

# Re-discovering the Positive Sides of Social Work: Social Support and Client Strengths Perspectives

## Sociālā darba pozitīvo aspektu atklāšana no jauna: sociālais atbalsts un klienta spēka perspektīvas

*Valdas Rimkus, Dr. sc. soc. (Lithuania)*

This article aims at discussing the positive sides in social work. Positive approach is presented as emphasizing positive attitudes, social context and interpersonal relationships in a complex reality. It's argued that problem-oriented, medicalised methods and approaches should yield to process-oriented, dynamic and relationship-based thinking, because it could facilitate a better understanding of changes, contradictions and uncertainties within social processes. To be relevant in a current social context, positive perspective in social work calls to embrace not only strengths and virtues of a person but also expand its focus to a wider social environment. To cover the personal, relationship and social components, social support and strengths perspectives are analysed as some of the possible ways to expand positive approaches in incorporating them deeper into social work theory and practice.

**Key words:** positive aspects in social work, social support, client strengths perspective.

### Introduction

A human being naturally strives for a stable environment because it provides us with a sense of safety and security. Looking back into history, there were different milieus which acted as supports for individuals and society to lean on to. According to H. Arendt, in antiquity people found sense of eternity in the tangible world, cosmos, while with the rise of Christianity religious belief and hope of afterlife became the pillars for stability (Arendt, 2005). Our current society is submerged in material and sensory abundance as well as rapid change and often described as being “post-traditional”, “in crisis” or “at risk”. We live in the world, which has lost the absolution of religion and neither has regained the tangible stability so important in antiquity. Human life becomes focused on individual needs and desires, yet the loss of an afterlife has

not been filled in by material life either (Arendt, 2005). In other words, today people live in a world devoid of any foundation for stability and must deal with complexity and uncertainty on a daily basis.

This situation raises significant challenges for social work. To reflect the changing reality, perspectives of uncertainty and complexity should gradually take the central position in social work practice. Social workers should not expect that they will know in advance the results of planned intervention, not every decision made by social work professional is to be considered as correct and unquestionable. Yet however, according to S. Witkin (2017), despite presenting itself as a progressive and adjustable profession, the science and practice of social work is still too often based on conservative approaches, gathering of factual information with the aim to classify clients and “cure” their “pathologies”. More so, social work is affected by neoliberal ideology where social workers and clients become “sellers” and “customers” of social services thus eliminating the importance of social context and interpersonal relations (Witkin, 2017, 1-2).

To answer the challenges described above, social work needs to go back to the essence of human being, focus on revealing hidden self of a client and controversies of a situation in order to help to form information-based consciousness instead of just looking for “truth“ and/or “facts“ and aiming to help client’s adaptation to a situation. In other words, social work should encourage clients to recognize their situation and look for means to improve the capacities of vulnerable people to independently plan and control their lives. In the latter decades the increasingly louder call to move away from problem and pathologies-oriented model and turn towards solution-oriented approach is heard across the social work scientific field. It doesn’t surprise, because without a doubt motivating the client and forming an information-based consciousness is not possible only by seeing problems and applying “medicine”. Thus, positive approach and focus on strengths and virtues of personality emphasizing the person instead of a problem is gaining momentum in social work literature. Therefore, the aim of this article is to discuss the approaches in social work which give priority to client strengths and are solution-oriented, emphasizing positive attitudes, social context and interpersonal relationships in a complex reality.

## **Towards positive approach in social work**

Looking from today’s point of view, although clearly defined and modelled, positive tradition is still lacking in social work research as well as in the ways social work knowledge is applied to social work practices. Social work from its origin relates to social support and as such it could, in principal, provide the ground for even stronger positive approach within social work. However, the lack of positive approach may be due to historically determined position of social work in the hierarchy of social sciences. Related to the fields of sociology, psychology, social policy, social pedagogy, social work has been clearly positioned in the margins where it’s set to deal with person-related social problems. In the 1930-ies the growing popularity of increasingly developed methods of psychology and psychoanalysis had a significant influence on social work. The focus of social work was transferred from social environment, inequalities and social reform towards a person and family. Such paradigm shift gained its momentum, was widely established and, under a name of medical model of social work, has dominated the social work throughout the 20th century (Blundo, 2013, 30).

