



# Contemporary Social Work Issues & Practice

SESSION 4



# **Social Construction**



# Social Construction



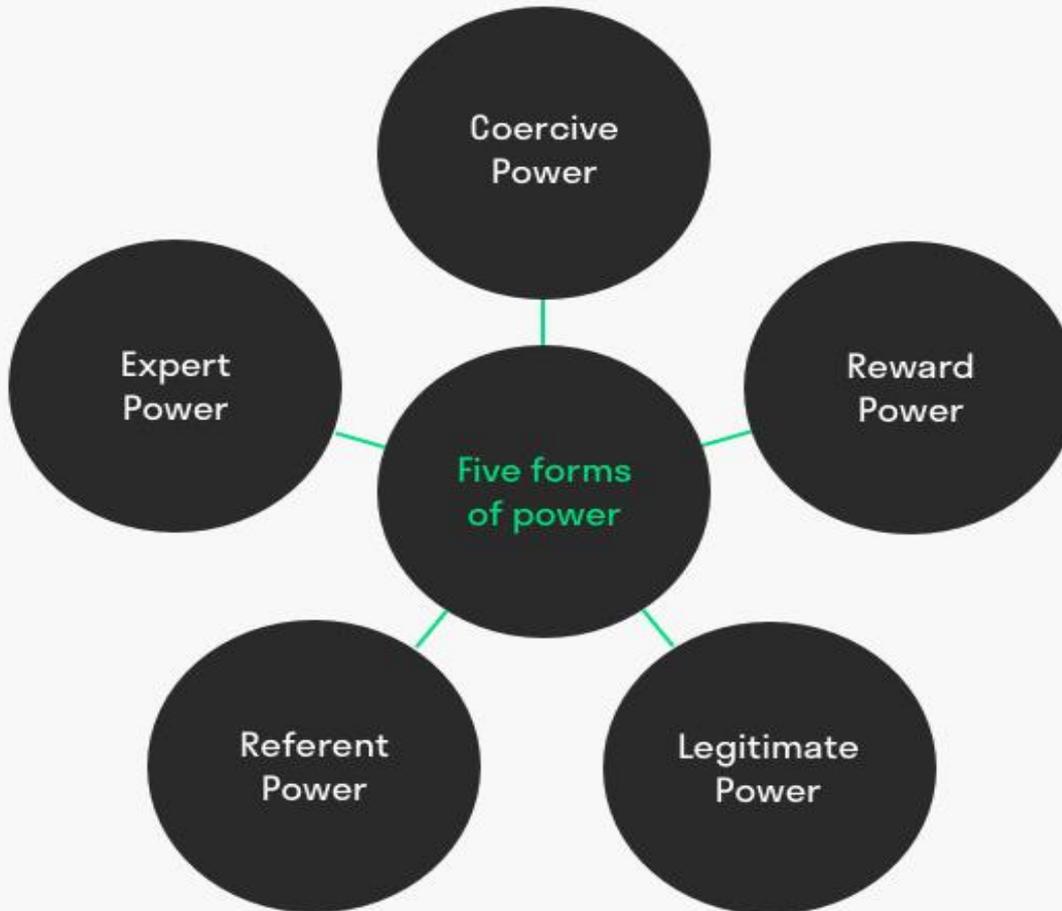
**Stereotypes** about particular groups are created by politics, culture, socialization, history, media, religion etc.

Subject to contention because there is  
**“no objective reality”**. **Reality is defined by power\***

Positive social construction?

Negative social construction?

