case presented to them. In the study's case, the husband and offender Kofi does not want his wife Joan to report him to the police. Instead he wants his family to settle the issue. When reasoning out how to solve the case, most social workers say that they would not involve the police. Below, Abena explains why she would let the case be handled within the family instead:

> It is not right, but as I said earlier on, for the sake of the integrity Kofi has built, I do not know. He is an intellectual – he is a graduate, and all that. For the sake of his dignity and integrity – we [social workers] would have to protect that. That is what Joan would want to do. Because no, it happens in the outside world, but in Ghana here, no Ghanaian lady will actually go out and report an abusive husband. They do not do that.

In this case, Abena is not suggesting that professional social work (where reporting to the police is required) should be blended with traditional practices (handling it within the family or community). She chooses to proceed by the traditional way only. To understand this we may return to notions of marginal man and hybridity and the relationship between actor and structure. To understand why Abena here seems to take the traditionalist perspective only, Berger and Luckmann's (1966) concept socialization is applied. Berger and Luckmann (1966) acknowledge the relationship between structure and actor as interdependent, both levels constituting each other through the dialectical process of socialization.

According to their theory, Abena may be seen as having internalized norms and values of the traditional subworld through *primary socialization.* As primary socialization takes place in childhood reflecting attitudes of the child's significant others, the world internalized in primary socialization is deeply and profoundly embedded in people's consciousness (Berger & Luckmann 1966:149-166, see also Mead 1934). This may explain why Abena would handle the case as if she were a member in the subworld of traditionalists and not a member in the subworld of social workers. Abena's socialization in the subworld of social workers is *secondary.* Secondary socialization is institution-based and involves gaining role-specific knowledge often attached to labour. It is not as profound as primary socialization (Berger & Luckmann 1966:158f). As primary socialization is profound and deeply internalized, Abena's identity as traditional Ghanaian is more profound and stronger than her identity as a social worker. She would therefore choose to handle the case the traditional way – within the family. Thus, to apply Berger and Luckmann's (1966) ideas show how identity and socialization are important factors determining how the students and teachers reason out social work cases.

This section has described how traditional actors and practices are taken into account when students and teachers reason out social work interventions, focusing on the organization of work between the subworlds. Issues of competition have been introduced and are further developed in this chapter's final section. The next section concerns the research question of what rationales the social workers provide for wanting to involve traditional actors and practices in their work.

6.3 Three Models of Explanation

Social worlds intersect under different conditions. To discover and analyse processes of intersection is important for the understanding of social worlds (Strauss 1991:237). This section of analysis focuses on incentives for intersection. To understand the social workers' rationales for suggesting that traditional actors and practices should be taken into account in work deepens the knowledge about social world organization and processes. I here suggest that their rationales can be divided into three models of explanation. These are the cultural, practical, and structural models of explanation. The models are second order constructions, analytically derived from the empirical findings.

Cultural Model of Explanation

Cultural aspects are central to Ghanaian social work practice. The students and teachers describe Ghana as heterogeneous society where a number of ethnic groups with different traditions and lifestyles exist.[21] This requires, they say, for social workers to take different cultural expressions and traditions into account when performing their work.

Cultural Sensitivity

According to the students and teachers, being, what they call, "culture sensitive" is to understand clients' culture. To reach understanding, the students and teachers describe, the social workers investigate into the clients' lives, traditions, and values. Through this, workers find out what belief-systems are at play and how these affect the problem at hand. To be culture sensitive, thus, is to acquire information in order to be able to understand the world as the client sees it. Aasiya explains how religious and spiritual aspects need to be considered in interventions:

> [W]hen clients present their problems, you may want to find out if they have any spiritual belief systems that are at play. That a client is saying that I am coming to see you – but I believe that God will take care of my problems [affects interventions]. So there is an underneath spirituality system going on there.

Culture thus provides context, which helps the social worker understand a problem from the clients' perspective. Applying Shibutani's (1955:565) concept, clients are used as a reference group – their outlook is used as a frame of reference – when the social worker looks upon the situation. However, being culture sensitive, according to the social workers, does not only include understanding. It also means that social work interventions have to be carried out in a way that acknowledges and respects clients' culture. From this it follows that clients are the ones who decide whether traditional actors should be involved in interventions. To take the perspective of others and adjust actions by it may be compared to Lena Dominelli's (2008) recommendations for anti-racist social work. Dominelli (2008:7-35) argues for how contextualisation, acknowledging the clients' cultural systems and adjusting the social work interventions accordingly, is an important aspect of anti-racist practice. However, she also argues that it is crucial to acknowledge asymmetric power relations between social workers and

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[21] Descriptions of Ghana as a heterogeneous society are present also in Kreitzler et al (2009:153).

clients while handling issues of multiculturalism in order to also address problems of discrimination and suppression.

Dominelli, as a British social worker, holds an interesting view in that it seems to differ not only from the view of Ghanaian social workers in this study, but also from that of Indian social workers in Nimmagadda and Cowger's (1999) study. The Ghanaian social workers do not seem to place cultural sensitivity in relation to power positions. They describe themselves as educators, and to give advice seems to be a common social work activity. Due to their profession and university education, they see themselves as in a position to guide and enlighten the clients. Nimmagadda and Cowger (1999:267f) present similar results concerning Indian social workers. From Dominelli's perspective, this may be interpreted as suppression. Yet, Nimmagadda and Cowger (1999:267f) interpreted it as localization of practice since giving advice responded to culturally appropriate behaviour in India. Like the Ghanaian social workers, the Indian social workers saw it as a beneficial method and as part of their duty to direct clients to the right path in life.

The Ghanaian social workers do not seem to think that their (culturally appropriate) practice is inconsistent with the central social work value of self-determination. Both advice-giving and self-determination is, by the social workers, frequently mentioned and referred to as important for good practice. They do not see these as conflicting values. Instead, they solve the possible dilemma by, after giving advice, leave *decisions* to the clients, thus allowing the clients to decide for themselves what they want. Aasiya explains:

> [I]t is your duty to educate [clients]. And as to whether they will accept what you are saying, it is their decision to make.

