

Is Family Group Conferencing a culturally adequate method outside its origin in New Zealand? A Meta synthesis

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Abstract: It is generally assumed that Family Group Conference (FGC) is a culturally adequate method for social work in indigenous communities. In this meta-synthesis, we question this assumption. Through systematic and strategic searches, we explored the existing trends of FGC research in indigenous contexts. 26 peer-reviewed articles, and 8 books and reports, are included in the literature review. Our analyses reveal that there is a tendency towards taking the cultural adequacy of FGC for granted. A few researchers question these assumptions, and debate tokenism and colonialism in social work. We argue that implementing FGC in new communities requires foundation in local, cultural contexts.

Keywords: meta-synthesis; literature review; social work research; indigenous; family group conference; cultural adequacy

Introduction

Family Group Conference is a model in social work developed with and for the Maori people in New Zealand. One of the core aims of FGC is to restore and empower family relations (Connolly, 2009), as well as to challenge the traditional role of professionals in problem-solving (Brown, 2003). FGC originated as an indigenous sensitive strategy in social work in Maori society: it is largely associated with traditional, indigenous ways of thinking and problem solving (Burford & Hudson, 2000; Love, 2000; Ryburn & Atherton, 1996; Zehr, 2002). It is therefore generally assumed that Family Group Conference (FGC) is an appropriate approach for social work in indigenous communities (Henriksen, 2004b; Holkup, Salois, Tripp-Reimer, & Weinert, 2007; Maxwell, 2008; J. Pennell, 2005; Zehr, 2002). However, when social services implement FGC in minority and indigenous communities outside New Zealand, few studies question these assumptions (Backe-Hansen, 2006; Gavrielides, 2014). In this article, we question these presuppositions through analyzing the trend of FGC research in indigenous contexts. We ask two questions. First, what constructions run through evaluations and theoretical studies that focus on FGC as a practice? Second, how are FGC addressed as a culturally adequate method, outside New Zealand, in these studies? To answer these questions, we have done a literature review on FGC research conducted as a meta-synthesis.

Meta-synthesis is a method for bringing together studies in a related area,

enabling exploration of nuances, constructions and the knowledge produced (Kinn, Holgersen, Ekeland, & Davidson, 2013; Walsh & Downe, 2005; Zimmer, 2006). This meta-synthesis provides an overview of FGC research beyond indigenous society in New Zealand. While FGC might be culturally sensitive in the origin society, it is not necessarily so in other societies. We endorse the theoretical foundation of FGC as a culturally sensitive, democratic, and empowering method. FGC represents a methodology that integrates indigenous people's rights in a practical way (Ryburn & Atherton, 1996). However, we question whether the best way to integrate indigenous peoples' rights is by importing the FGC as a manually based method.

First in the article, we present the theoretical framework of FGC and cultural adequate social work in indigenous context. Then we present two strategies for the literature search; a systematic and a strategic. Our results are presented in two main parts. Part A) Four themes in research on FGC in indigenous contexts; rights, paradigm-shift, over-representation, and culture. These results are based on the peer-reviewed articles retrieved from our systematic and strategic searches. Part B) Experiences from indigenous projects on FGC. These results are based on relevant reports and books from indigenous projects not published in peer-reviewed journals. In the discussion, we group trends in FGC research in two: First, FGC at the theoretical level; Second, FGC at the practical level. At the end, we offer some concluding remarks.

Theoretical Perspectives

Family Group Conference

During the 1980s, there was a shift towards greater inclusion of families in child welfare cases in England, the United States and New Zealand (Connolly, 2009; Connolly & McKenzie, 1999; Lupton & Nixon, 1999; Marsh & Crow, 1998). In New Zealand, this shift was showcased by the Puaoteata-tu (daybreak); a report conducted by Maori leaders directed to the Department of Social Welfare with recommendation of pro-Maori services (The Maori Perspective Advisory Committee, 1998/2001). The report influenced on development of the 'Children and Young People and their Families Act' in 1989, and further the development of FGC.