# + 5 Forms of Power



# + Social Construction & Policy Design



- Policy is purposeful and attempts to achieve goals by changing behaviours (Ingram and Schneider, 1991).
- **Intersection of**
  - 1. Power &**
  - 2. Social construction**

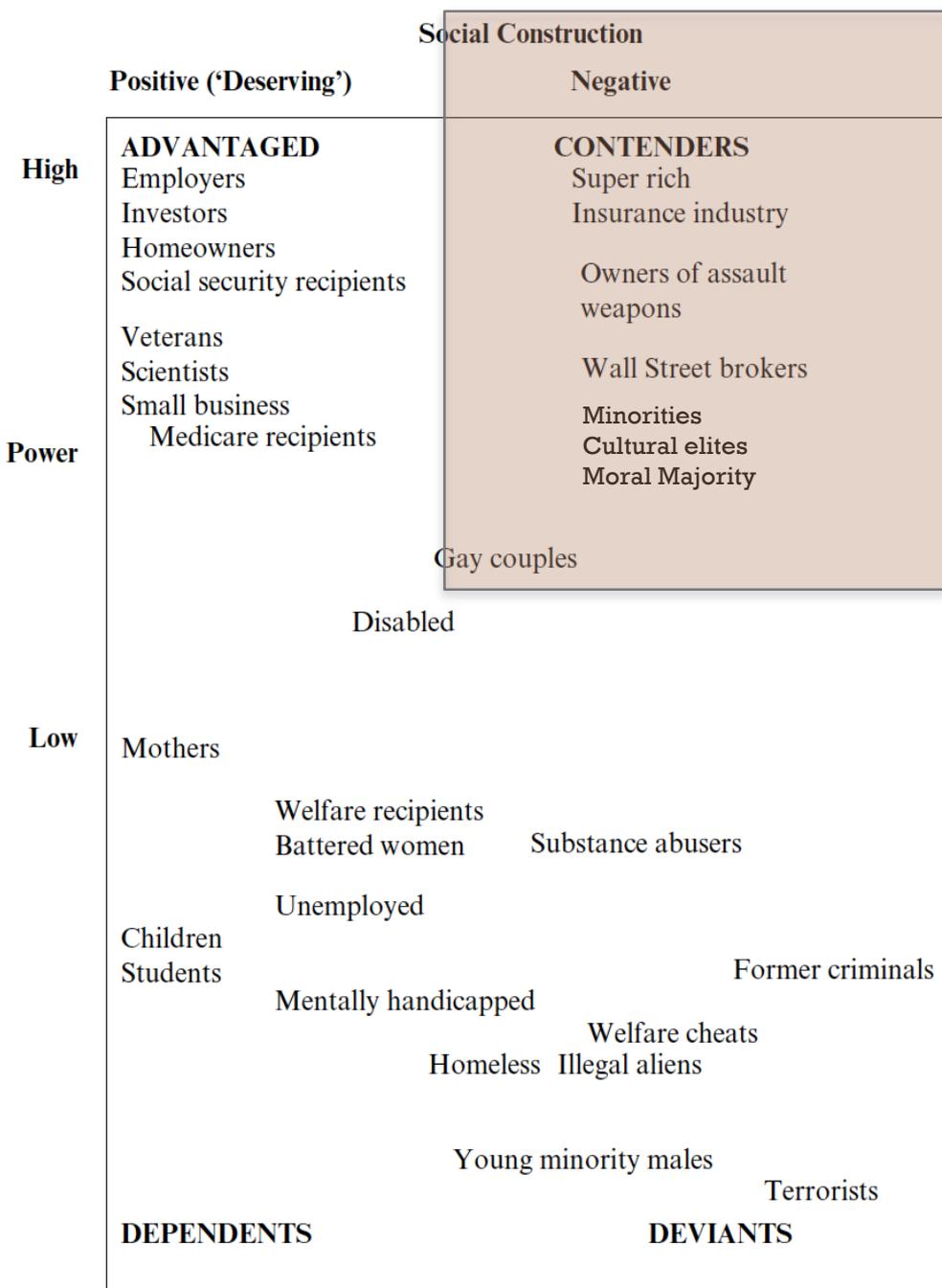
→ leads to allocation of **benefits and burdens** to different **target groups** (Ingram and Schneider, 1991)
- Out of definitions of social problems found in 34 widely referred texts, 21 included the requirement that the public or **some segment of the public must perceive the condition as problem before we can justly say that a social problem exists** (Lauer, 1976).
  - That means, if insufficient public perception of a social problem as problematic, then it does not exist.