Medical model means finding a cause of illness or disorder and prescribing a treatment. In other words, it is basically what social workers do today – identify a problem and look for a solution. Such processes facilitated the evolution of the problem-oriented paradigm of social work, which shaped the professional language and established itself as a set of rules and arrangements furtherly defining the boundaries of professional attitudes and contents of professional knowledge.

Naturally, that in the context of changing environment and emerging new patterns of social problems the search for new alternatives for medical or problem-oriented social work model is gaining ground. According to M. Herz & T. Johansson (2011), the increasing amount of scientific research reveal that social work practice is over-reliant on stereotypic approaches, while social workers too often lean on psychological methods. Systemic approach, attention to society is abandoned in favour of attention to a personality, which results in lack of understanding of social context. Psychologic methods and approaches should yield to process-oriented and dynamic thinking, because it could facilitate a better understanding of changes, contradictions and uncertainties within social processes. Some of the possible alternatives might be solution-focused approach, shifting priority from problem recognition to a change necessary to solve it; client strengths perspective, emphasizing the mutual social worker – client relationship; social support paradigm, which professes involvement of informal network into the process of help, and several other approaches. These approaches have already been practiced for a reasonable amount of time, they show that social work means more than just putting a “diagnosis” and finding a right “treatment” and thus neglecting the uniqueness of a client and his situation. As opposed to a problem-oriented model, the solution-focused model or client strengths perspective can be viewed as bearing a positive implication. These models emphasize solutions, client abilities and strengths, potential for change, cooperation, mutual relationship, social support, i.e. the features which are commonly seen as positive.

It is also noticeable that not only a social work practice, but also a big part of the research in social work is conducted within the problem-based tradition. Either it is individual, group or social policy approach. Researchers in their analysis often pose a question “What is the main issue?” which also steers toward a problem-based approach. W. Marshall & L. Marshall (2012) state that problem-based approach is ineffective because the client lacks motivation and hope. There is a great need nowadays to shift our look from problem-based social work to strength-based and solution-focused approaches. Strength perspective and/or positive approach in social work can be described as final departure for social work from traditional medical and rehabilitative models of practice (Schatz & Flagler, 2004). Emphasis on client strengths and solutions first of all means a shift in thinking about client, ability to see client’s position within a wider social context where he can employ his abilities and efforts to engage client’s social network in the helping process, not just exploring his personality features. When the strength is chosen instead of pathology, there opens a space for situational optimism. Saleebey (2013), Schatz & Flager (2004) write that positivity in social work means “to be guided first and foremost by a profound awareness of and respect for client’s positive attributes and abilities, talents, resources, and aspirations” (p. 6). Therefore, positive approach in social work is a supplement to what social work traditionally does. Social workers should be just as concerned with making lives of people fulfilling as they are with solving problems (Seligman, 2010).

To be relevant in a current social context, positive perspective in social work needs to embrace not only strengths and virtues of a person but also expand its focus to a wider social environment. Some authors call this process shifting the emphasis in social work from “work” to “social”, implying that this would bring the profession to its roots of social activities (Perttula *et al.*, 2009; Blundo, 2013). To illustrate such approach the phrase of J. Morkūnienė, although not very new but still relevant nonetheless, can be used: the aim of modern humanism is not to explain how a personality could preserve its own identity, but reveal the ways how a personality must act to preserve humanism in another person, i.e. preserve the world and humanity (Morkūnienė, 2002, 10). This approach is often undermined by social work falling under the influence of neo-liberal ideology and engaging in practices based on market principles. Neo-liberal ideology puts the main task of making decisions on a person, maintaining that everyone takes personal responsibility for creating one’s own well-being utilizing means unharmed to others. However, all the wrong decisions, inability to achieve a level of well-being also are considered a personal responsibility. Such ideology shapes an individualistic, “eye-for-an-eye” society where mutuality, social support and social context are devalued and, in general, contradicts the above given thoughts of J. Morkūnienė. According to J. Ife (2012), rejecting the mutual personal relationships and obligations, nurturing the rough individualism, which lies in the heart of neo-liberal ideology, is incompatible with the idea of human rights (Ife, 2012, 220). Furthermore, Z. Bauman argues that neo-liberalism contradicts the system of personal services, avoids and suppresses moral responsibility before the other (Bauman, 2000, *cit.* Witkin, 2017, 44).