Different versions of the FGC method have been imported by social systems in approximately 30 countries (Havnen & Christiansen, 2014), including but not limited to Australia, Canada, Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Israel (Frost, Abram, & Burgess, 2014; Strandbu, 2007). As a result FGCs have, to some extent, moved away from their original form and been transformed to suit a variety of nations and cultures (Nixon, Burford, Quinn, & Edelbaum, 2005). The FGC providers use a variety of terms to identify meetings that involve extended family in decision-making. In Europe, the most commonly used term is Family Group Conference (Havnen & Christiansen, 2014), whereas the term Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) is extensively used in the United States (J. Pennell, Burford, Connolly, & Morris, 2011). In Hawaii, FGC is referred to as Ohana Conferencing (Godinet, Arnsberger, Li, & Kreif, 2010). It is important to note that these different models vary in description and practice depending on their specific context. All the methods under the FGC umbrella involve the extended family and share the objective of achieving change in decision-making by transferring power from case officers to families. We use the collective term FGC.

Culturally adequate social work for indigenous populations

Indigenous refers to diverse groups of people who have shared land with settlers and have a history of being oppressed (Anaya, 2004; B eteille, 1998; Kymlicka, 2002; Niezen, 2003). Indigenous children are over-represented in social services and are placed in out-of-home care at rates that exceed their representation in the overall population of high-income countries (Carter, 2010; Church li, Gross, & Baldwin, 2005; Lawler, LaPlante, Giger, & Norris, 2012; Shlonsky, Macvean, Devine, Mildon, & Barlow, 2013; Sinha, Ellenbogen, & Trocm e, 2013; Smith, 2012). This is a longterm effect of assimilation and oppression of indigenous population and society (Duran & Duran, 1995; Duran, Firehammer, & Gonzalez, 2008; Eidheim, 1970; Evans-Campbell, 2008). To rectify this, indigenous societies and researchers around the world have addressed the need of culturally adequate social work (B. Bennett, Zubrzycki, & Bacon, 2011; Hart, 2010; Herring, Spangaro, Lauw, & McNamara, 2013; J arvensivu, Pohjola, & Romakkaniemi, 2016; Weaver, 2004). Involvement of

community, network, kin, and family have been advocated as important aspects for adjusting social work towards cultural adequacy in indigenous communities (Belone, Gonzalez-Santin, Gustavsson, MacEachron, & Perry, 2002; Drywater-Whitekiller, 2014; Gray, Coates, & Hetherington, 2007; Henriksen, 2004a, 2004b; Herzberg, 2013; O'Neill & Gonzalez, 2014; Stewart, 2008).

In the process of turning social work towards relevance for other cultural groups than majority populations, different aspects of cross-cultural social work are developed. These take forms and are defined in multiple terms such as culturally sensitive (Foronda, 2008), culturally competent (Weaver, 1999), culturally humble (Fisher-Borne, Cain, & Martin, 2015), and contextual social work (Saus, 2010). We define culturally adequate social work as social work that is both competent, humble and contextual. Culturally competent social work is social work that promotes cultural knowledge, cultural values and cultural skills (Weaver, 1999). Culturally humble social work acknowledge and counters structural inequality, it requires selfreflection from social worker for deeper awareness of power and privilege (Fisher-Borne, Cain, & Martin, 2015). Contextual social work highlights the relevance of local context for practical social work (Saus, 2008). Culturally sensitive social work focuses on social workers individual skills and attributes (Foronda, 2008). With the term socially adequate social work, we aim to address structural aspects of social work and social work curriculum rather than individual skills. However, we do not make distinctions between different cross-cultural approaches and acknowledge the different contributions from each perspective.

Exploring cross-cultural social work needs a reflection on tokenism. Tokenism is a theory proposed by Kanter (1977) suggesting that a representative from one group holds a symbolic position in order to give an impression of social inclusion (Hutton, 2006). The representative group has little real impact, and in reality experiences lack of visibility, isolation and role encapsulations (Gustafson, 2008). Gender is one of the most common themes in tokenism research, but the theory also covers ethnicity and minorities (Mpofo & Conyers, 2002). Baltra-Ulloa (2013) criticize cross-cultural social work for being developed from the position of the majority population. The tokenistic cultural social work appears when social work gives the impression of

being culturally adequate, while in reality upholding distinctions between minorities and majority. In New Zealand, Maori researchers have addressed the lack of genuine commitment to Maori family structure and values in FGC (Hollis-English, 2012; Moyle, 2014), and identified tokenistic tendencies. At the international level, however, there is little debate on tokenism regarding FGC in social work.

