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The social status of women belonging to an ethnic minority and the resulting consequences for the field of social work

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Vorwort

Internationale Dimensionen der Sozialen Arbeit gelten für die akademische Ausbildung und professionelle Reflexion zwar gemeinhin als wichtig, aber nur wenige Studierende machen dieses Diskurs- und Themenfeld zu einem eigenen Profilschwerpunkt. An einigen Hochschulen existieren spezialisierte Studiengänge (meistens auf Master-Level) mit einem internationalen oder transnationalen Profil. Seit 2014 gibt es in der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziale Arbeit (DGSA) eine Fachgruppe Internationale Soziale Arbeit und es erscheinen zunehmend programmatische Veröffentlichungen.

All dies trägt dazu bei, die Verflechtungen und Grenzen der nationalen, institutionellen und kulturellen Selbstverständnisse von Disziplin und Profession zu weiten. Unweigerlich konfrontiert das aber auch mit sehr grundlegenden konzeptionellen, theoretischen und methodischen Fragen der komparativen Analyse. Denn diese kann sich nicht an nationalstaatlichen Rahmungen und Vergleichsobjekten orientieren, selbst wenn Soziale Arbeit bis heute stark nationalstaatlich konstituiert und konditioniert ist. Um die fortschreitende Entgrenzung von Fachdiskursen und Handlungsfeldern angemessen verstehen und beschreiben zu können, bedarf es vielmehr eines transnational und intersektional geschärften Blickes, der dann auf konkrete Phänomene und Handlungsfelder zu richten ist.

Die Bachelor-Thesis „*The social status of women belonging to an ethnic minority and the resulting consequences for the field of social work. A comparative analysis related to the living situation of Indigenous women in Canada, and Sinti and Roma women in Germany.*" von Laura Müller ist ein gelungenes Beispiel für einen solchen Blick. Angeregt durch einen eigenen Studien- und Forschungsaufenthalt an der Vancouver Island University (Kanada), untersucht sie die gesellschaftliche Situation und Unterstützung von Frauen aus ethnischen Minderheiten in Kanada und Deutschland.

Die geschichtliche Rekonstruktion und gegenwärtige Situation der sogenannten „First Nation" women in Kanada wird der sozialen Lage von Frauen der Sinti und Roma Gemeinden in Deutschland gegenüber gestellt. Dabei werden die verschiedenen sozialhistorischen Bedingungen sorgfältig bedacht und Fragen von Diskriminierung, Bildungs- und Arbeitsmarktzugängen bis hin zu Kriminalisierungen junger Frauen konsequent in einer intersektionalen Perspektiven betrachtet. Erst vor diesem historischen Hintergrund wird die bis heute problematische Rolle der Sozialen Arbeit und die Skepsis der „Adressatinnen"

gegenüber einer staatlich getragenen Sozial- und Bildungsadministration in beiden Minderheitengruppen nachvollziehbar. Die Einbeziehung des kollektiven historischen Wissens der jeweiligen Communities und eine Aufarbeitung des professionsimmanenten (Neo)Kolonialismus und latenter Rassismen sind bei aller Unterschiedlichkeit zwischen Kanada und Deutschland ein *gemeinsames* Merkmal einer geforderten transkulturellen Reflexivität Sozialer Arbeit.

Mit der in englischer Sprache verfassten, fachtheoretisch und gesellschaftspolitisch gleichermaßen fundierten Analyse von eigentlich „Unvergleichlichem" stellt die Studie von Laura Müller ein mutiges Beispiel einer intellektuell eigenständigen und politisch engagierten „Grenzbearbeitung" in der Sozialen Arbeit dar. Die Würdigung dieser exzellenten Arbeit in der Reihe „Augezeichnet!" durch die Jury der Fakultät für Angewandte Sozialwissenschaft möge auch für zukünftige Studierende der Fakultät als eine Ermutigung für internationale Erkundungen der eigenen Diszipin und Profession dienen.

Prof. Dr. Matthias Otten

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1. Introduction

The main focus of this paper lays on the social, economic, and living situations of women who belong to ethnic minorities in their countries of origin and on how social work deals with problems and circumstances those women find themselves in. The comparison of the situation of Indigenous women in Canada, and Sinti and Roma women in Germany will serve as an example in this context. Pamela Palmater, an Indigenous lawyer and activist, stated 2016: "Indigenous women and girls are victims because they are Indigenous and because they are female" (p. 258). Indigenous people in Canada continue to suffer from the tremendous outcomes the colonial system had on their tribes and families. Women and girls of Indigenous heritage are therefore extremely vulnerable groups within the Canadian society. Sinti and Roma women in Germany also represent a very vulnerable and disadvantaged group. They face multilayered discrimination, based on their ethnicity and gender, inside and outside of their communities (Herold, 2014). Even though they are the biggest, and from most European states acknowledged, minority in Europe, they are suspected to be the most discriminated ones as well (DaMigra, n.d.).

To gain a deeper understanding of the current situation of Indigenous people in Canada, the history and context of colonization will be illustrated in Chapter 2. Based on this is the analysis of the current life circumstances and issues of Indigenous women. The history and the present situation of Sinti and Roma will be reviewed in Chapter 3. Building on that, the analysis of the current situation of Sinti and Roma women in Germany will be described. Both communities often find themselves living at the edge of society and with social services addressing their needs. Whether those services are the most effective ones concerning their addressees will be discussed throughout this paper. Furthermore, this paper aims to point out possible improvements and different approaches for social workers within this work field as well as to discuss concepts that may already be in place in organizations yielding a great rate of success.

2. Indigenous people (Canada)

For the further understanding of this paper it is necessary to briefly review specific vocabulary used in this paper and the history of the colonial era of Canada. **Indigenous** is a term to describe

First Nations, Inuit and Métis people. **First Nations** describe all different tribes living in present Canada except: (1) the **Inuit**, who settle in the Northern territories; and (2) the **Métis** who are descendants from the Cree Nation, and European settlers. This chapter will focus on the contact between settlers and Indigenous people, various drastic interventions against Indigenous people, and the different outcomes resulting from them. In the course of this paper it is not possible to analyze and discuss the entire Canadian history, which is why the main focus will be on the Indian Act, Residential Schools, the Sixties Scoop, and their respective outcomes. Following to that will the analysis of current issues regarding Indigenous women in Canada with a specific focus on the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). The representation and extent of Indigenous activism in Canada will be discussed within this context. Furthermore, the women's access to infrastructure on reserves as well as to adequate healthcare will be examined. Indigenous women – as a visible minority in their own home country – face various barriers and obstacles throughout their lives, with consequences for their education and employment chances. At the end of this chapter, the important and critical role of social workers working with Indigenous communities will be elaborated.

2.1.   Illustration of the Canadian history concerning the First Nations

The first contact between Indigenous People and the European settlers from France and England dates back to 1600. French settlers mostly colonized areas of the East coast and the English were settling over the main land up to the West coast. King George III announced the Royal Proclamation in 1763, which stated that all land belongs to the First Nations of Canada as their home and hunting grounds as long as they do not relinquish it (Hall, 2006/2019). No settler or private person was allowed to buy land directly from the First Nations, except the crown (Hall, 2006/2019). After the official Confederation of Canada was formed in 1867, settlers and First Nations peoples began to sign treaties that would regulate trading agreements, living situations, and the usage of land and resources from 1871 onwards.

The Indian Act was published in 1876 by the Canadian government. Its purpose was to restrain the rights of Indigenous people and to give European settlers significant power over the First Nations communities and their way of living (Stinson, 2016a). The law was used to label Indigenous people as 'Indians' and to remove various rights from this specific group, such as

voting, settlement, and hunting rights (Henderson, 2006/2018). Instead, they received an 'Indian Status card' that would register them and made them assignable as 'Indians'. The government banned the Indigenous people from practicing their traditions and ceremonies, such as the potlatch or the sundance. Restricted in these various ways, Indigenous communities faced multiple problems. They were not able to feed their families adequately or to fulfill other basic needs such as the need for clothing.

Notably, the Indian Act intervened especially in the rights of Status Indian women. Not only were they unable to vote under the Act until 1960, they also would have permanently and irrevocably lost their Status by marrying a non-Status man (Strong-Boag, 2016). Consequently, they would have to leave the reserve and their communities behind, because only Status Indians were allowed to live on reserves (Stinson, 2016b). If a woman divorced from her non-Indigenous husband, she would not be allowed back on the reserve and often lost the connection to her tribe. As a result, many women who were divorced or left behind would start a life on the streets, working in red light districts to survive, or turn to drugs in an effort to cope with pain and trauma. Women were more affected by the laws implemented by the settlers, as these laws were the reason why they lost their position within their tribes. Through the implementation of the Indian Act, the tribal hierarchy was changed, thus that only men were allowed to be voted into important positions, taking away any political power from Indigenous women (Harper, 2006).

In pre-colonial Canada, the life of Indigenous people differed immensely from their life now. Not only did their entire way of living change, but also within their tribes, the roles of women and men changed drastically. Within Indigenous tribes, there used to be a matriarchy system rather than the now prevalent patriarchy system (Stinson, 2016b). Women were seen as the head of the household due to their long list of responsibilities, including educating the children, preparing meals and clothes, teaching and carrying out traditions. Women were able to make big decisions that affected the entire nation due to their status as chiefs or involvement in women's councils and were therefore chosen to interact with the settlers. By refusing to engage with Indigenous women as leaders, settlers started to introduce the patriarchal system to Indigenous nations (Stinson, 2016b).

2.1.1. Exploitation during colonization

The introduction of industrial fishing during the 1600s resulted in the extinction of entire tribes due to fights over hunting and fishing grounds. Next to the solely economic causes for fights between settlers and Indigenous people, there were slaughter-like encounters between both parties. Additionally, the European settlers brought a variety of new diseases with them, causing many deaths of First Nation people (Stevenson, 2005).

On top of the fishing and hunting imports from Canada, the French people discovered the fur market and its many opportunities. As long as settlers were dependent on the knowledge and skills of First Nations regarding the hunting grounds and techniques, as well as the production of fur and leather clothing such as beaver hats, the relationship between both parties was based on respect. Many settlers took Indigenous wives to form a stronger bond with the tribes and to gain more specific knowledge about fur production. Descendants from those relationships formed a new group of Indigenous people called the Métis (Van Kirk, 1999). As soon as the first European women arrived in the settlers communities, many men left their Indigenous wives and children to form new or old relationships with women from their country of origin, leaving many Indigenous women destitute and homeless.

2.1.2. Residential schools

The first residential school was built in 1838 in what is now known as Québec. However, many documents highlight the time around 1880, since then the residential schools became mandatory for all Indigenous children between 7 and 16 years of age (Miller, 2012/2019).

The Indigenous children were taken from their families and placed in schools far away. They were forbidden to speak their own language, to have physical contact with siblings, to practice traditional ceremonies, and to have social relationships with their family and friends. The aim was to assimilate and christianize Indigenous people. Duncan Campbell Scott, the deputy superintendent of the Department of Indian Affairs, stated in 1920 that he wanted "to get rid of the Indian problem […] Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian [left] in Canada" (cited in McDougall, 2008/2018 p. 7). After attending residential schools for the

majority of their adolescence, the students were sent back home, often unable to speak their traditional language and thus unable to communicate with their parents. Aside from the communication problems, the communities were faced with entire generations that never learned how to properly parent or form stable relationships.