The process of educating or giving advice and then leave decisions to clients is done also by the Indian social workers (Nimmagadda & Cowger 1999:268). It allows for the social workers to follow the value of self-determination and simultaneously give advice or to educate. To leave decisions to clients seems to be a way to solve possible ambivalence among both Ghanaian and Indian social workers.

Giving Due Respect

In addition to culture sensitivity, traditional roles and positions are important cultural rationales when the social workers argue that traditional actors should be taken into account in social

work practice. The word 'respect' is frequently mentioned; traditionalists need to be paid due respect as traditional leaders. The social workers further describe that they must respect traditionalists because "that is the way things are in Ghana". Kwaku explains what people would say to a woman who did not turn to traditional leaders for help, but instead contacted the police:

> Why did you leave our father, or uncle or Imam and all these elders and went to the police station? [---] [He further explains:] It is a sign of insulting – that she do not respect these people. They could have competently handled the case, whatever problem there is.

To involve traditional actors because "that is the way things are", may be compared to Nimmagadda and Cowger's (1999:268) findings where "doing what works" was central to the Indian social workers' practice behaviour. "Doing what works" involved doing what was appropriate and worked in the particular local contexts, which the researchers considered central in the localization process. This way of localizing was related by them to practice-derived knowledge and Geertz's (1983:167) notions of local knowledge. The Ghanaian social workers relate to their work in the same way. They do not problematize using "that is the way things are", to motivate their actions. They rather see it as doing what works in local context.

The Value of Family

The value of family is emphasized in the students' and teachers' accounts on how social work cases should be handled. In order to preserve the family, students and teachers say, traditional actors should be involved instead of reporting a problem to the police or social workers. Abena explains why she would not report Kofi, the husband in the study's case, to the police even though he has hurt his child.

> The police will come in, take over the case and it can be something worse as Kofi can be presented to court or something for hitting. […] [W]hat if Kofi gets a punishment and comes back home? How are you going to face your husband? [---] [I]t will have a negative impact, a negative effect on Kofi. […] He would not be of himself. He would not feel as a father. He would feel restricted.

It can be gleaned that the social workers would involve the extended family instead of formal authorities as a way to ensure not only the maintenance of family, but also the order within the

family. To report an abusive husband to the police would mean a disgrace for the wife and family. In worst case, it could make the husband go to jail. I could also alter the father's position in family hierarchy and upset family order. In either way reporting would break family bonds, which is considered unfavourable by the social workers. To talk, listen, and to give advice to husband and wife are instead suggested for handling domestic violence or family issues. Discussing the same case as Abena did, Kwame states that traditional actors should be involved in the case. He explains why and gives his opinion on what actions they should take:

> [The traditionalists] want a peaceful marriage; they do not want to tear the family apart. So once there is understanding and the man has seen his fault and apologized and is willing to take the child to the hospital for the child to be attended to, I think we are heading towards the same cause or the same goal. So there is no need to push what the current laws say, or you might end up destroying the whole thing.

According to Kwame, the case should be settled traditionally by talking, making the husband apologize and take steps to mitigate his actions. A peaceful marriage is important and to involve the law might destroy the healing process in the family, he concludes.

To retain social order, or the order within the family, seems to be important to the Ghanaian social workers. Their view regarding duties and obligations to family shows similarities to Nimagadda and Cowger's (1999) findings. By acknowledging family order and value, just like Nimmagadda and Cowger (1999:271) conclude about Indian social workers, the Ghanaian social workers reproduce societal and family order. Actions shape society and the social workers construct and reconstruct the world they have internalized through primary socialization. Berger and Luckmann (1966:70-79) refer to reconstruction processes as *externalization*. As people interact, they develop shared understandings of the world, which in turn affect their actions and relations. Actions, in their turn, shape social structures. In this study, all rationales categorized under the cultural model of explanation in some way reproduce social order. To, for example, not report abusive husbands in order to preserve families, may reproduce notions of men as allowed to abuse their wives, and might enable domestic violence to continue without serious consequences for the perpetrator. This might lead to the idea that these issues are natural or nature given: "That is the way things are in Ghana". When social structures are formed and stabilized, they appear to be parts of an external objective world beyond the actor's influence. In other words, an *objectification* of the world has taken place

(ibid 1966:70-79). The society exists as an objective reality to which people conform and which does not seem possible to challenge.

Practical Model of Explanation

This section features the practical model of explanation. The social workers frequently describe various practical reasons why they would involve traditional actors in cases. An example is that traditional actors can render services to the social workers. Borrowing services and skills are often incentives for intersections of subworlds (Strauss 1978:237; 1993:217). In this study, a special form of service includes symbolic and representative features of traditional actors. Because of their position in the traditional system, traditional actors are respected and listened to. Parents and other elders traditionally play an advising role, and children are expected to follow the words of their parents even at old age (Kreitzler 2009:151; Nukunya 2003:49ff). This seems to be a reason why it is effective to bring in a parent or an elderly whose authority is not questioned. Yaw explains the advantage of involving traditional actors in cases of marital problems:

> Those people [traditional actors] have a lot of influences when it comes to issues like this. So when you realize things are not working out you could invite those people maybe their parents, family heads, even their reverends or ministers to come and talk to [the couple].

Thus, the social workers can involve traditional actors to benefit from their representation and symbolic importance. When acting as representatives, persons are not acting for themselves but on behalf of something or someone else, a system or organization, for example. Even before an interaction, there are representational expectations of the representative (Strauss 1993:179). That is, to even suggest to clients that, for example, the family head should be involved in the problem, adds certain expectations of what the family head – as traditional leader – would tell the clients to do. If the family head would be involved in the case, his words would represent the whole traditional system with its norms, rules and values – features beyond his role as a relative. Thus, using representatives to influence clients is beneficial for the social workers.