Meta-synthesis methodology

In this meta-synthesis, we aggregated research-based knowledge with the aim of elaborating on the interpretation and narratives of existing knowledge of FGC. Kelly (2011) has argued for the importance of a systematic approach reviewing research literature in social work. She claim it '...offers an opportunity for us all to shape the debate about what constitutes reliable enough evidence` (p. 83). We aim to provide an overview of current debates, contentious issues and ideas taken for granted within the research field of FGC. The meta-synthesis is systematically analogous to a metaanalysis. The search strategy, inclusion/exclusion, assessment, synthesis, and the presentation of the research is well defined and well described (Atkins et al., 2008; Barnett-Page & Thomas, 2009). However, the two methods, meta-synthesis and meta-analysis, differ with regard to their respective goals. Whereas meta-analyses seek to draw conclusions on cause and effect, a meta-synthesis aims to understand phenomena hermeneutically (Walsh & Downe, 2005). Meta-synthesis is often limited to qualitative studies. In our analyses, we include both qualitative and quantitative studies. In addition, we include both theoretical and empirical studies. We are of the opinion that all of these approaches contribute to the overall narrative of FGC in cultural contexts. By analyzing the phenomenon of FGC research, we place our research within a social constructivist paradigm. Like other social phenomena, research is an outcome of social constructions.

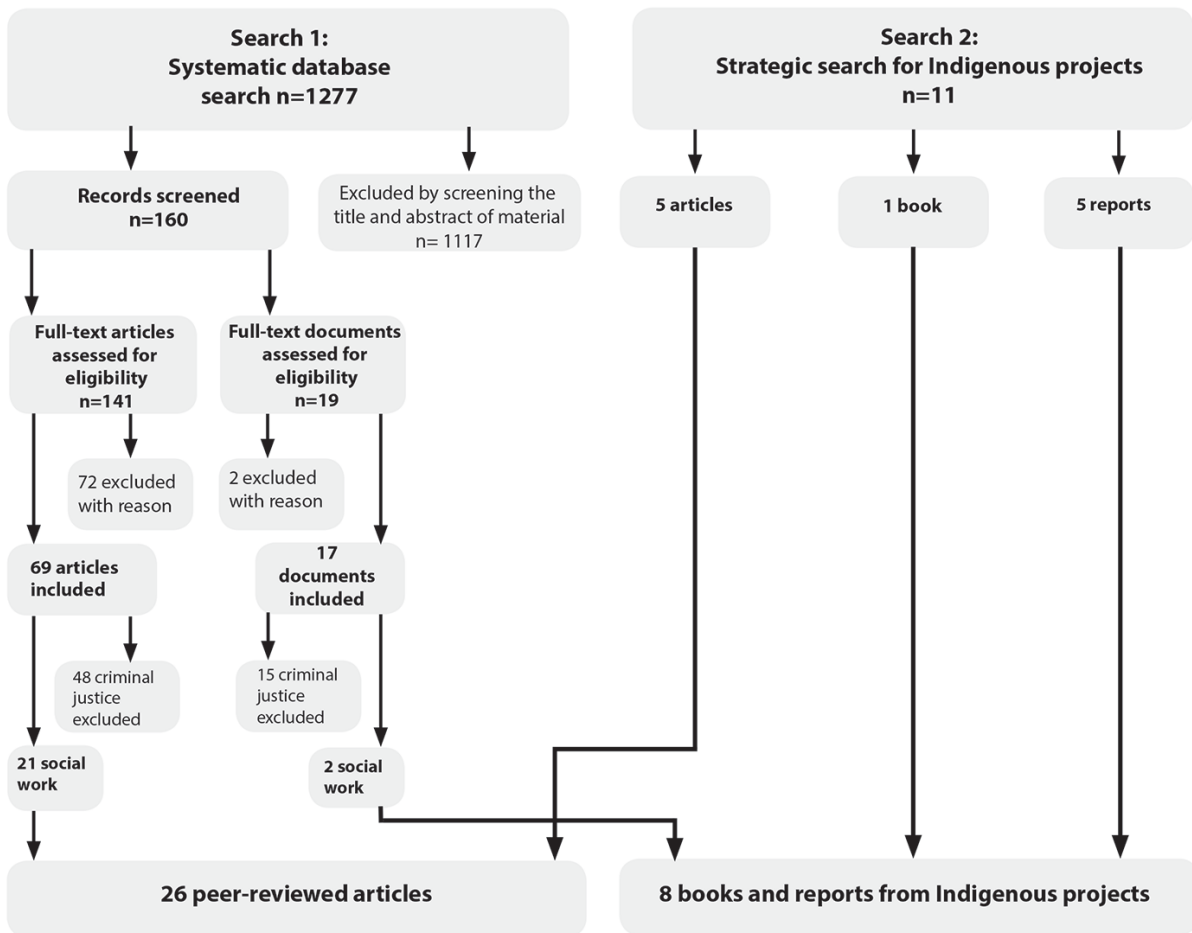
Method

Literature search

To encompass the existing research literature on FGC concerning indigenous context, we used two strategies; first, systematic searches in online databases, and second, strategic searches in grey literatures. The flow diagram in Figure 1 shows the two