The last residential school in Canada closed in 1996. Between 1880 and 1996, 150.000 Indigenous students attended residential schools, of which over 3.200 died (Miller, 2012/2019). The actual number of deaths is assumed to be much higher (close to 6.000) due to incomplete and missing records. It is assumed that these children died through maltreatment, starvation or other alleged torture (Miller, 2012/2019).

2.1.3. Sixties Scoop

The term **Sixties Scoop** describes an event that took place during the years from 1960 to 1990. Many children of Indigenous heritage were forcefully taken from their families and home communities and placed in child care or were given up for adoption. Nearly 11.000 children were adopted during this period, mostly into Caucasian middle class Euro-Canadian families or even into other countries or regions, e.g., the USA, Europe, or New Zealand. Recent research even suggests that close to 20.000 children were taken-off from reserves during that time (Sinclair & Dainard, 2016/2017). Adoption agencies paid the Canadian child welfare system up to 10.000 USD per child, in order that they were able to pass through the adoption process (Lavell-Havard & Lavell, 2006). The children were given the last name from their new legal parents and therefore lost their Indian status and the chance to ever regain contact with their family of origin (Alston-O`Connor, 2010). The loss of identity and the experienced trauma of being forced into entirely new surroundings and families led to vast numbers of children to become runaways, to take drugs, or to turn to a life on the streets (Alston-O`Connor, 2010).

Prior to this, Indigenous children made up 1% of all children in care, which rocketed to approximately 30% of all children in care after the Sixties Scoop, causing a tremendous overrepresentation of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children in the child-welfare system (Alston-O`Connor, 2010). This overrepresentation – engendered by forceful removal – often led to a downward spiral with regards to the children's lives and caused a lot of trauma for individuals, families and their communities. Indigenous children that turned to substance abuse in order to

deal with their pain were not seen as tragedies, but rather as a stereotype coming true. The majority of social service workers at that time had a Eurocentric perspective regarding 'the right' way of living, which led them to assume that an Indigenous household was not up to their standards and appropriate for a child to grow up in. These past events might explain the skepticism Indigenous people still display towards social workers today.

Researchers argue that the Sixties Scoop was just another way of perpetuating the cultural genocide and assimilation of Indigenous people into Western society (Sinclair, 2007). Many adult adoptees are now trying to reconnect with their birth family, which is often difficult due to an incomprehensible bureaucracy. They might have experienced a form of identity loss and are experiencing the human need to search for their ancestors and cultural background in order to have a fulfilled identity. Transracial adoptions made it difficult for adopting families and the adoptees to connect and to deal with their different cultural backgrounds in a well-informed and acknowledging manner (Sinclair, 2007).

2.1.4. Representation of 'Indian' people in popular culture

In school books, newspapers and other literature, Indigenous women were often portrayed and described as dirty, easy or drunken 'Indians' (Kim Anderson, 2000). The language and pictures used to describe First Nations people, and especially their women, were consciously chosen to degrade them and to justify cruel behavior towards them. Slurs such as 'squaw' were used to objectify and sexualize Indigenous women. Previously described as queens and mother-nature figures, they seemed to restrict the influence and power of the male European settlers. The perspective shifted from 'queen' to 'princess' or 'squaw' (Anderson, 2000 pp.100-102). According to Anderson (2000), the term 'princess' could be seen as a description of an easier to claim property in this context. The language in history and school books might have changed, but the slurs and stereotypes connected to Indigenous women were internalized by both Caucasian European Canadians and Indigenous Canadians.

2.1.5. Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Canada

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was founded in 2008 and was active until December 18th 2015. The commission's mandate was to collect and transcribe the memories and experiences of Residential School survivors at the 'National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation' (NCTR) (NCTR, n.d.). Based on the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement (IRSSA), students that attended the schools had a chance to tell their stories, get acknowledged, and perhaps even get financial compensation (Marshall, 2013/2016). Since 2015, the documents and statements made by former students are preserved in the NCTR at the University of Manitoba. The project aims to make these historic documents accessible for survivors and their families for further ancestry research as well as to enable educators to be more equipped to teach Canadian history (NCTR, n.d.). The NCTR hopes to enable people to heal, reconcile and move forward together as a nation.

2.2.   Outcomes for the affected tribes, families and Indigenous women

The history of Canada left its marks on Indigenous communities and the outcome of the various policies in place is still felt today. The mental health issues numerous Indigenous women and men face, and the lack of professional support have serious consequences for their quality of life.

2.2.1. Intergenerational trauma and historical trauma

With the introduction of the Indian Act and the government's goal to assimilate Indigenous people into Western culture, multiple bills and laws were passed. In addition, a variety of projects that would reduce the official number of Indigenous people were introduced. Those 'projects' include the previously described residential school system and the Sixties Scoop. Many children who attended residential schools were traumatized by the immense abuse by teachers and priests but also by the abduction from their families and culture. They often did not learn how to parent, have stable relationships of any kind, or practice their culture (Bennet & Blackstock, 2002).

Residential school and Sixties Scoop survivors showed higher rates of post-traumatic-stress-disorder, depression and suicide than non-Indigenous people (Martin, 2019). These symptoms, caused by the actions of the Canadian government, were not treated seriously until recently. Social workers during the 1960s saw dysfunctional families and instead of working to annihilate the root of their problems, they took away the children - again. This caused trauma over multiple generations.

Hartmann and Gone (2014) elaborated on the differences between Indigenous Historic Trauma (IHT) and life trauma or historic oppression. According to them the following are the key factors of IHT: (1) the fact that IHT has its origin in the colonial time, causing physical and psychological injuries; (2) it affects entire communities and is therefore experienced collectively; (3) high risk and vulnerability are transmitted across generations, passing down the experienced pain from old trauma (Hartmann & Gone, 2014). Barker et al. (2019) found a direct connection between the risk level of young adults to use drugs and the circumstance of their grandparents and parents attending residential schools or being in contact with the child welfare system in Canada. Adolescents with ancestors in the residential school system tend to be more involved with substance abuse than their counterparts. The substance abuse does not only affect the individuals themselves but also their families and the overall picture the society might have of Indigenous people.

2.2.2. Overrepresentation within childcare system, sex trade, and prisons

Indigenous Children make up 4% of the Canadian population but represent 48% of children in foster care (Palmater, 2018). More than 50% of all Indigenous children were in some sort of child welfare arrangement in the year 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2010), and even 60% lived in poverty. Aboriginal children are 4.2-times more likely to be involved in investigations concerning child maltreatment than non-aboriginal children (Sinha et al., 2012/2013). Those include investigations against foster parents as well as biological parents of the children. Maltreatment of children has enormous effects on their mental and physical health which can turn into very serious outcomes such as long standing trauma, attachment-disorders, or self-harming behavior.

The Missing and Murdered Women and Girls of Canada represent another problematic phenomenon Canadian society is facing. Women and girls of Indigenous heritage are at higher

risk for experiencing abuse, kidnapping, rape, and murder compared to non-Indigenous women. They are also proportionally overrepresented within the sex trade, which leads to discriminatory preconceptions on the side of police and law enforcement (Hansen & Emeka, 2019).

Indigenous people are also highly overrepresented in prisons and correctional services. Despite the fact that Indigenous people represent only a minor proportion of the Canadian society, their youth enters the correctional system at a much higher rate than their non-Indigenous counterparts (Statistics Canada, 2019). In this case, young Indigenous men are at an even higher risk than girls. Vicki Chartrand (2018) emphasized this injustice and recommended alternative approaches of correction, such as community placements instead of imprisonment.

2.3. Current situation of Indigenous women in Canada

Indigenous women experience racism in numerous ways, which result in discrimination and disadvantages for them throughout their lives. Next to other female groups which represent visible minorities, such as immigrant or refugee women, Indigenous women are targeted simply based on their appearance and on discriminatory assumptions against their race (Morris, 2002). This has major effects on their ability to find proper housing or adequate access to the justice system. Having had negative interactions and experiences with the police or law enforcement institutions, Indigenous women try to not get in contact with them, even if they are victimized, out of anxiety to reproduce negative connotations with their ethnicity (Morris, 2002). This leads to many unreported cases of racialized crimes and more internalized racism.

The concept of intersectionality is also applicable within this context. It describes how various discriminatory factors such as race/ethnicity, gender, class, and language overlap: A person can be experiencing discrimination due to multiple factors at once. Crenshaw (1991, p. 1245-1295) analyzed different categories in which intersectionality is present, such as the political system, structural states, or the media. Additionally, she related intersectionality to the issue of violence against women of color and the various barriers and limitations they face due to their social or ethnic origin. According to Crenshaw, women of color are disadvantaged when it comes to accessing housing and employment. Outcomes of this phenomenon include the spatial allocation of citizens according to their social class and ethnicity across cities. The separation by ethnicity

or culture might foster misconceptions of each race, due to the lack of diversity, inter-group interactions, and interracial mixing.

Anderson (2000) described the representation of Indigenous women in books and documents during the colonial times, while other authors analyzed the present representation of Indigenous women within the media concerning the MMIWG cases (Gilchrist, 2010; García-Del Moral, 2011). For example, Gilchrist's (2010) comparison of the coverage of crimes against white women and Indigenous women showed that crimes against Indigenous women are 6-times less likely to be mentioned in the press. Furthermore, she discussed the placement of articles, number and tone of words, and the presence and placement of photographs. The results showed huge discrepancies between articles covering crimes against white and against Indigenous women (Gilchrist, 2010). Jiwani and Young (2006) stated that if the system does not change, Indigenous women will continue to be "in the lowest rungs of the social order, thereby making them expendable and invisible, if not disposable" (p. 912). They placed emphasis on the vulnerability of women with Indigenous identity and on how a low coverage of their fates can, on the one hand, be representative for a racist and judgmental system in Canada and, on the other hand, reproduce systemic racism within the police force and society (Jiwani and Young, 2006). García-Del-Moral (2011) pointed out that the way of representing violence against Indigenous women can itself be violating is in its way of reporting. Victims can be portrayed as being 'deserving' of their fate and through sensational journalistic the focus of reporting often lies on the perpetrator or the crime instead of the victim herself (García-Del-Moral, 2011 p. 55). She also underlined that, by focusing on the perpetrator as a psychopath, the responsibility to deal with such tragedies is taken away from society, which will just lead to a continuing circle of violence against Indigenous women (García-Del-Moral, 2011). The wording in articles and adjectives chosen to describe Indigenous women can have an effect on the entire society and how they view Indigenous women. This includes Indigenous women themselves and how they internalize racist behavior against them. Since racism simultaneously acts on the institutional and on the interpersonal level, it cannot be seen as a single act taking place against an individual, but must be viewed as a systematic discrimination affecting entire communities and having a live-long impact on individuals (Speight, 2007).

There is one specific news channel whose reporting focuses on topics and issues relevant for the Indigenous communities: The Aboriginal People Television Network (APTN) National News (APTN, 2015). Among the most popular news cooperations – such as the Canadian Broadcasting

Corporation (CBC), the National Post Canada, or CTV Television Network – only CBC has its own section for Indigenous news (CBC, 2019; NPC, 2019; CTV, 2019). CTV represents a rather unbiased news source and the National Post is located at the more conservative end of the political spectrum, which is why they might have different broadcasting priorities (Media Bias, n.d.). As Caucasian Canadians are well represented in all public news channels, Indigenous Canadians have difficulty finding themselves adequately represented with regards to their concerns and issues. Not being visible to the majority of a nation leaves its mark concerning the interaction between both groups and how they perceive one another.