The component of positivity in social work is inseparable from social context, nature of relationship, diversity of views as well as recognition and acceptance of social environment. Positive approach does not provide answers or specific recipes how to deal with a certain situation, yet it offers the principles of cognition of the situation, emphasizing the diversity of ideas, values and approaches. Positivity in this uncertain and complex reality stems from the efforts to create a milieu where differences could be recognized and discussed rather than from efforts to prove the righteousness of one’s position; from knowledge of certain geographic and cultural context rather than from enforcing one way of living upon everyone. One of the main goals in social work is to start a change. No change is sustainable if it is enforced against one’s will, regardless of person’s situation, values and socio-cultural context. Sometimes in social work change is achieved through punishments and threats, however, as many might have noticed, change achieved that way tends to be temporary and superficial.

Thus, the positive approach in social work starts from the relationship of a social worker with another person next to him/her. From accepting different views, recognizing the context and establishing a mutual bond. From refusing to shape the other to conform general norms and avoiding to judge him/her according to standard categories. From abandoning neo-liberal, individualistic views and striving to know the social context, relationships and networks.

## **Social support in social work**

This article elaborates the approach that positiveness in social work is inseparable from the recognition of the importance of interpersonal relations, knowledge of the social context and attention to the other, especially the vulnerable one. This requires a wider presentation of the concept of social support.

Modern research on social support date back to the seventies of the last century when texts by J. Cassel, G. Moss, S. Cobb have been published (Vangelisti, 2009; Sarason & Sarason, 2009). These authors as well as others concluded that interpersonal relations and support they provide have a positive effect on personal health and wellbeing. It is noted, that social support is difficult to explain within the framework of one theoretical approach. This phenomenon covers individual's psychic, cognitive processes, relationships with other people, attitudes towards them and surrounding system of social ties. Generally social support is viewed from three perspectives: sociologic, psychologic and communication (Vangelisti, 2009, 40). Sociologic perspective focuses on integration within social group and the nature of interpersonal relations, psychologic perspective emphasizes on subjective appraisals of social support, in other words – perceived support, while communication perspective analyses the relations of support provider and receiver, verbal and non-verbal behaviour during the process of support (enacted support) (Ibid., 40). In literature social support is defined as potentially beneficial efforts carried out by relatives, members of social network or community which have positive outcomes for person's health, emotional wellbeing and behaviour (Pierce *et. al.*, 1996; Cohen *et. al.*, 2000; Barker, 2003).

Supportive transactions vary in their content. Opinions of different authors on types of social support might also vary, yet most of them agree on the basic division between social-emotional and practical – material components, or to put it differently between emotional and tangible support. Emotional support is the broadest and most inclusive type of support. To support the other emotionally is to show verbally or by actions that he/she is important and loved, to comfort, hear out, praise and encourage, increase his/her self-esteem and self-confidence. In literature we also can find concepts of appraisal support, esteem support or companionship support, but they might be considered as integral components of emotional support. Tangible support is a concrete aid or assistance, which mostly has a certain physical form. Watering neighbours' flowers while they are away, giving a ride, offering advice on how to solve a problem, lending money or a book are the examples of tangible support. As in the case of emotional support, several variations of tangible support are discussed. Informational support, physical / practical assistance, guidance etc. might be found in the literature, but they also can be put under the umbrella of tangible support.

A couple of flaws in understanding social support are quite frequent and thus need to be mentioned. M. Walker, S. Wasserman & B. Wellman (1994, 54) emphasize that social support should not be mistakenly identified only with mere transactions between two individuals. Instead it should be approached as a complex flow of resources among a wide range of actors in a network seen as a complex and unique entity. Pierce and his colleagues (1996, 8) argue that an individual in any everyday relationship is both a source and a recipient of social support, only in scientific studies these roles should be viewed separately. The same may be said about seeing provision of social support as a “cost” and reception of it as a “benefit”. In truth, providing social support also is a “benefit” as it contributes to self-esteem and healthy functioning, more so, people need to give as well as receive social support to experience higher levels of satisfaction in their relationships (Pierce *et al.*, 1996, 8).