# + Social Construction, Public Guidelines & Policies

- Public Officials often anticipate the reaction of specific target population to the policy proposed
- Public officials also anticipate reaction of others on whether the specific target population should be the beneficiary (or loser) for a proposed policy.
- Thus, policy proposal depends partly on the power of target population itself (power through ability to vote, wealth, and propensity of group to mobilise action) and partly on the power of others who may not be the target of policy.







**Public officials find it to their advantage to direct burdens Contenders Groups because the group though powerful but others will not approve of the policy being given as they are considered “undeserving people”.**

**Contenders are powerful but negatively constructed (“Undeserving”) by others.**

**Public Policy Strategy:**

- **Burdens directed on advantaged groups** usually are used to discourage actions through charging or creating barriers to entry.

**(Ingram and Schneider, 2015)**

## Social Construction

Positive ('Deserving')

Negative

High

### ADVANTAGED

Employers  
Investors  
Homeowners  
Social security recipients

### CONTENDERS

Super rich  
Insurance industry  
  
Owners of assault weapons  
  
Wall Street brokers

Power

Veterans  
Scientists  
Small business  
Medicare recipients

Minorities  
Cultural elites  
Moral Majority

Gay couples

Disabled

Low

Mothers

Welfare recipients  
Battered women

Substance abusers

Unemployed

Children  
Students

Former criminals

Mentally handicapped

Homeless

Welfare cheats  
Illegal aliens

Young minority males

Terrorists

### DEPENDENTS

### DEVIANTS

**Public officials find it to their advantage to provide beneficial policies to dependent groups because not only will the group itself respond positively but others will approve favourably of the policy in giving to “deserving people”**

**Dependents are not powerful but are positively constructed (as “deserving”) by others.**

### Public Policy Strategy:

- Usually in subsidies form, and require people to show proof.
- Usually requiring this group to take initiative, make their case, or rely on agencies to apply on.
- Such policies introduces stigma and tells dependents that they are powerless, helpless and needy, that they get attention through generosity of others, and their predicament is their own doing and fault.

**(Ingram and Schneider, 2015)**

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### DEPENDENTS

### DEVIANTS

**Public officials find it to their advantage to impose burden policies to deviant groups so that they need not fear electoral retaliation from the group itself and the general public approves of punishment for groups that it has constructed negatively.**

Deviant groups are usually negatively constructed as "Non-deserving"

### Public Policy Strategy:

- Usually involve coercive, force, sanctions, incarcerations.

**(Ingram and Schneider, 2015)**

**Social Construction**

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**Negative**

**High**

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**DEPENDENTS**

**DEVIANTS**



**Which section of population are you most likely to work with as social workers?**

(Ingram and Schneider, 2015)

# + Policy Design Impact on different target population

	Types of Target Population			
Types of impact	Advantaged	Contenders	Dependents	Deviants
<b>“Your” problems are</b>	Important public problems and you are capable of making your own decisions	In conflict with others’ interests, seen with some levels of suspicion	Helpless, needy and you are subject to generosity of society	Bad due to your own responsibility, high on policy agenda during elections
<b>Government should treat you with</b>	Respect	Fear or caution	With pity	With criminalization
<b>Mobilization Potential (Voting for)</b>	High	Moderate	Low	Low
<b>Mobilization Potential for private provision of services</b>	High	Moderate	Low	Low
<b>Mobilization Potential for advocacy in ‘disruptive forms’</b>	Low	Moderate	Low	Moderate

(Ingram and Schneider, 2015)

# + **Exploitation, Oppression and Social Problems**

- Most social problems are aggravated by the status of groups in society
  - Poverty, race, gender, age, sexual orientation
  - Deficits in social power
  - Low mobilization potential and low representation in politics
- Social problems may be aggravated by the lack of appropriate policies or services available to members of minority groups
  - Policies and legislations
  - Lack of range of services
  - Supplied in insensitive ways
  - Requires initiative in access