2.3.1. Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Activism

Not only are Indigenous people overrepresented within the child welfare system, jails and the sex trade, they also go missing or get murdered in elevated numbers. The issue of Indigenous women and girls that go missing and are often found dead or never get found is an ongoing problem. The Royal Canadian Mountain Police (RCMP) published a report in 2014 concerning the numbers of MMIWG. According to this report, there have been 1.017 murdered and 196 missing Indigenous females between the years from 1980 to 2013 (RCMP, 2014). The report analyzed the causes of death and the relationship towards the perpetrators. Even though being killed by a spouse displayed the highest rate for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous women, non-Indigenous women were 12% more likely to be killed by a current or former partner (RCMP, 2014 p. 12). Indigenous women were also more often killed by a stranger or an acquaintance (RCMP, 2014). This shows that violence against Indigenous women is not only an issue of domestic violence, but that perpetrators can also be peripheral to the victims, making their everyday life much more uncertain and dangerous. The arbitrariness of who is likely to assault them makes it difficult for women to trust their vis-à-vis and for the RCMP to find a suspect.

In their report, the RCMP also analyzed possible high-risk factors for Indigenous women. As stated in the report, 63% of Indigenous women have been intoxicated by alcohol or drugs prior to the criminal act against them, compared to 20% of non-Indigenous women (RCMP, 2014 p. 17). The RCMP, however, did not discuss whether this intoxication happened through free will or if it was forced on the victim without their consent. Therefore, these data have to be interpreted carefully. It is interesting that even though participating in the sex trade industry is considered a

high-risk profession or lifestyle, only 12% of MMIWG victims were verifiably involved in this industry. Furthermore, the RCMP pointed out that the status of employment or the receiving of social insurance can be seen as a high-risk factor for MMIWG. They presented high numbers of Indigenous women concerning the named factors but do not follow through with an explanation of why these factors may or may not affect the safety of Indigenous women so harshly (RCMP, 2014).

The integrity of this report has been questioned multiple times by various activists. Pamela Palmater (2015) pointed out that the data collection is incomplete for several reasons: First, there is an issue with the identification of the victims as Indigenous, as it depends on either their possession of Indian Status, an officer's discretion, or self-identification (Palmater, 2015). Second, the report does not include cases in which RCMP officers were accused of assaulting Indigenous. The Legal Strategy Coalition (LSC) – whose members are, among others, Amnesty International Canada and Constance MacIntosh – criticized that the RCMP report only analyzed cases uploaded to a national database, which is assumed to be delayed by two years (LSC, 2015). In addition, the RCMP continuously uses the term "aboriginal" to describe Indigenous people, which is considered an outdated and politically incorrect term in Indigenous communities.

Many Indigenous women and girls go missing on Highway N°16 in British Columbia, Canada. Many reserves along this highway have bad infrastructure and often have limited to no access to public transport. Mobility is an issue for many people living on reserves and, as a result, a vast number of women and girls opt to hitchhike in order to get to nearby cities or even just leave the reserves. Instead of investing into new public transport or infrastructure, governments and RCMP criticize hitchhikers and label their behavior as being 'risky' and 'dangerous' (Morton, 2016). These labels consolidate the picture of the Indigenous women who deserve to be assaulted, which is also fostered by their deeply racialized and gendered depiction in the media and police reports (Morton, 2016).

In order to address the issue of MMIWG in Canada, the Canadian government decided to put an inquiry into place that should examine past and current problems within the system, and current policies and practices in place (Smylie & Cywink, 2016). In an article in the Canadian Journal of Public Health, Smylie and Cywink emphasized on the exigent need of mental health and social support for families and persons concerned prior, during, and after the inquiry. They formulated four key factors that should be considered before working with those families: The first one focuses on adequate counseling opportunities in the fields of addiction, mental health, trauma,

and social needs. Furthermore, there is a need for educated response teams working from a trauma-informed, culturally safe and community-led approach. Ultimately, community-led safety nets, as well as specified resource packages for affected families need to be installed (Smylie & Cywink, 2016).

The issue of MMIWG gets more and more public attention through thematization in documentaries or other activist campaigns. Documentaries such as 'Finding Dawn' or 'Highway of Tears' cover the fate of different cases of MMIWG and the RCMP's dealing with them (Eriksen & Welsh, 2006; Pope & Smiley, 2015). The documentaries show very well how often police-officers act in racially biased ways and stall families of missing females because they assume Indigenous females to be runaways who will come back on their own. This leads to long periods during which women or girls are not labeled as 'missing' even though their families are very vocal with their concerns. Without being labeled 'missing', no resources, such as search troops and public attention, will be made accessible by the police. The fate of Ramona Wilson in the documentary 'Finding Dawn' pictures how the police, instead of assuming that she was just a runaway showing adolescent behavior, should have taken the concerns of families and friends seriously (Eriksen & Welsh, 2006).

The artist Jamie Black initiated the Red Dress Project in 2010 in order 'to draw attention to the gendered and racialized nature of violent crimes against Aboriginal women and to evoke a presence through the marking of absence' (Jamie Black, 2014). She placed over 600 red dresses across cities and university campuses to symbolize each missing Indigenous woman. Some universities initiated their own red dress campaigns to contribute to Black's work, show solidarity, and raise awareness for the MMIWG.

The 'Sisters in Spirit' movement initiated a Remembrance Day for MMIWG throughout Canada, which takes place on the fourth of October each year (Native Women's Association of Canada, n.d.). During those vigils, people come together to mourn and remember their missing or murdered sisters, wives, daughters and mothers. Indigenous activism does not find its end with the issue of MMIWG, but continues with topics like nature conservation, animal welfare, and political injustices.

Activists often use social media in order to spread news or awareness for issues, such as the MMIWG or environmental activism. As described earlier, Indigenous people, and especially women, do not appear on TV or popular news channels on a regular basis. This coverage is, compared to social media, based on national borders and only has a localized influence on

people. By instrumentalizing hashtags such as #MMIWG, #sistersinspirit, #inquiry, and #AmInext to raise awareness about the sexual and racialized violence against Indigenous women and girls, activists are able to communicate their concerns across borders and within an international context (Moeke-Pickering, Cote-Meek, & Pegoraro, 2018).

2.3.2. Access to health care, housing, and schooling

Access to healthcare varies depending on the geographic location of the patients. Nelson and Wilson (2018) conducted a study with Indigenous people and health care providers in an urban setting in Northern Canada to extract different reasons that can be considered barriers for accessing health care. They highlighted three major reasons why Indigenous people claim that they were obstructed from accessing services: The quality of care, waiting times, and racism or discrimination was described by both patients and health care providers (Nelson &Wilson, 2018). Nelson and Wilson (2018) concluded that emphasis on cultural safety is much needed, in order to be able to provide accurate help within this context.

Next to physical and medical needs, the Indigenous population shows a huge demand for mental health help. The rates of suicidal thoughts among Indigenous women are almost two-times higher than among non-Indigenous women, and had various causes such as a low self-worth or a history of residential school attendance within the family, as well as higher drug abuse (Kumar, 2016). In 2012, 23% of Indigenous women between 25 to 54 years of age had seriously considered committing suicide at some point in their life (Statistics Canada, 2012). Not only the rates of suicidal thoughts are much higher for Indigenous people, but the actual suicide rates are, too (Webster, 2016). According to Webster (2016), there have been claims on the side of the Indigenous communities that the data provided by the Canadian government are incomplete and missing essential numbers, thus falsifying the statistics. There is distrust against government policies and agencies based on historical knowledge and experience among Indigenous peoples, which can lead to psychological stress when medical services are accessed (Peiris, Brown, & Cass, 2008).

The infrastructure and housing situation on- and off-reserves has an enormous impact on the wellbeing of Indigenous people. There is a lack of appropriate infrastructure, maintenance, and water supply, which influences the ability to build new houses on reserve (Dyck, 2015). Between

the years 2008 to 2010, only 69% of households on reserves had a piped running water supply, while 15% had water trucked in, and 13% had to use a well for their water supply (First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2011). In 2011, 21% of households on reserves showed inadequate conditions compared to 2% of all households in Canada, which illustrates the precarious situation Indigenous people live in (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2016). The lack of proper housing, or access to necessary hygienic infrastructures, seriously impacts the physical and mental health of the aggrieved parties.

Not only does the access to medical help and infrastructure represent a current issue for Indigenous people, but the access to and experiences within the educational system are also challenging for Indigenous children. Indigenous university students described the presence of subtle racism within social and academic interactions and within the school system (Bailey, 2015). According to Bailey's findings, Indigenous students experienced mockery, accusations, and disfavor from their non-Indigenous counterparts and the staff.

The unemployment rate of Indigenous women (25-64 years of age) in 2011 was twice as high as of non-Indigenous women with a similar degree level. An exemption are the rates for women with a postsecondary certificate, where the rates differed from 5.1% for Indigenous women to 8.4% for non-Indigenous women (Statistics Canada, 2011). Furthermore, only 12% of non-Indigenous people have no high school degree compared to over 28% of First Nations people on reserve and 47% of First Nations people off reserve (only counting Status Indians). There are limitations for Indigenous people to find work and therefore to provide for themselves and their families. As various studies have shown, this has had serious impacts on their mental health (Hajizadeh, Bombay, & Asada, 2019). According to Hajizadeh, Bombay, and Asada (2019) Indigenous women, who were living in a low income household and within communities with high income inequality, were at high risk for suicide ideation and attempts.

2.4. Social work within the Indigenous communities

Historically, social work and its practitioners have had a controversial role in engaging with Indigenous communities. Men and women were affected deeply by interactions with social workers during the Residential School era and the Sixties Scoop. The outcomes for women will be reviewed in this chapter.

The history and progression of social work and the welfare system in Canada cannot be seen as the positive and charitable development many would expect. Prior to professional social work, Indian agents and Christian missionaries, both coming from the settler community, were involved with the concerns of Indigenous communities. While Christian missionaries were responsible for the education and civilization of Indigenous people, Indian agents were mostly in control of the contribution and access of social welfare services, food and other resources until the late 1900s. Therefore, they had great power over Indigenous people and their living standards (Fortier & Hon-Sin Wong, 2018). During the rise of professional social work and charity organizations, assimilation and civilization of Indigenous people were still counted as a priority or guiding principle for their practice. After the Indian Act got reviewed in 1951, social workers took over the previous responsibilities of Indian agents and perpetuated the subtle control and oppression of Indigenous people. While social work originally had the intention to help individuals who struggle with the system, it became a part of the oppressive colonial welfare system. Fortier and Hon-Sing Wong (2018) elaborated on three ways in which todays social work practice reproduces colonial structures (pp. 6-10): Firstly, they analyzed the practice of extraction from Indigenous communities, which can be related to land resources but also to the extraction of community members and children through the child welfare services. Social work reacts to circumstances that are labeled critical or inhumane, caused through the social hierarchy of the colonial system. However, they seem to treat those issues as self-made and as a result of lack of development and not as a result of colonial history and oppression. Secondly, Fortier and Hon-Sing Wong (2018) described how social work reproduces the colonial settler state by orienting its practices and methods towards the needs of the dominantly white society in Canada. Finally, they argued that social work in Canada is used as a technique of restriction and pacification for ethnic minorities or people of lower social classes. Social workers build allies with law enforcement, politics, and the police in order to identify individuals that do not act according to the predominant norms. Those individuals are seen as a disruption to the system and therefore have to be institutionalized and civilized according to expectations of society (Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong, 2018).