searches that we conducted and the screening processes for inclusion/exclusion. According to indigenous methodology, inclusion of indigenous voices in grey literatures in knowledge building processes is essential (Smith, 2012). By carrying out a meta-synthesis of literature produced within academia, we run the risk of reproducing Eurocentric understandings of FGC in cultural social work. To overcome this risk, we conducted a strategic search for indigenous research, in addition to systematic searches. The objective with the strategic search was to identify research results from Indigenous projects not published in peer-reviewed journals. The systematic search is characterized by stringent inclusion/exclusion criteria. The search criteria is so strict that it might miss relevant research literature. The strategic search is also systematic, with planned and well-defined searching strategies. However, the strategic search is characterized by a wider approach, allowing for a creative process searching for research literature. All the studies identified, that meet the quality criteria, and theme FGC in indigenous contexts, was included.

Figure 1: Flow diagram of Meta-synthesis



Notes: "Excluded with reason" indicate that the identified articles did not meet the inclusion criterias.

When a minority interacts with a majority, culture becomes significant. Hence, research involving other minority groups than indigenous ones will provide relevant contributions. We have therefor included all studies theming culture. We also included research involving other minority groups than indigenous group, as well as studies theming culture. The strategic search was limited to include exclusively contributions within the field of indigenous social work. Because we are asking for culturally adequacy of FGC outside New Zealand, New Zealand experience is used as a reference point; and are included in the synthesis. Two researchers have done search, screening and coding of the material. All the articles we screened for inclusion meet the quality criteria to be included in analyses.

Systematic database search

The first part of the flow diagram, Figure 1, presents the systematic database search.

Table 1 presents search terms and strategies.

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Table 1

Search terms and strategies

Search terms search 1	Family group conference* Family group decision making* Group conference* Family group conferencing Group conferencing
Search terms search 2	“Restorative justice” “Restorative practices” AND Native Indigenous Indian Aborigin* Ethnic Minority Inuit Tribe Race Culture
Databases	Scopus, PubMed, PsycInfo, ERIC, Social Care Online, Sociological Abstracts and Social Services Abstracts in ProQuest, HeinOnline
Time period	All studies published prior to January 2018 were examined
Availability	Published in English
Limitation	Abstract and title

Our main interest is FGC. We combined terms covering FGC in search one. This search provided relatively few research contributions, allowing us to screen the material without adding any further limitations to this search. Since some researchers use the code Restorative Justice (RJ) or Restorative Practices (RP) rather than FGC, we also included a search on RJ and RP. Search two combined terms of RJ and RP with terms of indigenous and culture. We full-text screened articles within the

area of criminal justice and social work. To ensure focus on FGC in social work, we excluded research on criminal justice. The systematic database search resulted in 21 peer-reviewed articles (see figure 1).

Strategic searches from other sources

To ensure the inclusion of relevant literature, we added a strategic search process in addition to the systematic searches. The aim was to retrieve grey literature; publications that are not found in research databases. The objectives were two-fold. First, we wanted to discover relevant reports and books from indigenous projects not published in peer-reviewed journals. From this part of the search, we found and included three books and five reports. The second objective was to discover relevant peer-reviewed articles, which did not appear in the systematic database searches. This was the case for five articles: Hill (2005), Herzberg (2013), Roby, Pennell, Rotabi, Bunkers, and Sully de Ucles (2015), Barn and Das (2016), and Valenti (2017). The strategic search was conducted continuously discovering articles published subsequent to the systematic search. We searched in relevant national databases and contacted researchers and practitioners with experience in FGC in indigenous communities from New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and United States. This strategic search did not produce an exhaustive overview of relevant indigenous projects. Identifying and finding additional reports was difficult. Defining strict criteria for inclusion/exclusion was also complicated. To appraise inclusion criteria, we used the relevance for our research questions. From the strategic searches, we discovered eleven research contributions analyzing FGC in indigenous communities: five peerreview articles, one book and five reports (see figure 1).