This type of alliance, where members of one subworld borrow services from another, is commonly considered useful, and thus formed, when members in a social world is threatened by those from other worlds (Strauss 1978:237). Threatening social worlds does not seem to be a reason for social workers' alliances with traditional actors. Yet closely related, the social

workers explain how they would involve traditional actors when a case is getting out of hand. When they need someone to prevent, for example, an abusive man from aggressing his family, the traditionalists are those who have the capacity to do that. Thus, the services traditional actors render do not include skills or techniques that social workers can learn. Traditionalists are taken into account because of their symbolic features. Their position and attributed authority rest in the individual and cannot be transmitted to the social workers – *actors* and *actions* cannot be separated. The social workers thus rely on the cooperation and involvement of traditional actors.

Another practical reason for involving the extended family, according to social workers, has to do with its traditional role in socialization and the upbringing of children. To let the members of the family serve as baby sitters or to invite them to come and live with the family are reasons suggested for involving them in the social work case. Furthermore, the social workers describe how the extended family or other traditionalists may serve as witnesses in social work cases. They can provide the social worker with information about a family and its background, which is information relevant for handling a case. They bring intimate knowledge of what really is going on in the family, and they also help solving the problem by bringing in new ideas to the case. Kwaku tells about a child custody case he took part in during fieldwork:

> [In] that case the two families, the man's family and the woman's family, were all there [at the social worker's office]. And they were all given the opportunity to say whatever they thought. [---] Their role was to help solve the problem.

Kwaku points at the importance of family for solving problems related to disturbances or disorder in family relations. As suggested, family matters are traditionally kept within the family. The social workers point out that parents know their children better than the social workers and therefore might come up with better solutions to problems. The family's ideas are welcomed and deemed significant.[22]

To invite extended family to give advice and assist in a case may be compared to colleagueship, in the more superficial meaning of the word. To share interests, common goals and ends of an intervention is characteristic of colleagueship. Colleagueship is closely linked to

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[22] This way of working may be compared to Family Group Conferences, which was introduced in Swedish social work during the 1990s. In Family Group Conferences the family and relatives are invited to the social services to contribute with advice or information, or to find ways of solving the problem (Socialstyrelsen 2010). Introducing Family Group Conferences in Sweden was actually an attempt to adjust methods to suit holistic family structures, where the client is seen as a part of a larger system instead of an isolated entity.

positions and hierarchies within a work site (Strauss 1978:253f). Recognizing traditional actors and their knowledge as contributing to social work thus puts them on a hierarchic level close to or equal to social workers. This conclusion is interesting as it stands in opposition to what was earlier said about social workers perceiving themselves as superior and more knowledgeable. It may be that when it comes to certain types of knowledge, particularly the more private and experience-based types, traditional actors may give advice to social workers.

Structural Model of Explanation

The structural model of explanation is the last model reconstructed from the empirical findings. Here, structural factors refer to issues regarding how welfare is organized within the country and the national economic situation. It also refers to the development of social work as a profession as well as its position and status within Ghana. Structural factors and welfare regimes influence social work practice (Payne 2006:49ff) and are non-negotiable in local case-specific situations. Accordingly, structural factors seem to play an important role when students and teachers in the study describe how they would take traditional actors into account in work. Central in their descriptions is the lack of professionally trained social workers, especially in rural settings. Tika explains how traditional actors are, as a result, a substitute for professional social workers:

> So you see now we still have shortage of social workers around, and the few that we have are not even in the remote areas. They are in Accra, Kumasi, Takoradi.[23] So we still use the family, the friends, the community to be each other's keeper in terms of social work in their various communities.

Like Tika, many social workers describe how work is left to traditional actors, as social workers do not have sufficient time or resources. They say that the situation is particularly difficult in the rural areas where social workers and formal institutions are few, or none. That social workers do not have time or resources, in its turn, has to do with the fact that many trained social workers in Ghana do no practice their profession. According to the informants, social workers work in other types of institutions, mainly in banks. The suggested reason for this is the low payment and the few social work institutions offering employment.

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[23] Accra, Kumasi and Takoradi are larger cities in Ghana.

This may be related to the over-all status of the social work profession. Social work in Ghana is described by the informants to be a profession on the periphery – un-established, unknown, and under developed. Afia describes how Ghanaian social workers are "babies in the social work profession". These types of statements are in fact central in stories and accounts of the social workers and are also brought up in research. Kreitzler et al (2009:156) concludes that social work in Ghana is a profession on the periphery, one not acknowledged by the public. This must be understood in relation to the in-effectiveness of the Department of Social Welfare (see Laird 2008:385-391) and the poor state of GASOW (see Kreitzler et al 2009:156). The lack of institutions and the ineffectiveness of those existing, especially the Department of Social Welfare, is mentioned by the informants. Previous research gives a similar picture (Laird 2008:385-391). According to the students and teachers, social workers sometimes pay for transportation from their own pockets to be able to go to the rural areas to help out, and they describe how DOVVSU personnel take maltreated children to their own houses since there are no shelters in which the children can stay. Social workers explain the lack of institutions to be especially problematic concerning women's and children's issues, and in rural areas the situation is worse. A woman who wants to leave a husband who maltreats her and her children has no societal institutions where to go for shelter and help, they say. Choosing to report a husband to the police, who will send him to jail, simply means that there is no one who provides for the family. This, combined with the shame this may causes the woman, which in turn can lead to her own extended family repudiating her, entails serious consequences. The financial situation on both national and local level aggravates the situation. Akosua gives an explanation of how economical factors affect social work:

> [T]hese days, poverty and a lot of factors are affecting people's lives. So even if they should go back to the family, the support would not be there right. The other family members do not have the money, or are not in position to really help. If you had a system that had like welfare benefits, like UK or US, this person can go back to their family home […] then everybody will get a little bit of money to support themselves. Then it will be better. But we do not have that yet, so it is difficult.