Social workers worked within residential schools and were on the front line during the Sixties Scoop, taking children away from their families. As described earlier, this caused tremendous trauma for children and parents. It is necessary to see the oppressive role social workers took on upon supporting a discriminatory, oppressive, and abusive welfare system.

The call for change in the child welfare service for Indigenous communities has been rising in the past years since Western society in Canada has begun to acknowledge that these services are best delivered by Indigenous social workers themselves (Burke, 2018). Although the numbers of Indigenous social workers have been increasing continuously, the practice has changed little and it needs to be questioned whether the educational system as well as social organizations and institutions have adapted a more indigenized and decolonized practice. To facilitate deployment of Indigenous social workers, the Ministry of Child and Family Development (MCFD) in British Columbia collaborates with independent organizations called Delegated Aboriginal Agencies (DAA) in order to enhance Indigenous influence in the field of social work. DAAs have been legally overtaking specific services for the MCFD since 1980, but only in a highly-regulated setting (Burke, 2018). To conclude: In some cases, child welfare services are brought by Indigenous agencies, but they must always comply with the MCFD's regulations. Therefore, the methods of such agencies are limited, perpetuating Western Eurocentric structures.

3. Sinti and Roma (Germany)

Sinti and Roma represent an ethnic minority in Europe. Historians agree that they have their origin in India. This folk was later banished from its home country and started to flee to Eastern and Central Europe in the 1100s. In the following chapter, the history of the Sinti and Roma will be described within the European and German context to build a conceptual understanding of their heritage and the use of specific terms. The term **Sinti and Roma** is an umbrella term that includes all Roma with German nationality. The term **Sinti** specifically describes people with Roma ethnicity whose ancestors have settled in Germany over 600 years ago. The term **Roma** is connected to the language **Romani**, which spoken by their people (Milton, 2000 p. 318). Only since 1995, Sinti and Roma are an acknowledged national minority in Germany next to the minorities of Sorbs, Danes, and Frisians (Faraco, 2006).

There is now a vast variety of people that descended from the same original folk but later split into many different subcultures. Because Roma and Sinti intermixed with other groups through marriages and adapted different culturally elements depending on the country they lived in, it is difficult to describe them as one ethnicity (Deutscher Bundestag, 2012). While many theorists

emphasize this, the term Sinti and Roma is still used to describe them as one ethnicity in scientific, social, and political contexts.

The German Bundestag (2012) published a report that summarizes the history and current circumstances of Sinti and Roma people in Germany. The report stated that, even though Sinti and Roma come from a Hindu background, they adapted key elements from different religions depending on their country of settlement (Deutscher Bundestag, 2012 pp. 6-8). Furthermore, they did not write down their religious beliefs, but rather taught them through oral tradition and story-telling. In their everyday life, they are still very religiously oriented and follow specific guidelines from Hinduism, each tribe with its own intensity. Therefore, it is very difficult to associate Sinti and Roma with a specific religion. Their religious background is linked to a traditional system of values. Sinti and Roma support a traditional patriarchal distribution of gender roles within the family and community. In addition, there is a predominant hierarchy of the elderly above the younger people (Deutscher Bundestag, 2012).

Statistics cited in the following chapter have to be interpreted with caution, because in Germany it is not allowed to collect data in connection with an ethnic marker, based on different laws, e.g. §1 of the General Equal Treatment Act (AGG), in order to prevent discrimination based on race, ethnicity and other factors. Nevertheless, some statistics might give an insight, although limited, on the current situation of Sinti and Roma in Germany which will be analyzed within the historical context. Upon talking about the social status and current situation of Sinti and Roma women, only women with German nationality will be addressed. Finally, the work of social workers within these communities and their role in history will be discussed.

3.1.   History of Sinti and Roma in Germany and Europe

While documents confirm that the first Roma arrived in Germany in 1407, they had been in Arabic and Eastern European countries since the 1400s. They were also known as the 'travelling folk', 'Gypsies', or 'Zigeuner' in German speaking countries. These terms are outdated due to their racist and discriminatory undertone.

Roma were faced with assimilation measurements in most of the countries they migrated to (Deutscher Bundestag, 2012 pp. 4-6). In Austria, they were forbidden to own any means of transport, which had inevitable major consequences for them as nomads. Furthermore, the

marriage between two members of the Roma community was forbidden and their children were taken away to be raised in Christian households. In Spain, they were forbidden to speak their native language or dress in their traditional clothing in order to assimilate them with the rest of society. These aspirations had little success and only a few Roma tribes settled down. As nomads, they were forced to change their entire way of living as well as their community and household structures upon settling in cities. Sinti and Roma are known for representing a subculture in European countries, which is based on their religious and cultural background (Deutscher Bundestag, 2012).

The Sinti and Roma community faced horrific times during the Third Reich. Since the main focus of many historians lays on the situation and suffering from the Jewish community, some might forget that the Nazis also chased and killed the Sinti and Roma people. Even though the discrimination and chasing of Sinti and Roma did not start with the Nazi era, it certainly reached its peak during that time. During the Weimar Republic, many different states already had discriminatory laws and policies in place that would restrict the rights of Sinti and Roma. For example, in 1899, Bavaria introduced the 'Information Agency about Gypsies', which collected data about residents with a 'Gypsy' background (Milton, 2000 p. 319). During the years between 1926 and 1933, more and more laws and agencies were introduced to 'fight the Gypsy plague' in Germany (Milton, 2000). After Hitler's election, the situation of Sinti and Roma rapidly deteriorated. They were excluded from participation in the labor force as non-Arians and were restricted in their ability of free movement as nomads. Many Sinti and Roma were forced to work in work camps if they could not provide proof of employment. Of course, their unemployment only originated from their exclusion from labor force (Milton, 2000).

Milton (2000) systematically compared the targeting of Roma people to the targeting of Jews in Germany under Hitler's rule (pp. 320-232). Simultaneously to Jews, Sinti and Roma lost their right to vote and were restricted by many other laws. In the beginning, there were distinctions regarding the treatment of Jews and Sinti and Roma by the Nazis, but ultimately, they were treated in equally horrible manners. The Nazis instated separate work and concentrations camps for Jews and Sinti and Roma. Initially, very young or old people, pregnant women, and Sinti and Roma with non-German nationality were excluded from deportation to these camps, which existed specifically to separate Gypsies from the rest of society. Later, however, they were no longer spared from deportation. Unlike Jews, the Sinti and Roma were not separated by gender and age, but always deported and killed collectively as families.

According to a number of estimates, approximately 220.000 to 500.000 Sinti and Roma were killed in Europe during the Second World War (Fugmann, 2019). A reliable number is nonexistent because after the end of the war, many Nazis got higher positions in legislative and executive organs, facilitating the manipulation or destruction of records of deportations and killings (Fugmann, 2019). Germany refused to acknowledge the genocide of Sinti and Roma during the Third Reich until 50 years later, when first attempts of reconciliation were made. Nevertheless, many victims of the Nazi regime were not eligible for compensation payments and even after their acknowledgement as victims the probability to receive payments was low.

Nowadays, two major agencies represent the Sinti and Roma community in Germany with two different approaches. The 'Central Council German of Sinti and Roma', and the 'Sinti alliance Germany' both represent Sinti and Roma in Germany on federal level (Deutscher Bundestag, 2012 pp. 10-11). They differ regarding the question whether they describe themselves as an ethnic minority or not. The 'Central Council of Sinti and Roma' emphasizes the fact that Sinti and Roma are an endangered minority in Germany that needs special services. It also aimed for the reappraisal of German history with regards to the treatment of Sinti and Roma people. The 'Sinti alliance Germany', on the other hand, does not identify itself as a minority but as a cultural subgroup in Germany. They do not think that 'Zigeuner' is a racist and politically incorrect term and prefer to embrace it rather than shame it (Deutscher Bundestag, 2012).

Cahn and Guild (2010) argued that until now no European country has successfully managed to include and integrate Sinti and Roma into its society. Many countries issue laws that violate the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) and European Union law.[1] They use practices like evictions or destruction of property in order to make Roma people leave on their own (Cahn & Guild, 2010). Sinti and Roma are mainly migrating to Italy, Germany, and Austria and most of them come from former Yugoslavia. In these countries Sinti and Roma were killed to thousands during the Third Reich, which left very few of them with Western European ancestry. According to Cahn and Guild, between 70.000 and 140.000 Roma lived in Germany in 2004 while 34.111 were forced to leave Germany (Cahn & Guild, 2010). The Roma that migrated to Germany represent about 0.12% of the German population and have just recently settled in this country.

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[1] These laws include migration, work, and asylum laws that have a huge effect on the living situation of Roma people. However, these circumstances cannot be discussed further in the course of this paper.

Having this in mind, measurements, like evictions, taken against this group might seem out of proportion.

Sinti and Roma might belong to one ethnic group but can differ in their nationalities. There are statistics based on national affiliation, but it is not possible to confirm any assertions based on ethnicity. The 'European Convention of Human Rights' protects all European citizens from discrimination based on their appearance or ethnic markers through Article 14. Discrimination based on ethnicity or race is further forbidden by the law of Germany in § 1 of the General Equal Treatment Act (AGG) and Article 3 of the German constitution (GG). Nevertheless, many police officers still pursue racial profiling and tend to note terms like "Landfahrer", "Zigeuner" or "häufig wechselnder Aufenthaltsort" (Deutscher Bundestag, 2012 p. 19). Only since 1989, it is prohibited to use any of these terms in police reports (Deutscher Bundestag, 2012).

In addition to subtle political discrimination against Sinti and Roma, the German media reproduces stigma and negative connotation with the group through biased reportage (Deutscher Bundestag, 2012). Markus End (2014) published a study that analyzed the representation of Antiziganism in the German media. According to him is the display of Roma culture and communities characterized by false and stigmatizing terms. The media often choses unfavorable and discriminatory pictures, terms and topics when reporting about Roma people (End, 2014).

The current situation of Sinti and Roma children in the German education system is linked to the ongoing discrimination of their group and has major consequences regarding their educational achievement and employment opportunities. Daniel Strauß (2011) published a non-representative study that could allow a possible view on the experiences and situation of Sinti and Roma in the German education system. According to his study, nearly 40% of all over 50 years old Roma in Germany did not even attend elementary schools, while in the third generation only 9% did not attend elementary schools. Although this shows that in general the school enrollment of Roma children is improving, their level of educational achievement often stagnates afterwards (Strauß, 2011). Very few of them reach the German "Hochschulreife", which would allow them to attend university and only 19% complete a professional training compared to the 83% of the majority population (Strauß, 2011 p. 101). Sinti and Roma children are more likely to be advised to special-needs schools because teachers assume that they will not attend school regularly enough to keep track. Often the speed of learning and the methods used in those special-needs schools do not fit the needs and intelligence of falsely advised children and they are under-challenged. These circumstances could lead to frustration and a higher likeliness to skip classes (Faraco, 2006).