Data analysis

In the end 26 articles were included: 21 from the systematic search and the five peer-reviewed articles from the strategic research. These constitute the data analyzed by means of meta-synthesis. We separated analysis of peer-reviewed articles, and analysis of experiences published in books and reports. This was done to (a) retain the level of quality assurance usually ensured by peer reviews, (b) retain the quality addressed in indigenous methodology.

Table 2 shows a condensed version of the categorization form we used to deconstruct and analyze the peer-reviewed articles. Categories of problems addressed, purpose, method, and selection strategies in the studies was determined prior to the analysis. The strategy of content classification was abductive, starting the analyses in included articles by close reading, before alternating the analyses between included articles and theoretical ideas (Blaikie, 2010). Through reading and interacting with the included articles, we constructed categories addressing the articles' themes, measures and conclusions. The quality of the articles was evaluated by their relevance, usefulness, transparency and the suitability of the research design; criterion analogous with validity and reliability in qualitative research. The categorization form was used in this process. The coding of one form for each article facilitated the quality evaluation, the analyses, and the article comparison. In this synthesis, we group and present the included articles based on the thematic categories. We use content in the category's 'measure' and 'conclusion' as foundation for the analyses and discussion. In line with the method of qualitative analyses, we use the articles in the presentation of the results and to shed light on our findings. We are referring to articles addressing main trends in the material, in addition to articles showing diversity and debates within the field of study.

Limitations

The search was limited to articles written in English. This might result in lack of relevant contributions written in indigenous languages. Furthermore, the choice of databases and search words may have led to the exclusion of some relevant articles. Within the social sciences, publication coding is not rigid, and the keywords used may have affected the visibility of publications in our search. FGC taking cultural adequacy for granted might not theme culture in presentation of research. Such articles will be missing in our literature search.

The strategic search that sought to find relevant material that was not accessible in the academic database was most likely not exhaustive. The inherent bias towards Eurocentric worldview in the sciences limits indigenous participation in the dialogue of knowledge production. In an attempt at diminishing this bias, we have

included a dedicated section with reports from indigenous projects. However, we acknowledge that there might be limitations in representation. Even though it is virtually impossible to present the entire narrative of FGC in indigenous contexts, by conducting both a systematic and a strategic search, our sample is representative enough for an overview of the field.

Results

We acknowledge that it is common to combine the research retrieved from peer-reviewed scientific journals, and grey literature represented with books and reports, in the meta-synthesis analysis. However, in this synthesis we analyzed the indigenous projects, represented by books and reports, separately from the peer-review articles. By keeping the indigenous projects separated, we are able to, firstly see whether the same questions and themes that are ongoing within the research published in scientific journals and indigenous projects, and secondly give special attention to indigenous voices represented by indigenous projects.

Four themes in research on FGC in indigenous contexts

In this synthesis, we have searched for trends of FGC research in indigenous contexts. Of the 26 included articles, eleven were from the United States, five from New Zealand, three from Australia, three from England, one from Canada, one from Scotland, one from Guatemala, and one from Ethiopia. From our analyses, four main thematic issues emerged: rights, paradigm shift, over-representation, and culture. (a) Rights: Four studies discuss themes relating to securing the rights of indigenous and minority children and their families. (b) Paradigm-shift: Five studies discuss the potential of changes in the paradigms of social services. (c) Over-representation: Three studies discuss FGC in relation to the over-representation of indigenous and minority children in the child welfare services. (d) Culture: Fourteen studies describe ways that FGCs might facilitate culturally adequate services. In the following, we present these four categories.

Rights

Table 3 (to be found at end of this article) lists articles on FGC that address the

rights of children and families. International law lays down children's rights to interdependence and their relationship to family, culture and community (Brooks & Ronen, 2006; Rotabi, Pennell, Roby, & Bunkers, 2012). Interpretation of these laws take place within a western individualistic framework (Brooks & Ronen, 2006). Interpretation influences how social services conduct social work, and how social workers treat families. FGC can ensure placements consistent with principles rooted in indigenous values (Hill, 2005) and principles of placements (Ban, 2005). All four articles conclude that FGC can contribute to ensuring children's rights to cultural belonging and family interdependence.