# + **Activity**

*The SG Context:*

Positive: Deserving

Negative: Undeserving

High  
Power

**Advantaged**

**Contenders**

Low  
Power

**Dependents**

**Deviants**





# **Advocacy**

# + **Advocacy**

- Advocacy is “about stating a case, influencing decisions, ending assumptions, getting better services, being treated equally, being included, protecting from abuse, redressing balance of power, becoming more aware of and exercising rights” (Dunning, 1995)
- Aligned to social justice mission
- Social workers bring strength to policy work > negotiation, coalition building and consensus building (Sherraden, et. al., 2002)

# + Advocacy

- Advocacy is intended to change opinion about a *policy* — specifically, policymakers' or the public's opinions that it is important enough — and achieve a policy change or mindset shift.
- Policy change can be a plan, strategy, or agenda; program or course of action; language, budget decision; piece of legislation; or regulations or protocols/guidance issued by a government, multinational entity, or institution.
- It is often necessary to conduct opinion change activities with the media, community members, religious leaders, and health care providers before conducting advocacy activities. However, these efforts are only considered advocacy activities if the target groups then put pressure on the policymaking process.

(Pathfinder, 2016)



# + Why Plan for Advocacy



## ADVOCACY:

- Involves getting **powerful individuals or organizations** to make **big changes** that may **not be in their short-term interest**
- Often involves **working in the public eye**
- Often involves **sticking out your neck**, as you take a stand against larger “opponents”

## PLANNING WILL HELP YOU GET TO:

- Clarify your goals
- Clarify the steps that will take you to your goals to increase your chances of success
- Help you find out ahead of time where the major difficulties may be and avoid surprises (including those surprises that might make you look ineffective or clumsy).
- If you don't plan, you may waste valuable energy, miss some opportunities, perhaps even antagonize people you need to keep on your side.

# + **Advocacy Planning Map Overview**

- (1) What is the defined problem?
- (2) Approaches to change? What change do you want to see
- (3) Decision to advocate and understanding of implications
- (4) Goals of advocacy Outcomes of advocacy that will shift current proposed solutions to the defined problem
- (5) Development of strategies and implementation
  - (i) Tactics | Implementation | Timing | Timeframe
  - (ii) Resources required
  - (iii) Stakeholders | Allies | Opponents | Public Opinions | Powerful individuals

# + Social work & advocacy

## Advocacy Planning Map

### 1. Pre- Planning - Identifying the problems and the policy issues

- What is the problem?
- How do we know it is a problem (e.g.: based on your assessment, conducting opinion polls?)
- How important is it?
- What has been done previously to address this issue?
- What is the policy dimension?
- What are preliminary solutions we have in mind?

### 2. Approaches to change

What is the solution to the problem?

Policy / Program / Project / Personnel / Practice

### 3. Deciding to advocate

- When you know enough about the issue at hand
- When all current possible solutions are unlikely to yield positive results
- When there is significant public good outcome from the advocacy process

# + Social work & advocacy

## Advocacy Planning Map

### 4. Goal Identification

- What is the goal? SMART goals
- What is the impact of this change initiative?

**Long-term goals** spell out where you want to be at the end of advocacy:

E.g.: In 4 years, we will reduce teen pregnancy rate among in Bay City by 30%

**Intermediate goals** get you much of the way:

- Focus on community and system changes - new or modified programs, policies, and practices in the local community or the broader system
- Help the group to feel it is doing something. This can be helpful to maintain high levels of motivation over the long haul.
- They provide earlier "bench-marks" by which you can measure progress.  
E.g.: In one year, the City Council will create six new low-income housing units

**Short-term goals** have some of the same functions as the intermediate kind. They help keep a group motivated, providing more immediate benchmarks in action steps.

## Advocacy Planning Map

### 5i) Tactics of Advocacy (The How-To-s)

- Collaboration
  - Implementation
  - Capacity building (participation, empowerment)
- Campaign
  - Education
  - Persuasion (Cooptation, Lobbying)
  - Mass media Appeal
- Contest
  - Bargaining and negotiation
  - Large group community action

## Advocacy Planning Map

### 5ii) Implementation

- Expected Outcome
- Timeline
- Anticipated Issues
- Evaluate
  - Quantitative and Qualitative Results
  - What went well/didn't go so well?
  - What do the numbers say?
  - How would we make modifications to the plan?
  - Next steps

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## Advocacy Planning Map

### 5ii) Planning for resources

#### ■ Money

- You wouldn't be needing massive financial support over a long period of time, but many donors may not want to put money into advocacy.