Some provinces introduced mediators with Roma background at schools in order to provide an alternative perspective on issues and to conciliate in cases of misunderstandings. Roma refugee children that successfully graduate are not entitled to work in Germany based on their refugee-status and are therefore without any perspective (Faraco, 2006). Many Sinti and Roma with a right of residence or tolerance status live in outer city districts in constricted apartments that do not fit their quantity of tenants. Out of insecurity and lack of knowledge about the system and their rights, many Roma, especially elderly people, hesitate to ask a question or to report mistreatment. The critical educational status of many Sinti and Roma also affects their ability to find a good job (Faraco, 2006).

3.2.   Current situation of Sinti and Roma women in Germany

Sinti and Roma women in Germany face multiple discrimination and barriers. As discussed earlier, there are no reliant and scientific data available for this group, and thus it is difficult to formulate a final statement regarding their situation. In 2006, the European parliament published a study conducted by the Berlin Institute of Comparable Social Research (BIVS) about the economic, social, and living situation of Roma women in Europe. Faraco (2006) contributed to this study with her country report about Germany (pp. 19-32). The focus in this chapter lies on Sinti and Roma women inheriting German nationality.

3.2.1. Access to education and employment

As described above, many Roma have a low school attendance rate and drop-out rates are disproportionally high. These rates are expectedly even higher for girls. For many girls and women in those communities it is difficult to combine their school visit and education with their family roles and responsibilities. Many Sinti and Roma girls get pregnant at a younger age than their non-Roma German counterparts and for many of them this means the temporary stop of school visits or even a complete drop-out (Faraco, 2006 pp. 24-20). Some argue that the conservative and traditional lifestyle of many Roma causes low school attendance of girls and

prevents them from getting higher degrees (Deutscher Bundestag, 2012). Contrary to this position, the BIVS report points out that many Roma women do not solely get help back from getting vocational training because of their traditional culture, rather than the missing alternative of work options to their traditional work field (Faraco, 2006). Many Sinti and Roma women express a desire to branch out of the traditional job expectations and opportunities that are given to Roma. However, they are rather inhibited by the incompatibility of family and education.

The earlier mentioned study by Strauß (2011) might offer an insight into the current situation of Sinti and Roma girls in German schools. Although he did not discuss any gender specific findings, the presented numbers are alarming, having in mind that Roma girls tend to drop out of school even earlier than their male counterparts because of pregnancies. The negative perception of the education system by Roma adults aggravates this problem (Faraco, 2006). Many parents did not accomplish higher educational degrees, which is why they are not equipped to support their children regarding challenges or problems in school (Deutscher Bundestag, 2012). This phenomenon is about to change in the near future, as there is a noticeable positive change regarding the level of education in the younger generations of Sinti and Roma (Deutscher Bundestag, 2012).

German job centers do not keep data on their clients' ethnicities rather than their nationalities, which makes it difficult to evaluate the work and employment circumstances of Sinti and Roma in Germany (Faraco, 2006). As there is no specific data on Sinti and Roma women, one could use the data on women in Germany in general to get an understanding of what the economic situation of Roma women could be like. In Germany, 47% of all employees are female while they represent 80% of all part-time workers in Germany (Faraco, 2006). While many Sinti and Roma work in informally jobs or are self-employed, it is difficult to integrate them properly in the German social security system and therefore guarantee a secured lifestyle (Faraco, 2006). A lack of proper education and the described difficulties to combine work and family life have even more negative outcomes for Roma women with many children and big families. The issues which are seen with regards to access to education ultimately also have consequences for the economic qualification of Sinti and Roma women. It is more difficult for them to enter the work force. Roma women are also faced with the shrinkage of traditional jobs that they used to take on. This factor combined with their responsibility within their families makes it very difficult for them to gain autonomous and quite natural access to employment (Faraco, 2006). The employment rate of

Roma people and especially Roma women is presumed to be far below average, not only in Germany but also in the majority of other European countries (Deutscher Bundestag, 2012). According to Faraco (2006), there are no Sinti and Roma women in any political or official offices within the German state. Many of them tend to be engaged in non-profit organizations, at schools or other work that is linkable to their housework (Faraco, 2006; Deutscher Bundestag, 2012). Moreover, until 2012 there was not a single organization that worked specifically for the political empowerment and involvement of Sinti and Roma women in Germany (Deutscher Bundestag, 2012). The initiative 'Romane Romnja' which started in 2012, is politically engaged and advocates for more participation of Roma women and more support for Roma women (Herold, 2014). In cooperation with the Caritas Cologne they started a program that is supposed to disrupt patriarchal structures within Roma families by educating their women about rights, resources, and system structures. However, 'Romane Romnja' is the only organization that tries to raise public awareness about the issues of German Roma women in particular.

3.2.2. Family structures and access to housing and health care

Birth rates in Roma communities are supposedly higher than for the rest of Germany. There are no specific data available but overall, the young age of pregnant Sinti and Roma women and the rate of heads per household in their communities suggest that Sinti and Roma women bear more children than other German women. The role and tasks women have to take over in Roma communities varies for each community, but the majority of them support a traditional lifestyle (Faraco, 2006). It is common in many Roma communities that young girls get married during or even before puberty, to ensure that they are married as virgins (Deutscher Bundestag, 2012). Marriages are seen as alliances between different family clans and are used to gain or reinforce power in the community (Deutscher Bundestag, 2012). Although these arrangements are often decided and negotiated by the parents, more and more young girls oppose their parents will and chose a different path for themselves, if possible (Deutscher Bundestag, 2012). It is popular that girls and women in their communities take the responsibility for taking care of the household. Because of that they often stay at home and are even greater affected by horrible living conditions many families face (Faraco, 2006). The BIVS report refers to the findings of the Report of the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) regarding the situation of Sinti and Roma in

Germany from 2004, in which it stated that Roma housings are often located in areas that can severely affect their health because of high frequency of traffic or garbage dumps (ERRC as cited in Faraco, 2006 p. 24).

Not only do many Sinti and Roma live in run-down apartments in social housing, but they often must settle on more or less legal camp sides due to a lack of available social housing. Legal statuses of those camp sides are often uncertain, so that tenants must expect evictions at any given moment (Faraco, 2006).

Precarious living conditions, such as described above, have an impact on the state of health of many Roma in Germany. Despite the fact that German Roma have naturally access to the private and state health care system based on their nationality, many of them report experiencing discrimination when accessing services (Deutscher Bundestag, 2012).[2] The general state of health of Roma is estimated to be noticeably worse than that of the average population. Their life expectancy, for example, is estimated to be about ten years less than the European average (Deutscher Bundestag, 2012).

3.2.3. Discrimination

The lack of reliable data on Sinti and Roma in Germany makes it remarkably difficult to assess the discrimination and Antiziganism (Roma-specific racism) in Germany (Deutscher Bundestag, 2012). Upon reviewing the current representation of Antiziganism in Germany, Markus End reviewed different surveys conducted with German citizens about the public's perception of Roma (End, 2013). The analysis showed that an alarming amount of German citizen (over 60%) would not like to have Sinti and Roma in their neighborhood (End, 2013). In a representative long-term study published in 2011, 27% of respondents supported the statement that Sinti and Roma should be banished from city centers (End, 2013). Other surveys within Roma people

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[2] Although not the focus of this paper, the situation of Roma refugees should be briefly mentioned in the context of healthcare. Many Roma families living in Germany have refugee status and therefore have a more restricted and limited access to health care. Health care in their case includes the care for their basic needs, serious illnesses, or even strong mental health problems. However, sex education or other women-supporting care is not covered by their insurance status (Faraco, 2006 p. 25).

showed that over 70% of the respondents have experienced discrimination more than once in their lifetime (Deutscher Bundestag, 2012).

All these factors are mutually dependent on each other and represent the struggling situation of Sinti and Roma women in Germany. A person who is not able to receive proper education is not equipped for the labor force and faces poverty. The perpetuation of traditional roles and the lack of support to provide a functioning and reasonable way to combine work and family life, withhold not only Roma women from participating in society but also is a hindrance for integrating themselves into the labor force. German Sinti and Roma women and girls are therefore discriminated in their professional, family and social life.

Sinti and Roma women are very dependent on social services and outer support in order to even gain an equal chance at life compared with the majority population. They face barriers and difficulties throughout their lives based on their race, class, gender and other categories, as described by the concept of intersectionality.

3.3. Social work within the Sinti and Roma communities

Many NGOs that work with Sinti and Roma communities incessantly emphasize that most of their work focuses on explaining the German system to their clients. The disconnection between Roma and the majority population is huge and distrust against official agencies and service providers continues (Faraco, 2006). There are no governmental programs in Germany that are developed for Sinti and Roma due to the lack of data on their situation. Without data and facts, it is difficult to design a service that helps and supports the needs of the Roma communities, especially when agencies like the Sinti Alliance Germany and the Central Committee of German Sinti and Roma have such different perspectives on their people's problems and how they should be taken care of (Faraco, 2006). Neither is it easy to gather information and data on the Sinti and Roma communities due to the legal standards in the German Republic. The huge, and justified, mistrust of Roma people against German officials originates in the illegal use of these data in the past and the horrific actions that were taken against Roma in German history, such as the holocaust during the Second World War and persecution during the Weimar Republic.

Sinti and Roma girls and women are often not seen in the entire context and the different external factors which influence their life. Reimer (2016) claimed that social workers need to be more

involved in the informal and formal education of Roma women and girls. Many of them might be limited due to oppression within the society and their traditional community life settings. It is tremendously important that those girls get the opportunity to educate themselves outside of these settings. Social workers within schools or youth centers should provide a safe space for Roma girls to gather information and successfully built an identity and sense of belonging for themselves in a culturally informed practice. In many cases, Roma women took over the part of mediators at schools (Reimer, 2016).

Stiglechner (2013) pointed out that even though social work has many contact points with Antiziganism issues, little scientific research has been done on those problems. Prejudice and other discriminatory assumptions, negative as positive, that are rooted in the long tradition of Antiziganism, affect and influence professional social workers as well. Social workers tend to view a minority group as specifically helpless. In those situations, members of minority groups as Sinti and Roma are often seen as not as competent as the majority, which leaves them even more dependent on social workers and the social services.

Social workers most often work with people that face exclusion from the majority society. Despite the fact that Sinti and Roma always have been confronted with this issue, social work has always played a role in the exclusion process of their communities (Stiglechner, 2013). Teaching about Antiziganism is not a significant part in the German education system, which is why many social workers lack knowledge about this issue and are even influenced by it themselves. There has not been a lot of scientific research conducted on issues and situation of the Sinti and Roma communities in Germany and on how social work is involved in it. Neither is this a special focus during many social work bachelor's degrees.

One criticism of the social work profession might be that its work and approaches are very norm-orientated, meaning that it sees the majority as 'normal' and anyone outside of that community as some sort of 'other'. This results in assessing Sinti and Roma as 'others' or 'not normal', with the possible intention to assimilate them into the dominant culture and society, and thus erasing their cultural identity (Auernheimer, 2013 pp. 57-59). Wherever two or more cultures come together and one is more strongly represented in the population, there is a power imbalance present. The concept of intersectionality must be taken into account in order to equalize each person's chances and power.

In Germany, there is only one Initiative in place that specifically supports Sinti and Roma women and girls (Herold, 2014). Many other social programs are either issue-related or not gender-

specific (Faraco, 2006 pp. 25-30). Nevertheless, many organizations do offer special groups just for women, working mums, or in general gender-based free space (Faraco, 2006). However, as mentioned earlier there is a lack of reliable data on Sinti and Roma women's situations in Germany, which makes it even more difficult to develop a program that would fit their needs and could provide the necessary supports.