Where national finances are not enough, NGOs often enter the arena. There is a recent trend of NGOs and the civil society becoming growing actors in international development (World Bank 2010). The social workers describe how foreign NGOs have started to build shelters and other institutions in Ghana to fill in the gaps where the local government lack of finances and manpower. NGOs taking over the role of local governments in welfare/development issues can

be problematic (Potter et al 2008:119). One problem, mentioned during classes at the University of Ghana, is that programmes depending on foreign donors often involve funding directed at a specific issue, for example HIV/AIDS. This may lead to poor adaptation to local conditions and needs, as the local work force cannot use the funding for what they consider most useful, for example fighting malaria. Even though the Department of Social Welfare is responsible for registering and monitoring NGOs in order to ensure that money is used where it is needed, the poor financial situation of the Department means that surveillance is inadequate (Laird 2008:390).

The Interrelation of the Three Models of Explanation

The three models show that the students and teachers provide different rationales for taking traditional actors and practices into account in professional social work. Their rationales may be interpreted as localization of practice. When they reason out how to handle a case, the social workers reflect upon and define the given situation and its context. They then suggest what actions – relevant to situation, context, and local conditions – to take. Further, all three models of explanations build on the integration of *actors* not solely *activities*. The social workers explain how services are bound with representatives, that is, the position and attributed authority of traditional actors. This means that social workers are not able to require needed skills or technologies through, for example, education. Their work requires the involvement of traditional actors, not only activities. Consequentially, the social workers cannot carry out their work alone; they must rely on the cooperation and involvement of traditional actors.

Further, the three models of explanations are not as exclusive as the preceding may suggests. Boundaries between them are not clear, and rationales and explanations given by the social workers are interrelated. In fact, the social workers take cultural, structural, *and* practical factors into consideration as they reason through how to handle cases. An example of this is how the social workers say they would involve traditional actors instead of police in a domestic violence case. The social workers would involve the traditionalists to pay them respect as traditional leaders (cultural model of explanation), and because they are influential and therefore may be of practical help (practical model of explanation). Traditional actors would also be involved because the lack of formal institutions where the victim can get help (structural model of explanation). Culture thus gives traditional actors a certain status which in its turn makes their practical help beneficial. Further, if there were formal shelters with professional personnel, practical help would be given there instead and the traditional actors

would lose significance as providers of practical assistance. Cultural, practical and structural motives are thus interrelated.

6.4 Gaining Ground in the Common Social World

The rationales presented in the previous section reveal how professional social work, according to the students and teachers, needs to involve not only traditional practices, or activities, but also traditional actors. It is not possible for the social workers to carry out their work alone, which is one reason why they rely on the cooperation and involvement of traditional actors. This dependency may be a reason why the teachers and students never talk about conflict and never see problems in the relationship between social workers and traditionalists. Usually, processes of intersection like those described in previous sections, highlight differences in perspective and disagreements over issues, their values, goals and means (Strauss 1978: 237). Such disagreements are dismissed or denied by the students and teachers.

Furthermore, the denial of conflict seems to have its origin in more profound and important issues than needed help in case work. The traditional actors do in fact seem to be crucial for survival and development of the social work profession. This may be related to the poor state of the social work profession, which is central in the social workers' accounts, as mentioned in last section. Traditionalists seem to be needed in order to promote the social work profession, make people aware of social work and most importantly, to give people a positive attitude towards the profession. According to the students and teachers, traditional actors are well-established and familiar to the Ghanaians. This makes them trusted and listened to. Social workers though, are strange, feared, or not trusted, they say. The workers have to struggle to get their profession valued, appreciated, and wanted. In this process, traditional actors can help. Social worker Yaw gives an example of what this can look like. When social workers want to establish their work in a community, he explains, they must make the community people gain a positive attitude towards social work. The social workers therefore ask traditional leaders to tell their people about social work, and why it will be beneficial to the community. This is how he says it is done:

> [B]efore you enter a community you need to make the leaders of the community aware – now we are coming with this, we want to help people with this. [---] Then you tell them how they would be of help, and the various reasons why the services you want to render to them will help them. So then they kind of realize that this is a good thing that

you people want to do. They give you the needed cooperation. [---] They send their town criers[24] around, they beat the gong-gong, […] and people come to gather around and the chiefs tell whatever you want them to do.

In the social workers' different examples of what work can look like, glimpses of a conflicting relationship are found only when reading between the lines. The struggle for obtaining respect and appreciation for the social work profession may, using social world theory, be interpreted as an ongoing battle between social workers and traditionalists. In this battle, the social workers' purposed actions are *strategic*; their actions are directed at a specific purpose (Strauss 1993:187). Though actions may always be seen as directed at a purpose, strategic action as interpreted in this analysis refers to an overall theme or underlying rationale for action. This point then, is gaining control and ground in the common social world, which can be gleaned in described rationales and interactions of the social workers. As Strauss (1978:237) claims, intersections and arenas are central for the understanding of social worlds. Using social world theory, I use the question of child rearing as a case in point to suggest how intersections and arenas may reveal strategic action on the part of the social workers.

Child Rearing as an Arena

Child rearing is an issue where members of the traditional and social work subworld intersect, and where different perspectives of the subworlds become accentuated. According to the social workers descriptions, members of the two subworlds have different ways of interpreting and handling child rearing. There is thus the possibility that an arena will arise around this issue. Arenas arise in the intersection of subworlds, around issues which the members debate, argue, or fight (Strauss 1993:226). The process of intersection usually highlights differences in perspectives leading to disagreements over issues, values, goals and means (ibid 1978: 237). Arenas are likely to arise if disagreements are not settled quickly. When an arena has risen, members have to decide whether to stay in the arena and fight for their cause or to leave (ibid 1993:226f).

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[24] Yaw explains town criers to be "an old form of information service". A town crier is a person who makes public announcements in the streets.

'Preventing Arenas from Arising' and 'Leaving Arenas'

Strategic actions can be identified as the students and teachers talk about child rearing. One strategic action that can be gleaned is how the social workers 'prevent arenas from arising'. This strategy is used, for example, in the issue of compulsory education versus child labour. When reasoning out this issue, the social workers structure the world in a familiar way. The matrix below is a reconstruction based on the social workers' accounts.

