

**Title:** Perspectives and models of community social work : social workers' understanding and practices in social exclusion and citizenship in Chile

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**Abstract:**

Drawing upon the contributions of critical theory, this thesis aimed to explore perspectives and models used by social workers to address social exclusion and citizenship in Chile. Specifically, the research focused on the perspectives of social workers holding the role of coordinator of community-oriented programmes. A qualitative design using semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis informed the study. Twenty-six social workers employed by two Chilean NGOs were interviewed and a number of documents related to the interventions carried out by the participants were also collected. Data produced were analysed by using thematic analysis. This research, the first of its kind in Chile, provided a number of insights for understanding the position that social workers occupy in the implementation of state policy for overcoming social exclusion. The findings indicated that most of the social workers combined diverse perspectives to understand their interventions; however, a neo-conservative approach to social exclusion appeared as the dominant perspective. A functional model of community intervention predominated in their practices, as well as a liberal idea of citizenship. A few social workers exhibited an approach closer to radical perspectives. Using professional discretion, these social workers undertook what they called 'sensitisation' models and 'deliberative' models of community practice. Notions of citizenship, closer to a critical republican approach, were found among the views of these social workers. The study identified how neoliberal rationality has impacted on Chilean social work. At the same time, it brought to light strategies employed by some social workers to oppose resistance to such an apparent hegemonic order. Drawing upon the study findings, suggestions are made with respect to the development of the Chilean social work profession from a critical perspective. The thesis also seeks to make a contribution to international social work research and debate.