Observations concerning educational program attendance by women and men showed that women are less likely to attend such social support programs because they were not able to find a babysitter. In cases where implemented childcare programs offered babysitting for children older than 2 years of age, the attendance of women rose substantially (Faraco, 2006). While mainly mothers and older women were interested in learning reading, writing and the German language, in so far as there was a lack of language knowledge, younger girls expressed foremost the need to exchange experiences as girls and talk about their status in society and identity development (Faraco, 2006).

There are different associations working with Sinti and Roma people in Germany that are run by and for Roma. They offer counseling and support services with different focuses, such as apartment and job searches, migration and integration support and help on health issues (Rom e.V., 2013). Associations like Rom e.V. (2013) often operate on multiple levels, such as political activism and awareness campaigns, counseling and support of their clients, and engagement in the education system and childcare. Employees of these associations are often social workers or other professionally trained social service workers. They do not necessarily have to have Roma background but should come from a culturally informed perspective and work as allies with the Roma communities.

Other huge social work employers in Germany such as 'Diakonie' and 'Caritas' do also provide services or programs only for Roma. Nevertheless, it is difficult to get an overview of all the services which are available, because both organization have local branch offices and do often act as funding organizations to support third party projects. Therefore, it is not immediately apparent which service, childcare program, or support group is funded by whom. Both organizations guiding principle is based on the Christian religion and requires all employees with 'client-contact' (teaching, caring, and counseling) to be members of either the Protestant or Catholic Church. Even in jobs without client contact, their employees are still required to prove convincingly their support for the fundamental beliefs of the Christian church (Caritas Deutschland 2019; Diakonie Deutschland 2019). This distinctly Christian background increases

the perceived cultural difference between Sinti and Roma people and the support offered by social workers, thus might inhibiting successful interactions.

4. Comparison of both groups

This chapter will juxtapose the situation and social status of Indigenous women in Canada and Sinti and Roma women in Germany based on the information presented earlier. Findings will point out the many similarities of the aforementioned groups, as well as their discrepancies. Three major issues will be discussed in detail: Access to education, living standards, and the events surrounding their cultural genocide. Following that, interventions and measures taken by officials and social workers will be reviewed.

Sinti and Roma women in Germany and Indigenous women in Canada have on one hand immensely different histories and backgrounds, but on the other hand many parts of their past are comparable to some degree. Both are considered national minorities in their home-countries. While Indigenous people of Canada, as the term explains itself, have lived there before any other nation settled there; Sinti and Roma migrated into central and eastern Europe over hundreds of years. Despite living in central Europe since more than 600 years, they are still seen as outsiders and not Indigenous to their home land in a sense as Indigenous Canadians are.

4.1. Living standards and placements

In pre-colonial times, Indigenous people used to pursue a nomadic lifestyle. Their ability to travel through the country was dependent on seasons, climate conditions, and availability of hunting stock. They lived a self-sufficient lifestyle and were able to provide for their tribe and family on their own for hundreds of years. When European settlers arrived, they started to ban Indigenous people on reserves and by that prohibited their nomadic lifestyle. Settlers were eager to place reserves far away from cities or popular hunting grounds in order to keep them out of sight and influence. As described earlier, those reserves were and continue to be very limited when it comes to infrastructural conditions.

Todays' conditions have not changed much for Indigenous people. Many reserves are still placed in very rural areas without public transport connections. They are placed along highways, endangering foremost the safety of children and women who want or must leave the reserve without their own vehicle. Another issue is the critical water supply as many households on reserves do not have their own water source. This not only has adverse effects on the residents' physical health and hydration conditions, but also on the hygienic standards any human should have access to. Without running water, any way of cleaning is difficult and the physical health of residents can consequently be threatened by infections or vermin.

Sinti and Roma used to pursue the nomad lifestyle as well but for different reasons. In addition to that, they never were the only native inhabitants of any country they lived in. They used to be one of many other cultural groups in India and after their banishment, they settled in various countries that were already populated by different nations. They migrated into countries where a nomadic lifestyle was not conventional and often encountered a lot of resistance to this lifestyle from citizens. At one point, they had to give up traveling around and settle in one place. When a country's legislation is one which permits wild camping to a certain degree, Sinti and Roma people would commonly create campsites with their entire family, made up of hundreds of people. These campsites do not provide the necessary infrastructure, such as running water or electricity. Some Sinti and Roma people access social services and get assigned to social housing apartments. These apartments are often located in outer city districts which are usually not diverse across social classes.

Both groups are placed somewhat out of the society and face additional barriers to access services that they might need. When a woman is forced to engage in a long and stressful journey in order to gain access to services like education, childcare, or counseling, she may be less likely to engage in these services at all. Barriers for affected people in these situations might be so high that these people are even more limited compared to other social weak and underprivileged people, but who have a better placement situation.

The Canadian Government has two important departments for Indigenous affairs: One is the 'Indigenous Services Canada' (ISC) and the other one is called 'Crown-Indigenous Relation and Northern Affairs Canada'. The ISC is responsible to provide services and funding for issues and projects in Indigenous communities. They funded various projects regarding Indigenous housing, community infrastructure, education, water programs, social services, economical support, health care, and Indigenous self-governance (ISC, 2019). Research concerning the effects of

infrastructure projects, funded by the ISC, showed a huge improvement in living standards on Reserves. While these investments by the ISC sound promising, the amount of monetary resources planned to be spent should be taken with a grain of salt. The people that allotted the budget for these projects may not have authority anymore at the time when these Indigenous communities are meant to receive the expected funding. Thus, there is a significant risk that the projects to raise the standards of living in these communities may not proceed with each change in governing party. Furthermore, many of those funding and investment plans do not involve a further expansion of the public transport network to provide better accessibility of rural reserves (ISC, 2019). Nevertheless, it is important to note that there are different specific programs and projects aimed at various Indigenous communities to meet each group's individual needs for people on- or off-reserve. Therefore, each community gets their special needs met. The access to drinking water on reserves is critically low, as mentioned in Chapter 2.3.2. Therefore, the ISC runs special programs that aim to end the water shortage on Reserves and to introduce a better water waste system (ISC, 2019).

In Germany, Sinti and Roma often live in social housing apartments. Apartments that are registered under social housing have a limit on rent and are built by private investors that get financial subsidies from the provinces for those projects (Bundesregierung, 2017). In Germany, the number of apartments registered under social housing have declined step-by-step over the years, especially as not enough new ones have been built (Bundesregierung, 2017; Zeit-Online, 2019; Janson, 2018). Having said this, social housing is not the only option for people with low income to gain access to housing. The German Social Security System does also provide services like 'housing money', which low-income households can apply for to get financial support in order to pay their rent. It is not that all Roma access these services or live in social housing apartments, but a huge number of their households are suspected to be at low-income level. This leads to the assumption that when social housing numbers decline so drastically, Roma people will at some point be affected by it. Living space is getting more and more limited in Germany. The stress for Roma families seeking affordable housing can be unimaginably high.

In Germany, there are limited programs in place that support Sinti and Roma as ethnic minority. These programs are solely directed to German Sinti and Roma (Bundesregierung, 2014). While many German Roma do not access these services out of fear of discrimination, Roma people with migration status do not have right to access the same services as German Roma because their nationality is of greater importance than their ethnicity in this context. The German government

provides financial support to the Center of Documentation and Culture of German Sinti and Roma as well as individual social projects (Deutscher Bundestag, 2014).

4.2. Education status and opportunities

Both minority groups discussed in this paper face inarguable discrimination throughout their education and later in the work force. Though having a difficult history with access to education, the groups are different in as many ways as they are similar. Similarities are seen in their own traditional way of educating their children. Sinti and Roma, and Indigenous people are both known for using oral traditions, wherein traditions and knowledge are not passed on in written form but instead through storytelling. On both sides there have been attempts made to invent a written version of their languages. However, the vast variety of dialects in their own language makes it difficult to create one collaborative and all-representative written language. One difference that must be acknowledged is that Indigenous people were forbidden to speak their mother tongue during residential schools, making it even harder to reconnect with this language now as adults.

The presence of residential schools is one of the major differences between the groups. The ways in which Indigenous children were taken without consent from their parents and placed in learning facilities, especially designed to 'de-indigenize' them, is a very colonial phenomenon. Indigenous people have been colonized without any choice to stay independent as a nation. The connection between education and assimilation has caused tremendous trauma throughout generations. It is reasonable that many Indigenous people, especially now, do not have the best connotation with the Western-European education system in Canada. Their childhood trauma may hold them back of perpetuating their educational career in secondary education or other career paths.

Sinti and Roma have not been faced with the same forcible separation from their families and culture in pursuit of education. Though they have been excluded from schools and other educational facilities in Germany during the Third Reich, these rules were no longer applicable in post-war Germany. Nonetheless, they continue to experience discrimination in the education system every day. It is challenging to understand how teachers in Germany, rather than supporting their students and providing incentives to perform well at school, tend to recommend

Roma children to special needs schools, based primarily on the chance of them not attending school regularly.

Current problems that both groups face, is their continuing underrepresentation and low attendance in school, especially in post-secondary education facilities such as colleges and universities. Roma girls tend to show a lower school attendance or drop out of school at a much younger age than their male counterparts (Deutscher Bundestag, 2012). In 2012, of all Indigenous women and girls in Canada between the age of 15 and 24, 82% had not received a high school diploma or any post-secondary education (Statistics Canada, 2016). Germany has not completed surveys of similar focus for Roma girls; however, the earlier discussed statistic of Strauß offers a possible picture of how Roma girls receive less education than the majority population. In both groups, girls are more likely to miss school regularly and consequently miss out on major career opportunities in their life. There have been actions taken on different levels, in order to promote success for these populations in school.

In Canada, many schools offer scholarships for Indigenous students that succeed in school and university. While these scholarships are only available for Indigenous students, they are also eligible for scholarships open to the general population at their university. The goal of this financial support is often to gain more equity for Indigenous students, who statistically come from low-income households. It is important to note that secondary education in Canada comes at a price that many people are unable to pay out of pocket, which is why the majority of students take on a student loan of thousands of Canadian dollars, resulting in incurring a large depth. Students have to pay university fees, course fees, textbooks, application fees, making education inaccessible to anyone not able or willing to pay such tremendous costs. Therefore, scholarships and financial support are a significant contributor to increasing equitable access to post-secondary education in Canada.

Post-secondary education in Germany comes at minimal cost when one is going to a public school/university. While in Canada students have to pay additional fees for every class that they are taking, German students only pay one fixed fee for every six months at University, including a public transport pass. Nevertheless, there are scholarships available for Sinti and Roma people to support their engagement at universities and other post-secondary institutions (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, n.d.). The German 'Foundation of Remembrance, Responsibility, and Future' (EVZ) supports organizations and associations that engage in the process of providing educational equity for Sinti and Roma (EVZ, 2012). It can be

difficult for students to actually find the support they need due to the sheer number of different organizations, foundations, and websites that provide information and scholarships. It would be beneficial if students and support personnel could more easily gain access to this crucial information. The central committee of Sinti and Roma in Germany is allowed to annually put ten applicants forward for consideration of a scholarship based on the applicant's ethnic background and individual suitability (Zentralrat Deutscher Sinti und Roma, n.d.). It is questionable if this number of scholarships recipients is adequate enough to overcome the lack of equitable access to education for Sinti and Roma youth.