The Subworld of Professional Social Workers	The Subworld of Traditional Actors
Allow children to go to school	Children take care of the house hold
Statutory compulsory basic education	Child labour
The law (supersedes culture and tradition)	Tradition and culture
West	Africa
Well-functioning social system	Non-functioning social system

The social workers describe how they want children to go to school, and how traditionalists instead want children to work or take care of the house hold. In this case, applying the law is an effective way for the social workers to avoid an arena arising. As suggested in previous sections, culture and tradition are important factors to consider in social work interventions. In the case of a family wanting its child to stay in the house to work, it is therefore possible that the traditionalists' perspective would win an arena battle as the family's culture correlates with the traditionalists'. However, before a debate on whose perspective is favourable can even begin, the question is determined as the social workers declare that the law has to be followed. Children have to go to school because the law declares they must. The social workers describe the law as the only thing that supersedes culture and tradition. It is obvious that if it was not for the law, the social workers' perspective would not prevail – culture and tradition would instead rule. In other words, without the law, there would have been an arena battle that the social workers would have lost.

It is therefore not surprising that many of the social workers demand more effective laws and a more developed legal system. Social worker Kwabena further promotes the law by linking Ghanaian social law with a well-functioning social system like the one in the West. Here he explains how compulsory basic education prevents parents from keeping their children from school:

[I]n the social work practice in Western Europe, almost everything has been structured in the way that you have […] constitutional laws that backs most of the determinations that […] [a] social worker can take. Everything you do there, you do it in the framework of the law [---] But here, […] because our traditions are deeply rooted, […] the hold the family, or the father, has on a child is very strong. And we […] are still developing our legal system, our constitutional law system, so there should be certain amendments in a lot of things. […] [Y]ears back, there was not free compulsory basic education. So a father could decide – my daughter, because you are a woman […] your office is in the kitchen, so there is no need to go to school. You are going to marry a man and cook for the man, so do not go to school. And nobody can say anything.

By constantly emphasizing the need for a stronger judicial system, the social workers promote their perspective. By linking the law to a well-functioning social system, they further emphasize their perspective as favourable.

How the social workers describe arena processes involving statutory regulated issues may be compared to those not statutorily regulated. In these situations, they say, culture and tradition cannot be argued against. Instead they describe how they would "just leave it". Like Strauss (1993:43) states, members of social worlds have to decide whether to stay in an arena to fight, or whether to leave. In this case, fighting seems to be useless to the social workers and they therefore leave the arena. No matter what they say or do, they cannot argue against culture and tradition. When there is no law to support their perspective, they cannot win. Furthermore, by exiting the arena, the social workers avoid creating conflict with traditional actors. It follows that their relationship, and the peace required for their collaboration, goes undisturbed. Avoiding the creation of an arena gives the same effect as using the law to determine an issue. By letting the law decide, the social workers do not have to enter a conflict area and risk their good relationship and needed collaboration.

Legitimating and Authenticating

Another strategic action which promotes the social work perspective is *legitimating* or *authenticating*. To legitimate or authenticate is to claim value and jurisdiction over an issue (Strauss 1978:238; 1993:217). In the quote below, Kwadwo legitimates the work of social workers by saying that formal education makes people understand how children should be treated. Social workers gain their authority from formal education, in contrast to traditional

actors whose authority is based on position in kinship. To say that education changes things in a positive way is to value, or legitimate, the work of social workers, and at the same time devalue that of traditionalists.

> [W]e [Ghanaians] realized that children were not treated well. […] So now we have come to the understanding that there is the need for improve upon the conditions of these children. [---] [F]ormal education is also helping to change things very, very fast. I can see that about 90% of us here, university students, will treat our children better than those who had not have any chance to go to any formal education.

By legitimating their actions and perspective based on formal education, the social workers can win the arena battle. In addition, they distance and exclude traditional actors from performing child-rearing activities.

Claiming *authenticity,* authenticate, is another strategic action that some social workers describe. To claim authenticity is to consider oneself not only the most representative actors for a social world, but also the one who is associated with the most appropriate activities. Anyone in a world is associated with its activities, but the one who performs the most essential activities and the one who performs them with quality has authenticity (Strauss 1978:238). The social workers claim authenticity as they describe how traditional actors, because of their lack of education, are incapable of being objective, scientific, or neutral. The fact that the students and teachers do not want to call the traditional actors social workers, although they perform social work, can be interpreted as authenticating. Kwadwo emphasizes professionalism:

> [In] Ghana, you see, that though we have people performing almost the same functions as the social worker, they are not professionals. So their approach to doing things is sometimes not up to the standard.

To state that traditionalists do not do their work properly and do not reach the standards of social workers may be interpreted as claiming authenticity for social workers. It can also be gleaned that social workers think that traditionalists misrepresent themselves as social workers. *Misrepresenting* is to take, openly or implicitly, attributes of another in order to pass for that person in other people's eyes (Strauss 1993:183). The students and teachers think that traditionalists are misrepresenting, and therefore they accuse them of distortion – since they are not, in the students' and teachers' eyes, actually professionals. Misrepresenting is thus connected with authenticating, as it involves the issue of professionalism and how the

knowledge used in work is gained. The social workers describe it as problematic when the traditionalists rely on personal experience and knowledge instead of formal training and scientific methods when they interpret and handle social problems.

Professionalism and Knowledge Claims

The question about formal training and formal knowledge as opposed to personal and experience-based knowledge is interesting. In the battle over the social work field, the social workers disregard work and knowledge of the traditional actors. Simultaneously, they value their own work and knowledge. As mentioned in the beginning of this section, this may be related to the poor state of the social work profession. To speak ill of traditionalists 'work does not necessarily mean that the social workers think traditionalists' work is poor. Maybe their statements about traditional actors say less about their views on traditional actors than the state of their own profession. To disregard personal and experience-based knowledge and to promote formal training and knowledge may rather be a way for the social workers to claim professionalism. Professionalism involves questions like knowledge base, quality, recognition, and categorization. Public recognition, formal training, service, quality and the approach and attitude of the workers distinguish professional work from mere task performance (Payne 2006:143ff). Thus, it is possible that what the social workers in this study express has to do with the formative process the social work profession is undergoing in Ghana. Since Ghanaian social work is unknown and under developed it is crucial for the social workers to present themselves and their work as professional. They try to gain ground in the larger social world by promoting their own profession and showing its benefits at the expense of traditional actors. Thus, a conclusion is that even though the social workers disregard work and knowledge of the traditional actors in the battle over the social work field, they do this in order to promote their own profession and not necessarily because they consider work of the traditionalist as poor. In next chapter this thesis is closed by discussing results and analysis focusing on professionalism and knowledge claims in social work.