Paradigm Shift

FGCs are rooted in Maori culture, and in indigenous traditions for conflict resolution and problem-solving. The analysis identifies five studies where the main interest is whether the FGC approach can refashion the Eurocentric paradigm within social services. Table 4 lists articles that address the potential of FGC to achieve change in the application of Western paradigms.

Moyle and Tauri (2016) analyze the myth of FGC as rooted in indigenous culture. Maori participants experience FGC as a 'one-size-fits-all' approach that supports Eurocentric policy construction (Moyle & Tauri, 2016). Others, however, state that FGC is one way of challenging the current welfare system by integrating worldviews from culturally diverse groups (Gilbert, 2013), or by restoring relations between indigenous families and child welfare services (Ivec, Braithwaite, & Harris, 2012). When implementing FGC it is very important to consider cultural differences among societies (Levine, 2000); and the method needs grounding in local context and families (Kaye, 1997). These articles reveal a debate on whether FGCs are successful in changing paradigms and de-colonizing social work.

Over-representation in child welfare services

Table 5 presents articles that investigate FGCs' ability to address over-representation of children, from cultural minorities, placed out of home by child welfare. There is an over-representation of children with indigenous heritage, African American children, and minority children in the child welfare services worldwide. Minority

children are placed more frequently in out-of-home care than majority children (Crampton & Jackson, 2007; Drywater-Whitekiller, 2014; Godinet et al., 2010).

The three articles addressing over-representation all assert that FGC is have potential in contributing to keep children within their extended family (Crampton & Jackson, 2007; Drywater-Whitekiller, 2014; Godinet et al., 2010).

Culture

There is a general lack of knowledge on the success – or lack of success – of FGCs among minority families. Chand and Thoburn (2005) highlight that there is little research on the use of FGC with minority families in England. Our systematic search found few such research contributions, thus confirming that this gap also applies to other countries. Studies that address the use of FGC with minority and indigenous populations examine whether these methods may be culturally adequate and, if so, how to implement FGC in order to achieve the intended goals. Table 6 presents articles addressing cultural adequacy of FGC among diverse ethnic groups.

The tendency in these articles is to take the theoretical assumption of FGC as a culturally adequate method that accords with indigenous worldviews for granted. The objective of facilitating dialogue and permitting the families to be heard is to safeguard cultural considerations in the interactive process between professionals and family members, a claim stressed by O'Shaughnessy, Collins, and Fatimilehin (2010), and Marcynyszyn et al. (2012). However, McCrae and Fusco (2010), found that caregivers felt no more involved in the decision-making process with child welfare services when participating in FGC. Cohen and Gershon (2015) demonstrate that the idea of a 'family' in FGC is not representative for all cultures and contexts. Barn and Das (2016) argue that cultural competence with FGC requires reflection and understanding of family context; including both culture, religion and language in addition to macro-structures such as poverty and discrimination. Seven studies addressing culture surmise that FGC is culturally adequate (Fulcher, 2001; O'Shaughnessy et al., 2010; Joan Pennell & Burford, 1994; Roby et al., 2015; Sheets et al., 2009; Valenti, 2017; Waites, Macgowan, Pennell, Carlton-LaNey, & Weil, 2004), while three studies found FGC promising, but do not offer any definitive conclusions

on cultural adequacy (Chand & Thoburn, 2005; McCrae & Fusco, 2010; Rauktis, Huefner, & Cahalane, 2011). Finally, three studies, Cohen and Gershon (2015), Herzberg (2013) and Barn and Das (2016), assert that FGC is not directly culturally adaptable being implemented as a manual-based method. Significantly, only two studies feature children as informants, namely, the studies by McCrae and Fusco (2010) and Marcynyszyn et al. (2012). From the articles listed in Table 6 it appears that, two elements are particularly important for securing cultural adequacy. First, allowing space to consult family resources and engage in dialogue, and second, affording proximity to the local context and community.

Experiences from Indigenous Projects on FGC

By including indigenous projects, we seek to incorporate the experiences of indigenous peoples in this research. Three books are included in this synthesis (Henriksen, 2004b; Love, 2000; MacDonald, Glode, & Wien, 2005) and five reports (M. Bennett & Blackstock, 2002; Hollis-English, 2012; Love, 2002; Moyle, 2014; Neff, 2004).