Another action that has been taken in order to support Sinti and Roma students to succeed at school is the earlier mentioned mediation program. Roma volunteers, most of them women, help to mediate in conflicts or misunderstandings between students, parents, and teachers at school. Important social work employers such as Diakonie start to employ school-mediators (Diakonie Hasenbergl, n.d.). Diakonie has designed the role such that one would only need middle schools' education to be eligible, and mediators will receive further training on the job through professional development courses and class visits. Lowering the required educational level reduces barriers for the Roma community, who typically are underrepresented in post-secondary education. Additionally, reduced barriers to this career opportunity can lead to increase representation of Sinti and Roma people in the workforce who may act as role models for Sinti and Roma students.

Within the context of post-secondary education, it is interesting to look at how social work professionals teach and are taught the history of social work at universities and colleges. The history of social work with Indigenous people began when settlements were first created, wherein Indian agents and missionaries completed typical social work responsibilities as described in Chapter 2.4. Nonetheless, many books covering the history of social work in Canada, start at the beginning of industrialization and described the social movements resulting from the issues at that time (Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong, 2018). There are few texts that do focus on social support structures prior to colonization or how settlers interacted with Indigenous people. It is irresponsible to not cover and teach the entire history of social work especially when it so significantly affected one major group of the social work client base. This could have negative effects on their understanding of Indigenous history, and therefore their ability to establish therapeutic rapport and provide therapeutic intervention. This lack of underrepresentation of

Indigenous history in the education of social workers also further contributes to the ongoing mistreatment of Indigenous people since colonialism.

4.3.   Implications of genocide: Discrimination in the past and present

Both groups have faced discrimination against their ethnic groups in their home countries. Usually, this discrimination was a result of laws and rules aimed at assimilating these minority groups into the dominant Eurocentric culture. The Canadian government introduced legislations to strategically reduce the number of registered Indians. These actions varied from subtle changes like the aforementioned loss of Indian Status when an Indigenous woman marries a non-Indigenous man, to radical efforts like the residential school system or the Sixties Scoop, where children were adopted by Christian families to eliminate their status. Canadian Indigenous women and men suffer from severe intergenerational trauma due to the major discriminatory events that many experienced over generations.

Both minority groups had individuals who were threatened, hurt, or killed in the process of genocide. Politicians phrased critical statements that openly suggested support for the genocide targeted to the culture and people of these minority groups. While the Nazis had the goal of the total extermination of the Roma ethnicity, the Canadians were more interested in the assimilation of Indigenous people into Western society. The Sinti and Roma community was deeply hurt and traumatized by the genocide executed under the Nazi regime. They experienced public persecution with few allies or support.

It is important for a country and as a nation to honestly and responsible reflect on its own history. Germany was forced to do so while still being controlled by the Allies of the Second World War. As a result, every student in Germany will learn about this part of history and the consequences of such horrific events on survivors. There is a massive effort to spread and teaching awareness and knowledge about this issue in Germany.

Canada is comparatively much younger as a nation. It has been commonly argued that history and the way it is taught is often written by the 'winners'. This could explain the lack of Indigenous history in Canadian high school curriculum, as it does not portray the powerful majority in a positive light.

After overcoming and living through horrific events like the Sixties Scoop and residential schools, Indigenous people have not received acknowledgment for what they have been through up until recently. In 2008, former Prime Minister of Canada, Stephen Harper, officially apologized on behalf of the nation for the residential school system that was active until 1996 (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, 2010). As a part of this apology, the Canadian Government was obliged to compensation payments. However, who exactly is eligible for compensation payments is not transparent at all and it is not clear whether and how deaths of students will be compensated at all. Indigenous activists still fight for acknowledgement and reparation payments in regards to the Sixties Scoop events. The involvement of social workers in the residential school system and the Sixties Scoop was highly unethical (Chapter 2.4.).

In the years after the genocide by the Nazis, Roma were not acknowledged as victims of the Third Reich and therefore they were excluded from any reparation or compensation payments. Thirty-seven years later, German officials apologized for this mistake and Sinti and Roma were officially registered as victims of the Nazi regime (Dokumentations- und Kulturzentrum Deutscher Sinti und Roma e.V, 2011). Victims and survivors of the holocaust still struggle to assert their compensation payments. Many forget, due to lack of awareness and education, that Sinti and Roma were at such great disadvantage during the Third Reich that they do not take this factor into account when dealing with this group.

It is not possible to compare two genocides by numbers or methods applied; each is horrible in its own way. An evaluating comparison is neither intended nor possible. However, it is certainly valid to state that each community suffered severely under the oppression and persecution. Intergenerational trauma is one of the main symptoms resulting from those incidents.

While both groups are still discriminated minorities in their countries, different laws and programs have been passed to support them and to provide social equity. In Germany, it is forbidden by the General Equal Treatment Act §1, to be discriminated upon ethnicity, race, sex, religion or worldview, disability, age, or sexual identity. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom states under Article 15.1:

> every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

Nevertheless, Roma people in Germany still feel discriminated and the numbers of antiziganistic offences against their people represent this very well. In 2018 alone, there were 63 registered criminal offences against Roma in Germany with antiziganistic background (Bundesregierung, 2019). In the period between January and July 2019, there have already been 23 hate crimes registered against Roma people (Bundesregierung, 2019). Perpetrators in these cases are often of German nationality. These official numbers might provide insight into how Roma people are at a higher risk than it might be expected, considering that many offences will never be officially registered.

5. Consequences for the field of social work

Social work faces challenges in justifying its effectiveness, methods, and structures. Though not everything is wrong, there needs to be adjustments in order to provide more appropriate and helpful services. Germany and Canada differ not only in the way social work is taught, funded, and practiced; but also in their unique cultural history and how each nation has dealt with current impacts of their history. In this chapter, consequences for the field of social work will be discussed. First, practice implications regarding the earlier discussed comparison will be introduced. Following this, practice implications related to different issues that have not been discussed in detail in this paper will be proposed.

5.1. Consequences for living standards

At first, the connection between social workers and the living conditions of their clients may not be apparent. The pedagogy part of social work does not necessarily have something to do with the housing conditions and infrastructural circumstances of minority groups. Nonetheless, every client is highly affected by his/her living conditions, and living in poor conditions can have negative impacts on the mental and physical health, as described earlier. Clients who struggle to access services due to a lack of infrastructure in rural areas should therefore, be a concern for

social workers. To improve their client's situation, social workers should be, and in most cases already are, willing to enable clients to access needed resources. Having said this, social workers can support clients to access services already in existence, such as monetary support like basic social services. In order to offer more specific resources, social workers and their clients need to vocalize their demands more assertively to officials in order to sustainably make policy changes to meet the community's needs.

Social work has always had political implication. When faced with the grievances of their clients it is not only necessary to provide them with appropriate services, but also to advocate on their behalf on a public and political level. For example, there is a need for a call for action to address the social housing situation on Germany. Social workers on the front line who work with people of a low socio-economical class that are dependent on social housing, need to be more vocal and political. In wealthy countries such as Germany and Canada, the political lobby for people of lower classes is not that big and influential. Albrecht (2015) argued that social work professionals need to be much more political and with economic influence to have a sustainable impact on their country's society. Social work as a profession is closely linked to social policy. Social workers can spread awareness about issues and argue in favor of their clients' needs on different political levels (Schäfer, 2018). Lane and Pritzker (2018) extensively described the need for political social work and its crucial influence on social policy making.

The often normative characteristics of social work can be seen very critically, especially in the context of living standards. The allegedly aim to norm clients in their way of living to be socially acceptable for the majority population, can cause great distress for the affected individuals. German and Canadian social workers practice from a western Eurocentric lens and as such, they may struggle with understanding and accepting alternative living and social concepts. There are opposing opinions about the normative aspects of social work in theory and praxis and to what degree, if any, is a problem for the profession (Otto & Ziegler, 2012). In defense of the profession it has to be mentioned that social workers are confronted with the so-called triple-mandate and therefore, have to satisfy the clients' needs, the state's demands, and the ethical standards of their profession (Staub-Bernasconi, 2018).

5.2.   Educational consequences

With regards to enabling the education of Sinti and Roma women and girls, social work evidently still has a long way to go. How is it possible that in a progressive country such as Germany, there is an ethnic group still at such a significant disadvantage when it comes to educational support? It is indispensable for social workers or teachers in schools to gain a better understanding of the Sinti and Roma background. The answer to low school attendance should not be further neglect, rather than there should be support systems aimed not only at students, but at their parents as well. Making education more inclusive to other cultures might result in enrichment opportunities for all parties involved. Research has found out that gender specific programs are highly requested by young Roma girls, to connect and reflect on their societal status (Faraco, 2006). Social workers in schools are in demand to work closer together with the Roma school mediators in order to establish a safe space where children belonging to an ethnic minority can get the chance to cope with the different cultures they are faced with. Similarly, this is already feasible for Indigenous students in Canada as well. Many schools already provide gathering places for Indigenous students where culturally appropriate services can be accessed. Without minimizing the situation of Roma students in Germany, it should be acknowledged that Indigenous people have played a slightly different role in the history and upbringing of their country than Roma in Germany.

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) published their recommendations with regards to intercultural work with Roma people, focusing on "the key role of women and education" (EESC, 2011 p. 1). These recommendations are addressed to all European countries and generally state that there is a need to work in collaboration with Roma and to stop applying random methods on them (EESC, 2011). They emphasized the importance of the inclusion of Roma women in particular. The EESC (2011) referred to the 'German model of intercultural education and learning' as an example of progressive and exemplary method for working with Roma (p. 4).

Fortier and Hon-Sing Wong (2018) argued that social work in Canada must be decolonized in order to be more inclusive and improve the actual practice. In their opinion, decolonizing social work would only be possible if we would "dehistoricize", "deinstitutionalize", and

"deprofessionalize" the practice, leading to a complete restructuring of the profession as it is known now (Frontier & Hon-Sing Wong, 2018 pp. 10-15).

Under 'dehistoricization', they recommend social workers embark on a cautious questioning of the treaties signed between Indigenous nations and the settlers, as well as a deeper confrontation with the colonial power structures and how they are present today (Frontier & Hon-Sing Wong, 2018. p. 11). Many Caucasian social workers review the struggles Indigenous people face within scientific papers without questioning their own position in the historic context of white people coming into Indigenous communities trying to help and 'safe' them. As mentioned earlier in this paper, social work literature in Canada rarely focuses on the practice before the labor movement and therefore, ignores a significant part of the history of social work in the colonial context. One implication then would be, to teach the entire history of social work, because it is crucial for students to gain a full understanding of their profession as a whole. This includes the positive social movements but also the involvement of social workers in criticizable events.

By 'deinstitutionalization' Frontier and Hon-Sing Wong (2018) referred to challenging persistent oppressive colonial structures in the social work profession and with Indigenous people (pp. 13-14). Acknowledging that the European western approach for social support may not be the most effective nor the most appropriate approach to work with Indigenous people could make a major difference in social work practice. Consequently, social workers would have to open up to a new cultural approach to social work, broaden their knowledge of these approaches, and gain a deeper understanding of the efficacy of these from different approaches. In this case it would mean to shift to a more community-based perspective from the typically individual focused western perspective.