To define the role of social support in social work process requires putting social support alongside other types of interventions. Current social work is dominated by interventions where the dominant source of support are social workers and teams of professionals. Most of such interventions may be classified as network interventions or

case managements (Maguire, 1991). In the case of network intervention client and his/her nearest social network are considered as the sphere for social worker to address in order to achieve the desired result. Case management means organising and managing support resources to meet client's needs. Although in both instances relatives and members of informal network may be involved in the helping process, yet social worker and other professionals remain as the dominant actors who shape the direction, nature and duration of services. Whereas social support belongs to another type of intervention – system development. In this case the focus is on the client's informal network (family, friends, relatives) which becomes the main provider of help and support. Professionals in this type of intervention take the secondary role. B. H. Gottlieb (1983, 25) advises social workers to recognize and heed the differences between professional help and informal social support. Social support intervention for social workers means stepping down from the leading role and assuming the role of identifier and initiator of relationships, counsellor for network members. Even non-professionals involved in support process should avoid acting like experts, because it might create a distance between them and community. The essential difference between informal support and professional help lies in the former being naturally accessible, compliant with local traditions and forms of support and rising from interpersonal relations. On the other hand, it's important to remember that social support is unable to outweigh low income, harsh living conditions or unequal opportunities, thus it must be combined with other interventions on social work.

There are different reasons for insufficient social support. As in many other cases the problem might lie in internal or external factors. Internal factors for the lack of social support include personal features or behaviour models, which block the personal willingness to look for help or reduce the willingness of others to provide support. The following internal factors for insufficient social support are defined in the literature:

- low self-esteem;
- suspicion and fear of others;
- lack of verbal and non-verbal communication skills;
- manipulative or annoying behaviour;
- shyness or just being different;
- low hygiene or poor looks (Pearson, 1990; Mattson & Gibb Hall, 2011).

The second barrier for social support is external factors. They are formed in the environment and social network of a person and are not necessarily connected with the personality of a support receiver. According to R. Pearson (1990, 124) these conditions of support receiver's living and relationships should be looked at as being potentially harmful for social support:

- physical distance, changes in support provider's life (change of place of living or work, divorce, death of a close person);
- limited resources of a network (low network size, psychological exhaustion of support providers);
- disruptive behaviour of members of social network (conflict, lack of social skills, disagreements).

According to the identified factors behind insufficient social support, the appropriate measures should be taken. Depending on the factors, correction of the network structure or correction of network communication might be chosen. B. H. Gottlieb (2000, 198) distinguishes certain conditions which indicate what approach – involvement of new network members or correction of the existing network – should be taken. Involvement of new network members is advised if:

- existing network is impoverished, ineffective or conflictual;
- existing network reinforces undesirable behaviours or identities;
- existing network lacks experiential knowledge;
- specialized knowledge or expert opinion is necessary.

While the correction of the existing natural network without involvement of new members is advised if:

- achievement of goals depends on behaviour of one or more network members;
- existing network needs strengthening to meet long-term support needs;
- presenting problem or outside intervention is highly stigmatizing;
- there is a cultural gap between support recipient and external providers.

If these rules are applied, the adequately assessed and corrected social network might become potentially more effective and provide purposeful and situation-corresponding support.

## **Client strengths perspective**

Client strengths perspective is another important aspect of positive approach in social work. This perspective leans on humanist and constructionist philosophies to emphasize the importance of positive traits, capacities and strengths of a person in establishing an individual relationship with environment. Client strengths perspective in social work originates from the USA as an answer to over-saturation of the profession with discourses of problems, deficiencies, disorders and pathologies (Healy, 2014, 165). One of the biggest contributions in establishing this perspective belongs to the professor of Kansas university Dennis Saleebey. He believed to be representing the better side of social work which reveals immeasurable possibilities of hope and lifts success above failure, health above illness, resources above shortcomings. Strengths oriented social work practice implicates a paradigm shift. It includes not only highlighting strengths, but also changes in worldviews, thinking and means of language. Seeing strengths is not just one of values in social work – it's different approach to social work when the ways how client survived despite pains and hardships are sought for. However, it's also important to emphasize that strengths perspective is not exclusively oriented towards positives, neither avoids negative aspects. Identifying a problem remains important, yet strengths-oriented help offers a different, rather positive way to solve them.