Initially, FGCs were a way of trying to implement the recommendations from the 1988 Puaote-Ata-tu (Love, 2002). The Puaote-Ata-tu rapport base upon Maori people first hand stories, as well as historical and contemporary politics and practice studies. The report recommends a change in social services in line with Maori tradition (The Maori Perspective Advisory Committee, 1998/2001). Love (2000) argues that well-run FGCs can be beneficial to children and families. However, there is a concern about the level of cultural insight among social workers, and that Maori roots have acquired a tokenistic role in the social work done in Maori communities (Hollis-English, 2012). The FGC-based approach seeks to merge two worldviews and can potentially result in continued colonization of Maori people (Love, 2000). There is a new cross-sectoral agency, the holistic Whanau Ora process in New Zealand, which empowers the whole family rather than the individual. This process integrates the principles of FGC, but aims to overcome the limitations of the tendency to misuse the Maori family value in FGC (Moyle, 2014).

In a Hawaii study on FGC, Neff (2004) found that FGC participants referred to

FGC as a culturally appropriate method, although culture was not a direct theme in the interviews. In a Sami context, Henriksen (2004b) uses the Sami lavvo (teepee) as a model to illustrate the role of the extended family. He demonstrates how FGC can be appropriate for Sami culture of family and kin relations. A literature review on First Nations in Canada from 2002 presents an abstract that addresses family conferences, First Nations, and human rights, stating that FGC is in line with the local indigenous paradigm (M. Bennett & Blackstock, 2002). Also MacDonald et al. (2005) are studying FGC in indigenous communities in Canada find that the approach corresponding with traditional family and community values. This is comparable to the research that sees FGC as agreeing with indigenous worldviews. The reports from indigenous projects raises similar issues as the peer-reviewed articles: FGC can secure indigenous rights, FGC has the potential for a paradigm shift, FGC is a method to change over-representation of Indigenous children within child welfare, and FGC fits with indigenous culture.

Discussion

The two trends in FGC research

The four themes in the identified studies; rights, paradigm shift, over-representation, and culture, fall into two states of knowledge relating to FGC in indigenous contexts.

First, Theoretical knowledge: FGC as a cultural approach at the ideological and conceptual level. Second, Practical knowledge: FGC as a cultural practice at the practical level. Articles addressing the first theme, discuss paradigm shifts and securing of indigenous people's rights. Articles addressing the second theme pose questions concerning the use of FGC in specific indigenous contexts and as a tool towards over-representation of minority groups in social services.

FGC at the Theoretical Level

FGC arose from a political and ideological movement. International laws and conventions establish the rights of indigenous peoples. The Convention on the Rights of the Child require social systems capable of securing children's right to be involved in relationships that foster a sense of cultural belonging and interdependence (UNCRC 1989). FGC is a response to the inconsistencies between law and practice.

The method strives to ensure that social work gives families the possibility to express

their own culture (Ban, 2005; Hill, 2005). Research on FGC at the ideological and conceptual level stresses the importance of rethinking social services. Social services must be relevant beyond Eurocentric systems and comply with the requirements of international law. The studies also discuss how FGC can overcome the imbalance of power between cultural groups and compensate for the adverse effects of colonialism. Eleven of the twenty-six articles included in the meta-synthesis is theoretical. This high theoretical emphasis might spring from the fact that FGC has an ideological foundation seeking to transform the ethnocentric paradigms within social services. The questioning of paradigms frequently involves the challenging of theoretical assumptions.

Colonization.

One central aim underlying FGC is to overcome colonialism. Its purpose is to go beyond the hegemony of the Eurocentric worldview and provide a new way of performing social work. Research disagrees on whether FGC has been successful in achieving its goals. Social scientists debate whether FGC truly challenges and changes the standardization of social services within the modern Eurocentric welfare state. In addition, they question whether the approach is part of re-colonization of social services, or if it is in fact de-colonizing (Gilbert, 2013; Ivec et al., 2012; Moyle & Tauri, 2016). The tokenism debate echoes the debate on the question of potential re-colonization. Internationally, social services continue to refer to FGC methods as culturally adequate. In New Zealand they developed new strategies, such as Whanau Ora, as an attempt at enhancing commitment to Maori values and social systems (Moyle, 2014). The relatively low international interest in the debate of tokenism regarding FGC is cause for concern.

FGC at the practical level

Research that questions the success of FGC focuses on how this approach facilitates cultural adequacy in practical social work. Because it is mainly empirical, we classify such research as addressing the practical level of FGC. This research includes studies that show how social services use FGC in specific communities or societies. As indigenous and minority children continue to be over-represented in child welfare cases, there is a vital need for cultural knowledge in social services towards children

and families. Research at the practical level questions whether FGC is a practically and culturally adequate practice.