Finally, social work would have to get 'deprofessionalized', meaning social workers would have to stop acting as assumed experts on every issue affecting Indigenous people. Professionals would need to learn more about Indigenous healing processes and traditions in order to provide necessary and culturally appropriate support that Indigenous people may need or want (Frontier & Hon-Sing Wong, 2018). Resulting from that claim, social workers would have to abandon their supreme status as experts and be willing to learn more about different ways of being professional and supportive. All of Fortiers' and Hon-Sing Wongs' findings and arguments can be connected to the German system of social work and could be implemented in modified ways. Most notably,

the idea of 'deprofessionalizing' social work would be beneficial clinical practice with ethnic minorities such as Roma people. A social worker from a different ethnic background than his/her client should be able to step back, listen and learn from his/her client before imposing the allegedly 'right way' of addressing the clients' issue.

On institutional level, the practices and frameworks used by social work organizations needs to be reconsidered as well to better address minority groups. The western perspective in Canada is much more prominent in organizations' guidelines and framework, and Indigenous knowledge is often not considered (Burke, 2018). It would be a great improvement to combine the Indigenous and western perspectives in order to work in accordance with the existing system, with the added benefit of using a variety of techniques and methods, to help all clients equally.

Adding to the argument of 'deinstitutionalization' is Johnson (2016), who published a dissertation about the indigenizing of higher education. She argued that Indigenous students need to be more involved in the process of education and pedagogy. In order for this to occur, each student and professor would need to question themselves with regards to the extent he/she is participating in the calls for action from the Truth and Reconciliation Committee (Johnson, 2016). It would be beneficial for the process of reconciliation that non-Indigenous staff members and fellow students at universities show more serious efforts to indigenize postsecondary education.

Furthermore, McCauley and Matheson (2018) criticized the lack of Indigenous-centered and informed social work in college and university social work programs. As a possible new approach, they (McCauley & Matheson, 2018 p. 295) reinterpret the 'four foundational principles of Indigenous traditional social work practice' recently published by Kennedy-Kish et al. (2017). Inspired by the medicine wheel of Indigenous culture, they emphasized the principles 'Kindness', 'Honesty', 'Sharing', and 'Strength' (McCauley and Matheson, 2018 pp. 295-301). 'Kindness' describes a state in which social work students and teachers provide a safe space for people of all ethnicities and are open to reflect on the dominant Eurocentric perspective they themselves as well as society might have on certain issues. Having the kindness to be aware of one's own assumptions against another race and being able to step away from these constitutes the second principle. 'Honesty', as a second principle, focuses on the acknowledgment of privileges of non-Indigenous social workers and the great power that comes with them. The colonial structures and

oppressive laws are still embedded in today's Canadian system. In order to gain insight into other cultures and especially the Indigenous culture, one needs to include the principle of 'Sharing'. Storytelling and sharing of experiences are key factors of Indigenous culture and healing ceremonies. A more informed understanding of each other's heritage can be achieved by sharing traditional stories among Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. In fourth place comes 'Strength' - the strength to build allies and stand up against injustices and for the equality of all races. By taking these four principles into account while studying, teaching, and practicing social work, one can implement a more caring and successful social work practice in Indigenous communities (McCaulery and Matheson, 2018).

In Canada and Germany, undergraduate and graduate students have to accomplish different forms of field education, such as practicums or internships of various lengths. These practice experiences are tremendously important to help social work students to gain a deeper understanding of their work and how theoretical methods are applied in the field (Ayala et al., 2018). Ayala and her colleagues (2018) conducted a study concerning the current situation of Canadian social work students in field education resulting recommendations to provide a more effective and successful education. They emphasized the much-needed collaboration of organizations, schools and professional workers to enable change on provincial, federal and local level within the neoliberal context (Ayala et al., 2018). Equally interesting, is the authors' take on alternative field education options that would broaden the students practice knowledge (Ayala et al., 2018). The recommendation is to place students in international or untraditional practicum conditions the aim to bring the social work profession forward with regards to opening up to alternative methods and systems.[3] With more open-mindedness, it may be possible for traditional institutions and organizations to support and bolster the alternative healing and working methods of Indigenous people in Canada. It is necessary to exit one's comfort zone in order to make new positive and favorable experiences with alternative concepts of social work in order to get them incorporated into existing working models. Ultimately, Ayaly and colleagues (2018) called for more human and financial resources in the field.

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[3] Another opportunity for social workers to reflect upon their status and practice could be an international comparison of social work approaches and methods around the globe (Walther, 2018).

Applying these findings to Germany, it is likely that there will be similar findings. Social work students in Germany are only required to complete a 6-months practicum during their studies, which is evaluated and guided by a faculty member and an on-side field coordinator. It is questionable if students gain insight into the broad and multi-facetted practice by working in only one specific placement. The thought of a more challenging approach where students are required to interact with multicultural methods and perspectives from different organizations could be both interesting and educational.

5.3.   Dealing with discrimination and history

Social workers played a significant role in the historical genocide of Indigenous Canadians. The profession still seems to struggle to acknowledge this part of its history. Czyzewski and Tester (2014) argued that it is essential for professional and successful social workers to reflect on the colonial history of Canada and on one's own position in the system. As researchers, they collaborated with Inuit women from Nunavut in order to conduct a study on the outcomes of mining on Inuit women in their area. Focusing on the importance of acknowledging colonial history and consciously dealing with the past, they mapped out the different meanings of cultural safety, humility and competence. They denounced the use of the term competence as something one could fully achieve at a certain point of education because cultural competence is a steadily developing understanding of other cultures (Czyzewski & Tester, 2014). Furthermore, the competence of understanding different cultural backgrounds does not automatically come with ability to be a professional social worker. It demands cultural humility and cultural safety as a quality for professional social workers. Cultural safety, within this context, is described as the ability to acknowledge power differences and to act against them (Czyzewski & Tester, 2014.). In order to be humble in the cultural context, one should be willing to listen to different perspectives on issues, be eager to learn more and to develop self-determined relationships with community members from different cultures (Czyzewski & Tester, 2014.). In order to practice cross-cultural social work, it is necessary to reflect upon personal privileges and roles within society, even if it could hurt.

The implications and consequences for the social work practice discussed up to this point can also be applied to the issue of discrimination. On a micro level, in working with individual clients, there is a need for better cultural awareness of social workers because "social work often is inherently racist when it comes to application of social policy and practice in the case of minority groups" (Pierce, Hemingway, & Schmidt, 2014 p. 216). On a macro level, social workers would have to be more politically involved to advocate for their client population as a whole. This could be either by enabling members of the minority group to gain access to resources that promote and support political engagement, or by using the advantage of being a more privileged member of society to spread awareness and influence the public opinion.

The history and role of German social workers during the era of National Socialism is still not entirely reprocessed and acknowledged. The profession experienced a large increase of attention during this time and was sufficiently funded to provide a vast range of social services (Nolzen & Sünker, 2018). As much as social work was supportive of socially vulnerable people, support was exclusively available and accessible to Arians. The trauma and mistrust against social workers developing from this time is still felt today. Sinti and Roma do not trust the system based on their past experience of discrimination and persecution, as described earlier. Consequently, social workers that work with Sinti and Roma need to be aware of the profession's past involvement in discrimination against the same population and that rejection of offered services may be a reasonable response given the discriminatory nature of social work in the recent past.

Germany has been challenged by the United Nation Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to raise more awareness specifically about the issues of Sinti and Roma women in Germany (Habeeb, 2004). Various intersectional factors must be considered to explain, understand and deal with the issue of why Sinti and Roma women are at higher risk in Germany than the majority population.

Other factors, such as the difficult and threatening situation of women belonging to ethnic minorities when it comes to violence against their person, must be considered as well when discussing consequences for the field of social work. Domestic violence, sex trafficking, and criminal offences against women are of concern for social workers everywhere. The previously discussed factors have major influence on the social status of ethnic minorities; any may place women from ethnic minority groups at even greater risk of violence than women in the general population.

In general, it can be concluded that social workers in Canada as well as in Germany still needs to improve their methods, approaches and perspectives on working with women belonging to ethnic minorities. In order to do so, social workers need to work as allies and collaborative together with ethnic minorities.

6. Limitations and reflection on thesis

It is needless to say that the issues and topics covered in this paper could be discussed and analyzed in much greater detail. Within the scope of this paper it was not possible to do justice to the entire variety of matters that concern women belonging to ethnic minorities. There are various other ethnic minorities in Germany and Canada whose own unique histories in these countries are interesting and could be a topic of further research.

In future research, it would be interesting to consider and analyze the situation of Roma women in Germany without citizenship, as they are faced with entirely different regulations and opportunities. One challenge I was confronted with in my research is the enormous lack of ethnic and gender specific data available from the German government. Different institutions call for a more representative scientific research and data acquisition, as well as a more critical approach from researchers with regards to the negative connotation data collection has for Sinti and Roma in Germany based on their history (Stiftung Erinnerung Verantwortung Zukunft, 2016). There is much less data on the circumstances of Sinti and Roma people in Germany than on Indigenous people in Canada. It is unclear whether this is because of a lack of interest in European societies or due to the issue with data collection due to anti-discrimination measurements.

The substantially bigger focus on the history and circumstances of Indigenous women in Canada in this paper was chosen intentionally, as it seems that there is a lack of knowledge about Canadian history in Germany. The way Indigenous people approach social work is fundamentally different from the western European perspective and could provide a model of culturally sensitive social work. During my studies in Canada, I had the privilege to learn about these methods from Indigenous elders and educators. Evaluating my own social status and privilege as a Caucasian woman in the western world was necessary to gain a deeper understanding of my role as a social worker, and the power imbalance inherent in engaging with ethnic minorities.

7. Conclusion

The comparison between the situations of two unique ethnic minorities provides insight into how minorities struggle with similar issues around the globe. The contemplation of the history, traditional life, and current situation of a minority group is needed to get a better understanding of each minority. Although varying in form and period, both groups examined in this paper have been persecuted in their home countries. The traditional Indigenous as well as the Sinti and Roma cultures differ in many ways, such as their initial attribution of gender roles, but they also show similarities, like the essential role of family and traditions in their culture. Social workers were involved in some part in each group's history.

In summary, Canada and Germany are highly developed countries that still struggle to deal with national ethnic minorities in a more ethical and culturally sensitive fashion. Today, there is still a significant gap between the living standards and opportunities ethnic minorities have compared to the general population of their home country. The governments of Germany and Canada have started to take actions in order to support these minority groups. Whether the taken measures will be sufficient enough to increase equitable opportunity remains to be seen.

Actions, programs and initiatives on local levels need the support and involvement of social workers. Social work professionals that work with ethnic minorities should be educated about the cultural background of their client; and they should work with a trauma-informed and culturally safe approach. Acknowledging the difficult circumstances many minorities find themselves in and taking into account the general disadvantage that women in both countries face, in conclusion means that they are at an even higher risk for experiencing inequality. The factors discussed in this paper illuminate the relatively low social status of ethnic minority women. Social workers have to expand their knowledge of alternative methods and different approaches by working with these women in person. Furthermore, another area for development for the profession lies in changing the way we teach and learn about social work: Many Indigenous scholars have made suggestions regarding the way in which the social work profession could improve (Chapter 5.2). It is important to listen to these alternative approaches and include them into the way we teach, learn, and practice social work.

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