#### ■ Assets

- Contacts (e.g.: with media resources, larger coalitions, emails, shared drives, interest groups, student caucuses)
- Facilities (e.g.: access to transportation, meeting locations)

#### ■ Allies

- Ensuring assets are solidly in place, any internal problems such as relationships between staff and volunteers, disagreement on use of funds that needs to be sorted out during planning stage

## Advocacy Planning Map Intervention

### 5iii) Stakeholders

- Identification of Actors (Brager, 1978)
  - Critical Actors (Actors who would be able to deliver the proposed change if he/she deems it to be in the organisation's interest)
  - Facilitatory actors (Actors whose approval must be obtained before reaching critical actors and actors whose responses would have a direct impact on Critical Actors)
- Identification of Driving and Restraining Forces (Lewin, 1943)
  - An issue is held in balance by the interaction of forces promoting change (driving forces) and forces attempting to maintain the status quo (restraining forces)
  - In order for change to occur, the strength of driving forces must exceed the strength of restraining forces
  - Concept known as the **Force Field Analysis**

# + Social work & advocacy

## Advocacy Planning Map

### Force Field Analysis

- Investigate balance of power
- Identify important players
- Identify opponents and allies
- Identify how to influence each target group

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## Advocacy Planning Map

### Force Field Analysis

Assess each force for:

- *Potency*: the power of a force
- *Consistency*: the stability or constancy with which the force has taken this position
- *Amenability*: the openness of the force to outside influence and pressure

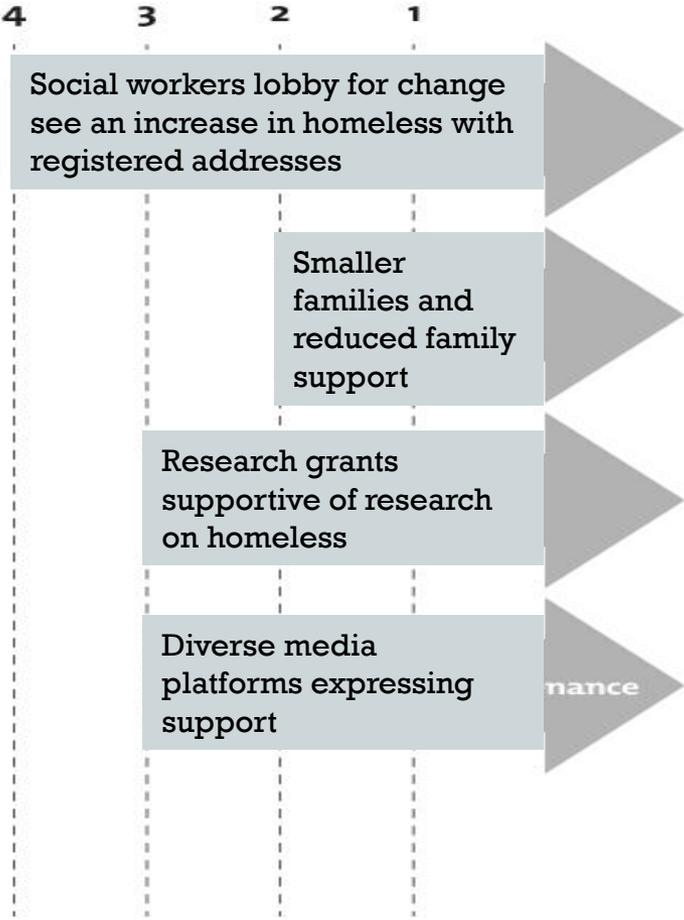
# FORCE FIELD ANALYSIS

Broader Definition of homeless to include all in unstable housing

Situations maintained by an equilibrium between forces that drive change and others that resist change