7. Discussion

The over-all research objective of this study has been to investigate if and how traditional actors and practices are taken into account in contemporary professional social work in Ghana. The issue was investigated from the perspective of social work education, through participant observation at the Department of Social Work at the University of Ghana, and interviews with students and teachers.

The findings of the study show that students and teachers consider traditional actors to be participants in the social work field. I suggest that professional social work and traditional actors can be seen as subworld members in the larger social world of social work. The subworlds are ordered as binary oppositions where traditional actors connote e.g. tradition and illiteracy, while social workers connote e.g. modernity and enlightenment. In the social world, I further suggest, workers have a hybrid position which provides them with the ability to handle cases from the perspective of both subworlds.

 The findings also show that traditional actors and practices are taken into account when students and teachers reason out social work interventions. Social work can involve traditional *actors and practice* or, though not frequently mentioned, *only practices*. To use practices and methods of the traditional actors does sometimes seem to be an expression of the identity of the social workers. In these cases workers shift perspective and leave their social work group affiliation. Instead they both look at and act on the situation as members of the subworld of traditional actors. In the analysis, I suggest this to reflect the primary socialization of the social workers as Ghanaians.

Through the rationales students and teachers provided for taking traditional actors and practices into account, three models of explanation were identified. These are the cultural, the practical, and the structural models of explanation. Findings suggest that the social workers take them all into account when reasoning out interventions. All models build on the involvement of traditional actors and not only practices. Due to the fact that needed services are bound in traditionalists' positions and attributed authority, social workers need their involvement to carry out interventions. Furthermore, because of the poor state of the social work profession, social workers need traditionalists help to get their profession valued, appreciated and needed. Traditional actors can help since they are listened to and well-known by the Ghanaians. Thus,

an overall theme of action that lies behind the social workers' rationales was identified: their actions are strategic. The point is to gain ground and control in the common social work. To identify such strategic actions, arena processes were analysed. The chapter was closed with the conclusion that the analysis needs to consider the poor and peripheral state of the social work profession in Ghana. It is possible that the state and status of the profession affects the workers' accounts and views about traditional actors.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

The conclusion that the state of the social work profession affects the accounts and views of social workers leaves us with more issues to be investigated. To further examine the possible connection between the state of the social work profession and the involvement of traditional actors and practices in social work would be interesting. Another question to examine more closely is how traditional actors are taken into account in actual social work practice by social work practitioners. Furthermore, to expand the body of knowledge on views and opinions of clients and traditional actors would also be interesting. Such research would add a new dimension to research on social work in Africa. Currently, no research is produced from clients' or traditional actors' perspective. The emancipative approach I have employed in this study can perhaps be questioned when considering the study's lack of data from these two perspectives. To challenge existing power relations and to conduct research from a neglected perspective, which I aspired to do, should perhaps rather be to focus on the accounts of traditional actors or clients.

The study's other purpose is to allow Swedish social workers to get a deeper understanding of multicultural social work, gain new perspectives, and make new interpretations of social work. What can be said of this? Can the West learn from the South? Midgley (1990:295) states that social workers can learn from each other by studying work in disparate societies, provided that learnt approaches are localized. But what does localization mean in Swedish social work today? When clients come from all over the world, how do we know what cultures, values, and traditions to localize to? A postmodern approach is sometimes used in social work to solve the issue of how clients' diverse cultures and values should be handled (see e.g. Fook 2002). To criticize universal views and discourses and instead acknowledge and be guided by clients' subjective knowledge, as a postmodern approach would advocate, allows for social workers to assist in a way that responds to clients' individual needs. Yet, at the same time, a postmodern approach may result in a relativist stance that may be problematic (Alvesson & Sköldberg

2008:447f). If practice is always contextualised and adapted to the individual, social workers are left with few guidelines. Ethical, moral, or professional responsibilities could lose their role.

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Thus, localization involves the question of whose reality should be considered. Do social workers have a responsibility to stand up for certain values or rights? Are there any universal truths in social work? Should a social worker let a child stay home and work instead of going to school, if the family wants this? Would this mean neglecting the child's rights and well-being, or would it mean to localize work? On one hand, social workers have a responsibility for clients' well being. Their task is to interfere, guide and help. On the other hand, social workers must respect clients' self-determination – their integrity, knowledge and choices. Eliasson (1995:58) sees these aspects as social work's two holy principles, between which there will always be conflict. When talking about cultural sensitivity, the Ghanaian students and teachers give us one example of how conflict between these two principles may be handled. They describe how they educate and give advice, but leave decisions to clients. In Western social work, the question about clients' roles and decision-making has been accentuated by the growth of evidence-based practice and service user involvement in social work (e.g. Beresford & Branfield 2006; Glasby & Beresford 2006; Kumer-Nevo 2005). These issues involve larger questions about the nature of knowledge in social work – what is knowledge? and whose knowledge is relevant or acceptable? Personal and experience-based knowledge, in this study represented by traditional actors (and clients), is often seen as opposed formal and professional knowledge (Beresford & Branfield 2006). In Ghanaian social work, questions about the nature of knowledge also capture the relation between African and Western knowledge.

