

Call for papers: *Research on Social Work Practice*

Special issue: “Program Theory in Social Interventions Developed in Practice Settings”

Guest Editors: Tina M. Olsson & Therése Skoog

Solving societal problems through social intervention in practice settings is a complex task. The extent to which we achieve this end depends heavily on the effectiveness of the change strategies in use. Increased understanding of how these change strategies work to impact outcomes is at the forefront of the science of social intervention. In ideal scientific circumstances, social interventions are developed based on a clear understanding of what is known from basic and applied research about a given problem, its associated risk and protective factors, how it develops and changes over time, and the populations that are most vulnerable to the problem (Fraser & Galinsky, 2010; Fraser et al., 2009). This information is then used as the starting point from which interventions to address a given problem, for a given group, in a given context are conceptualized and developed (Fraser & Galinsky, 2010; Fraser et al., 2009). This conceptual model of how an intervention is intended to bring about change is known as a program theory (cf logic model, theory of change, change theory.; Fraser et al., 2009; Funnell & Rogers, 2011; Rey et al., 2011; Rossi et al., 2004). Social interventions, however, often originate in practice settings (Sundell et al., 2015). The theoretical understanding of how practice leads to change, either implicit or explicit, may be inferior to other concerns within practice settings (Chen & Garbe, 2011). Understanding more fully the theoretical process of change underlying interventions used in practice settings will help us better understand the relationship between the science and practice of social work. Taken together, there is a need for more research and theory development which addresses the use of theory in practice an area that has been underutilized in the development of intervention science. The purpose of this special issue is to increase our understanding of how social work interventions developed in practice settings are intended to work to achieve desired outcomes.

Research on Social Work Practice and special issue editors seek submissions for a special issue on “Program Theory in Social Interventions Developed in Practice Settings” and welcome the following types of papers:

- Primary research investigating the application of theory in interventions developed and used in practice settings.
- Methodological papers that increase our understanding of how to specify or assess the theoretical basis of interventions developed and used in practice settings.
- Systematic or scoping reviews investigating the use of theory in interventions developed and used in practice settings.
- Papers that specifically investigate, review, or comment on the harmful use of theory in the development or use of interventions in practice settings.
- Commentaries on the use of theory in social intervention that can increase our understanding of how practitioners may develop effective interventions.

The catalyst for this special issue is four-fold and based on our own experience in conducting intervention research over the past 15 years. First, there has been much attention in the literature on the conduct of research in order to test and assess the effectiveness of social interventions (Sundell & Olsson, 2017). However, the testing of intervention effectiveness is the final step in an intervention development process that has not been fully described or investigated in the literature. Second, many interventions in use today have been developed in practice settings which may mean that they are not specified to the extent necessary to be included in controlled research (Chen & Garbe, 2011). Understanding the theoretical starting point for these interventions is essential for the development of intervention science in practice settings. Third, there is an emerging policy interest in developing ways in which practitioners may be better supported in developing and choosing interventions to use in practice with the first element of a promising practice being its firm rooting in a well-defined theory (The Danish National Board of Health and Welfare, 2021). Fourth, the application and use of theory in practice may not always be beneficial to services users (Thyer, 2012). This necessitates efforts to better understand the role of theory in social interventions used in practice settings.

If you are interested in contributing to this special issue, please send your submission directly to the guest editors: Tina M. Olsson, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Department of Social Work, University of Gothenburg, tina.olsson@socwork.gu.se and Therése Skoog, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Gothenburg,

therese.skoog@psy.gu.se . All submissions should be sent as word documents and formatted according to the guidelines provided in the 7th edition of the APA publication manual. Questions about suitable submissions may be directed to the Guest Editor prior to submission.

All submissions should be prepared for blind peer-review. Please include a cover page with submission title as well as all identifying and author contact information. The main manuscript should contain no identifying information. The cover page and main manuscript text should include a single running head. The cover page should also indicate that your work represents original and previously unpublished scholarship, whether appropriate ethical approvals were obtained, and that it is not under concurrent editorial review.

Deadline for submission: December 1, 2021

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