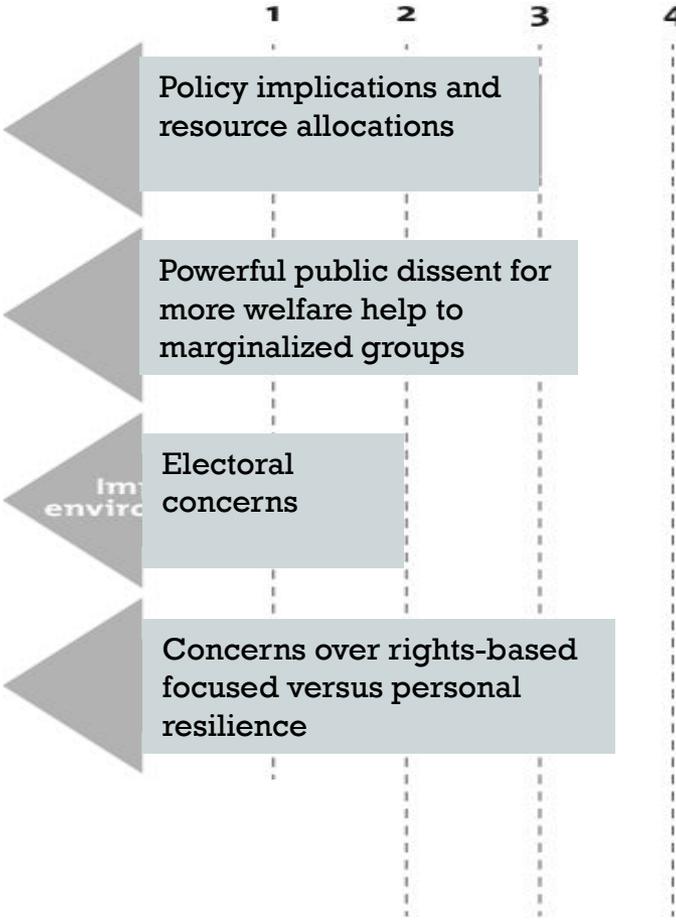


## Foces for Change



A broader definition of homelessness to include all in unstable housing

## Foces Against Change



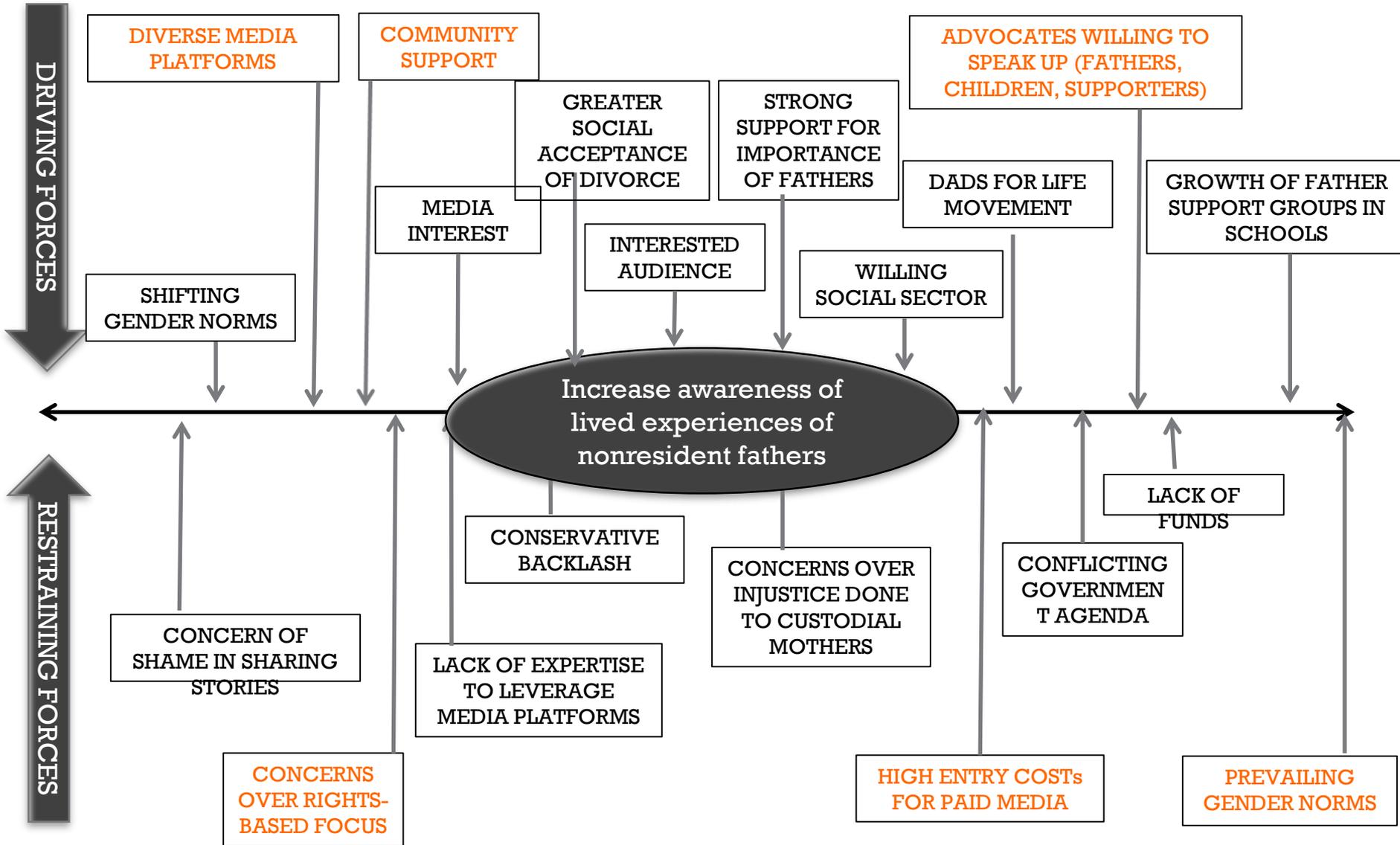
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Total: 11

# FORCE FIELD ANALYSIS

Increase awareness of lived experiences of nonresident fathers

ILLUSTRATION ONLY



Force	Potency	Amenability	Remarks	ILLUSTRATION ONLY
<b>Driving Force:</b> willingness to speak	High	Moderate	The sharing of real stories creates a strong sense of authenticity and awareness. Good awareness campaigns are built on real lived experiences	
Community support	High	Moderate	There is growing acknowledgment of nonresident fathers as a vulnerable population. Such community support will go a long way in creating momentum to recognise the unique concerns and issues of nonresident fathers and create impetus for more stories to be shared and heard.	
Availability of diverse media platforms	High	High	The range of platforms ensures breadth of messaging, while flexibility of options ensures that we can decide on which media to leverage based on resource and constraints.	
<b>Restraining Force:</b> Concerns over rights-based focus	High	Low	Confucian values continue to frame Singapore society such that there is a natural aversion to rights-based discourse. Any attempt to utilize a rights-based perspective is likely to derail progress towards the cause	
Prevailing gender norms	Moderate	Moderate	Prevailing gender roles prescribe a nurturing role for mothers that inherently make a strong case for mother presence relative to father presence in situations of divorce. Yet, this is evolving towards more equal perception of responsibilities.	
High entry cost	High	High	The barriers to entry of some traditional media platforms such as TV or radio remain significant. This has a strong bearing on using the most widely accessible medium for publicity. At the same time, the diverse media platforms suggest that we are not limited in our options for choice of media platforms.	

# + Social work & advocacy

Assess implications of force field analysis on implementation plans)

Force	Potency	Amenability	Implication
Willingness to speak	High	Moderate	Prepare for readiness to speak
Community support	High	Moderate	Greater reliance on them
Availability of diverse media platforms	High	High	Focus on more accessible media first
Concerns over rights-based focus	High	Low	Focus on child needs rather than rights of fathers
Prevailing gender norms	Moderate	Moderate	Increase information, research and articles to increase literacy in these issues
High entry cost	High	High	Fundraising