It would be easy to interpret this study's results only from a postcolonial perspective, saying that the social workers see African knowledge as inferior to Western knowledge, and interpret their descriptions as an expression of cultural dependency or a colonial heritage (e.g. Mudimbe 1988; 1994). However, this would not do the students and teachers justice. Social world theory has provided tools for an analysis that stays close to the local. This study has, by analysing local interaction and descriptions, challenged colonial structures as determinants and pointed at the complexity in the social workers' perceptions and alleged actions. Furthermore, when interpreting their accounts, the context in which they are produced must not be forgotten. What the social workers express must be understood in relation to status of the social work profession and the formative process it is undergoing in Ghana. However, I do not expound on questions

about professionalism or how the social workers' accounts might depend on the state of their profession, as this is outside the scope of this study. Yet, this analysis could preferably be combined with other theories on professions and professional development. To let further research provide a more extensive analysis of the profession would add interesting knowledge to research on social work in Africa as a developing profession.

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DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

P.O. Box LG 419, LEGON-GHANA Tel: 233-21-513051/500300 Ext: 3289
Fax: 233-21-513051 E-mail: socialwk@ug.ed.gh

Our Ref................................

Your Ref................................

29th January 2010

Dear Colleagues at the Social Work Department:

We currently have a visiting student from Sweden due to our new collaboration with Malmö University. Her name is Christel Avendal, and she's a Swedish Master student in social work. She's currently in Ghana to do fieldwork for her Master's thesis on "Social Work Education in Ghana". During the 8-10 weeks of her visit, she will attend classes and talk to/interview lecturers and students at the Social Work Department at University of Ghana. Will you please extend to her your full cooperation in attending your class, announcing her need for survey subjects to students and giving her the time she needs to interview you.

Her study is very relevant, as a growing percentage of the Swedish population today has non-Western background. Swedish social workers therefore need to adjust their work to make it more relevant to persons with origin in non-Western countries. In this process Swedish social workers can learn from social workers in other countries. The study of "Social Work Education in Ghana" can bring new perspectives and allow for Swedish social workers to make new interpretations of social work.

You may contact Christel Avendal at mobile no. 054 54 11-074 or via email at christel.avendal@gmail.com

Sincerely,

Dr. Kofi Ohene-Konadu

ARE YOU A STUDENT AT THE SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT?

WOULD YOU LIKE TO PARTICIPATE IN A STUDY ABOUT

SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION IN GHANA?

My name is Christel Avendal, and I am a Swedish Master student in social work. I am currently in Ghana to do fieldwork for my Master's thesis on social work education in Ghana. During 8-10 weeks, I will attend classes, talk to and interview lecturers and students at the Social Work Department at University of Ghana, Legon.

As a growing percentage of the Swedish population today has non-Western background, Swedish social workers need to adjust their work to make it more relevant to persons with origin in non-Western countries. In this process I believe Swedish social workers can learn from social workers in other countries. The study of social work education in Ghana can bring new perspectives and allow for Swedish social workers to make new interpretations of social work.

If you are interested to participate in an interview, please contact me. You will see me at classes or on Campus, or you can contact me at 054 54 11 074, or via email at christel.avendal@gmail.com.

A small token of appreciation will be prepared for the 45 minutes interview time I need with you. Interviews can be held at ASSOW Gardens or an office in the Social Work Department.

JOAN'S STORY

Joan was born in London, the UK, to Ghanaian parents who had moved to the UK years ago to finish their University degrees. In her early 20s, Joan moved to Accra to start studying at University of Ghana. At Campus Joan meets Kofi, a nice man who is also a student. He comes from a traditional Akan family who lives in the Volta Region. Joan finds Kofi's emphasis on traditional Ghanaian culture exciting, and it also makes her feel emotionally closer to Ghanaian life, culture and her heritage. The two soon becomes friends and not much later they fell in love. Eventually they graduate from the University, get married, start working and they have two children, Aasiya and Adwoa.

The family of four people lives in La, Accra, in a small house. To Joan it is important to embrace the Ghanaian culture and traditions, so the family tries to hold on to the traditions of Kofi and his family. They also visit Joan's relatives in Kumasi as often as they can. The parents want the best for their children, so they both work long hours to earn money to be able to support the family. Kofi and his parents were at first not too happy about Joan working, but after many discussions they accepted this fact and that it would bring in more money to the household. As both Kofi's and Joan's family live far from Accra, the couple depend on themselves.

Every morning before she goes to work, Joan takes Aasiya to school and Adwoa to nursing school. In the evening Aasiya takes care of Adwoa while waiting for the parents to get back from work. Joan is not happy with this, as she thinks the girls are too small to be on their own at the house. Kofi don't disagree with her, but to him it's not a really a problem. Joan knows it's common in Ghana for children to take more responsibility at early age. But as time goes, Joan get more and more worried about the girls spending so much time alone. She tries to talk to Kofi about it, but he won't listen. This tears on their marriage as Joan keeps bringing up the issue, telling Kofi he doesn't respect her opinion and will. The situation becomes more and more tense. Both parents are tired from working and the girls are tired from long days at school and the house without their parents. They get more and more clingy and demand more and more attention from their parents. They also started to behave badly towards other children on the street. The parent of a friend of Aasiya's found out Aasiya had stolen a pencil and notebook from her friend, and Adwoa has two times hit other children while playing. This has caused the neighbours to think something is wrong with the family. They have told Kofi that his foreign wife should take better care of the children, and that they will interfere if things don't change.

One day Joan loses her temper and slaps Adwoa for crying. Kofi yells at Joan in front of the girls and screams that either Joan stops working or the children will move to his parents, or they will hire a young girl from the village to take care of the house. Joan starts crying and screams at Kofi. The children get scared and start crying too. Joan is tired because she just found out she is pregnant again. Also she started suffering from anxiety attacks. The attacks have become more and more frequent and make her dizzy and unable to breath. She has not told Kofi about the pregnancy, and she even started thinking of whether she should have an abortion without telling him. She does not know how much more she can take and she is afraid he wouldn't understand if she told him. When she recently tried to speak to him about the anxiety attacks he said this was a punishment for her fighting with him.