Subhead level 3: FGC potential in relation to over-representation and asymmetric power relation.

In general, there is a lack of knowledge of social work among indigenous and minority groups: this synthesis illustrates that FGC is no exception in this regard. There is a need for more knowledge produced with and by indigenous people on child welfare and social services. Studies evaluating culture and over-representation in child welfare conclude that FGC is potentially useful because it facilitates cultural adequacy and addresses asymmetrical power relations. However, as only a few studies have been conducted, their findings cannot be generalized. Additional research is required to create sustainable recommendations on the potential of FGC to help combat the over-representation of minority children within child welfare.

Culturally adequate approach.

The underlying aim of FGC distinguishing it from other practices is that the approach seeks to facilitate the family's own problem-solving processes. Many theoretical perspectives on FGC have in-common the notion of clients as experts on their own lives and thus fully capable of finding solutions. The task of the social worker is therefore, to recognize and highlight resources within the family (Frost et al., 2014). Given the history of oppression, indigenous people have a pressing need to be greeted by culturally competent social workers. They need social workers willing to listen and provide the opportunity to both define the problem and generate a solution (Herzberg, 2013; Weaver, 1999). In this respect, FGC has the framework required to facilitate culturally adequate social work. To facilitate for cultural competence, FGC requires a flexible approach rooted in local context (Barn & Das, 2016). It seems to be the theoretical base of FGC that enhanced development of culturally adequate social work, rather than the manually based method itself.

What is missing?

A few studies questions whether the FGC approach applied in different cultures

is potentially re-colonizing. Our synthesis revealed gaps in the research field. The knowledge base for social services is largely studies conducted on majority populations, and it is generally analyzed from the perspective of Eurocentric theories. Although the field of experts promote FGC as a culturally adequate method, the research primarily addresses majority populations. In these studies, children represent a small number of informants. The studies focus on neither the children's perspective nor the power structures within a family. We recommend that subsequent research with indigenous and minority families should explore these particular aspects of FGC.

We have not investigated whether or not FGC is culturally adequate as a working method in Maori culture. Rather, we have investigated studies concerning FGC outside New Zealand, aiming to contribute to the ongoing knowledge building on cultural adequate methods in social work. Hence, the analyses do not highlight the positive outcomes with and by the Maori society, even though we recognize and applaud this pioneer contribution.

We started out with the aim of summarizing the current state of FGC research in indigenous contexts. This approach may have had the unintended consequence of continuing the tendency to pursue one-sided research, disavowing indigenous experiences. We have tried to overcome this pitfall by including other relevant material, albeit without fully overcoming the inherent bias of our approach.

Conclusion

In this meta-synthesis, we have examined the research trend and asked two main questions: First, what constructions run through evaluation and theoretical studies that focus on FGC as a practice. Second, how is FGC addressed as a culturally adequate method, outside New Zealand, in these studies?

The research trends on FGC address four principal issues: rights, paradigm shifts, over-representation in child welfare, and culture. When examining the state of research at the practical level, we find that researchers evaluate FGC as a culturally adequate practice. At the ideological and conceptual level, FGC-related debates center on FGCs' ability to facilitate de-colonialization and structural changes. The

ongoing debate about re-colonizing or de-colonizing does not have a central place in FGC research. There are two exceptions to this overall picture, namely Moyle and Tauri (2016), who warn about the danger of re-colonization, and Cohen and Gershon (2015), who highlight cultural differences in the construction of families. These contributions introduce the debate on colonialism into the research on FGC. We welcome this debate.

The synthesis also reveals that the researchers generally assume that FGC is a culturally adequate method outside New Zealand. The underlying assumption of this debate is that FGC is a one-size-fits-all model. Our finding shows this understanding fails to recognize the process in New Zealand, where Maori people have carried out the process and developed this culturally adequate method in a Maori context. Indigenous people's rights are not necessarily secured by importing FGC as manually based method. It is more likely to render possible the rights by implementing the theoretical framework of FGC as a democratic work model. A central part of the theoretical framework of FGC is to contextualize social work.

Based on the synthesis presented above, we advocate local and cultural context as the foundation for the practice when adopting and implementing FGC in new communities. We recommend that cultural adequacy guide the implementation in new contexts, as this is one of FGC's main contributions to international social work.

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