Now, you are working as a social worker, and one day you meet Joan. She starts crying and tells you about the situation in her family and that things are really bad. Yesterday when she came home from work she found Adwoa with her left arm broken. She asked the girls what happened. Aasiya told her daddy got angry because Adwoa disturbed him while he was hugging his lady friend. When Joan asked who this lady friend is, Aasiya refused to answer and said daddy told her not to talk to mum about the lady. Joan tells you she took Adwoa to the hospital where she told the doctor Adwoa fell while playing in a tree. Later the same evening she confronted Kofi. He admitted that he has been having an affair, and also that he lost his temper and pushed Adwoa into the wall when she wouldn't obey him.

Joan now cries even more and tells you she told Kofi she wants a divorce, but that he told her it was out of the question. He said it would bring shame on him and his whole family, and also deprive the children of their father. He told her not to contact the police and that they will get help from the family or other people in the community. Now Joan doesn't know what to do and she asks you for your help.

Attachment D – Interview guide for students' first interview round

The questions on the interview guide were used as a guidance and reminder for me during the interviews. Most questions were not asked in such a direct way as written in the interview guide. Often they were interwoven in discussions about the case.

Interview guide – students   2010-03-02

Information to student	Background information
This is a way for me to learn more about social work in Ghana. Your answers will be used as data in my master thesis together with other interviews. Confidentiality Use of tape recorder Do you have any questions?	Age? Born where? Raised where? (Rural/urban) Tribal group? Level? Working experience? SW? Other? Fieldwork where? Long vacation /concurrent Have your parents studied at university? Why the SW programme? Did you choose? Did other?

Joan's case
- Working as a social worker, how would you see the problems Joan and her family face? How would you handle these? Why? Any other ways/reasons for?
- If it doesn't work out, what do you do?
- I have been told that as a social worker in Ghana you can involve the family head, the chief or religious leaders. Would you do that in this case? Why/why not? What would be the benefit?
- What would you do as a social worker if these people are involved?
- Who would the family listen to? Who would decide what to do?
- How would you handle the fact that Kofi does not want any contact with the police or social services, but Joan does?
- Why doesn't Kofi want any contact with the police or social services?
-Can tradition or culture be used as a reason for not reporting to the police or social services? Why/ Why not? If not, how could you report in a way that respects Kofi's cultural beliefs and practices?

-What other things would you have to consider when choosing what to do? (social theory, culture, welfare system, tradition)
-Are there any other ways in which you could handle the situation?
-Would it be different if you instead helped Joan to get a divorce/report to the police/only involve the family? What would make you make that choice instead?
- Do you think other social workers would reason like you?

-Would you solve this case in a different way in a rural setting? How? Why? Why different?
- Do the two ways of handling problems conflict?

About the SW education and practice experiences
- Can you remember if you in class ever talked about chiefs, elders, family heads?

- Their role in sw?
- Can you think of an event during your fieldwork, when you worked together with chiefs, elders or family heads?
- What do you think about the work they do?

- Has the social work education affected how you see the role these people have in Ghanaian society? In social work?
- Before you started your BA, how would you have handled Joan's case?

- Participate in follow-up interview?

Attachment E – Interview guide for students' follow-up interview

The questions on the interview guide were used as a guidance and reminder for me during the interviews. Most questions were not asked in such a direct way as written in the interview guide.

2010-03-16

Interview guide students – Follow up

BACKGROUND INFO THAT I FORGOT LAST TIME??

Values

In the interviews you talked about social work values such as self-determination, confidentiality, women's rights. Let's say a family/community wants to settle a dispute in a way that interferes with the social work values of e.g. children's rights. What do you do as a social worker?

(om studenten låter dem välja – prata om underlåtenhetsmakt, you are supposed to protect the vulnerable)

The social work values are based on a Western belief system. Is it a problem applying them in Ghana? *(e.g. children's right to self determination)*

Are there any specific African social work values?

Relation formal - informal

Professional social workers and family/community do pretty much the same thing.

Is there ever a conflict between these people and social workers?

Do social workers welcome the work of family/community? Why? Are they doing a good job according to social workers?

Do the family/community welcome the work of social workers? Why? Other reasons?

Can the work of the family/community be a threat to the social work profession? How?

Do you call them social workers? Do they perform social work? Are they seen as social workers?

Is there an event from your personal life you can tell me about when these two aspects of social work has been present? Conflict/harmony?

Attachment F – Letter to teachers for participation in the study

2010-03-08

Dear teachers at the Social Work Department

During February I attended classes and interviewed students at the Social Work Department for my Master's thesis on Social Work Education in Ghana. From March 8 until March 26, I will interview teachers at the department. I therefore would like to ask you for 45 minutes of your time for an interview with me. The interview will focus on how formal and informal ways of handling social problems coexist in social work in Ghana, and whether this is something the social work education teach about. A short introduction to the thesis is attached to this document.

Please contact me on 054 54 11 074 to set up a time for the interview. The interview can be held at any place convenient for you.

Sincerely,

Christel Avendal

Attachment G – Interview guide for teachers

The questions on the interview guide were used as a guidance and reminder for me during the interviews. Most questions were not asked in such a direct way as written in the interview guide.

2010-03-10

Interview guide teachers

You teach (X-course), correct?
How long have you taught at the dept?
Did you go here yourself? Where? BA, MA, Dr
Have you worked as a social worker? Ghana/abroad?

As I wrote in the small introduction I gave you, social problems can in Ghana be handled outside the more formal or legal system. This must somehow affect social workers and their work. Is that something you talk about in classes? Why/why not? What do you teach?

Do social workers involve chiefs, religious leaders, family heads etc in the social work?

Is the role of these people competing with social workers?
-Do the social workers welcome/like the work of the work of chiefs, families etc?
-What to these people think about professional social workers?

Do you in class discuss the role of chiefs, religious leaders etc in the social work? Is it important to talk about? Why?

They do pretty much the same things, do you call chiefs, elders etc social workers? Do they perform social work? Are they seen as social workers?

Can you give any example of an organization, agency in Ghana that includes these people in the social work?

The role of social work in contemporary Ghana? Well known? Established field?

Are there aspects of the social work that are typical African or Ghanaian?