Social work practice usually is organized according to the basic principles as defined, for example, by L. Johnson (2001): information gathering and assessment, problem identification, designing a plan of intervention, carrying out a plan, reviewing the intervention. Such practice arrangement is not defective in itself, yet it indirectly

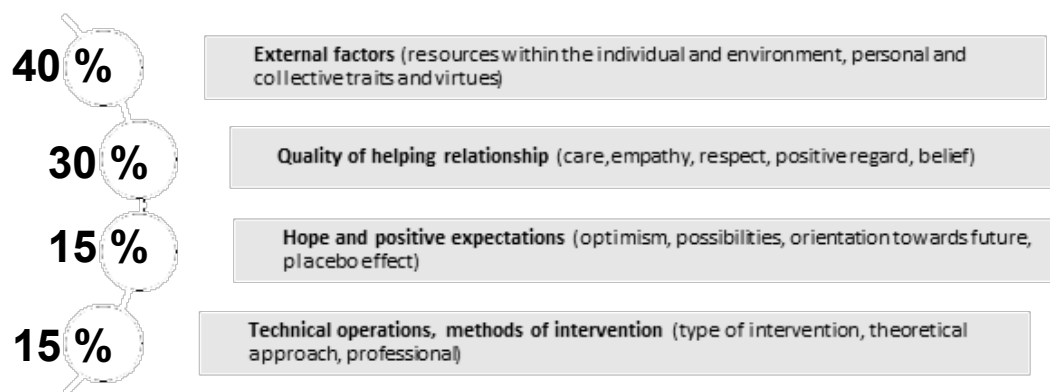
consolidates the dominant position of a social worker as an expert and does not invite them to shift the sight from problem to the other side of the situation. Usually it's client strengths, experiences, skills and capacities which hide on that other side. In other words, social work is overly oriented towards social services rather than towards client change. Because to achieve sustainable change, it's necessary to know the capacities and potential of a person.

D. Saleebey distinguishes six basic principles of strengths perspective:

- Every person, family or community has strengths. The task is to identify these resources and understand their potential in solving client's problems. To reveal strengths social worker must look for them and sincerely pay attention to person's opinion and experience.
- Trauma, abuse and struggle may be injurious, but they also may become sources of challenge and opportunity. People suffer, they bear scars, but they also may acquire life affirming capacities. Dignity and pride may be drawn from having overcome hardships and obstacles. Quite often spirituality and spiritual strength become of a great importance in these instances.
- Every environment is full of resources. Usually these resources are beyond the limits of social welfare system and they are not accumulated or distributed, but every community has assets to help itself, knows what has to be done and has energy for it.
- Everyone has a capacity for change. It's easy to adapt the approach that diagnosis or social conditions limit client's capacities for change and growth. Yet it's important to take individual and community aspirations seriously and not establish the upper limits for their growth.
- The best service for clients is to collaborate with them. Assuming the expert's role is not the best starting point. Strengths are easier revealed by counsellor or colleague rather than by dominant expert. Client's knowledge and experience are equally important.
- Caring and context. Social work in its essence is about care and caretaking. Like social work, strengths perspective emphasizes the potential of hope. The context here is embodied by the expression of individual and communal capacities (Saleebey, 2013, 17-21).

It's difficult to predict whether adopting strengths perspective will result in professional success of a social worker. However, it will surely provide alternative approach to the same situation, offer alternative solutions and bring more positive emotions into social worker's everyday practice. Yet it also may bring professional success. According to T. Assay and M. Lambert, belief in person's capacities and positive approach are important factors to achieve change (Assay & Lambert, 1999, *cit.* Saleebey, 2013, 99). These authors having reviewed the data of several research distinguished four enduring components for growth and change and proportionally assessed the importance of each component (*see* Fig. 1).





*Fig. 1. Four enduring components for growth and change*

Thus, quality of social worker – client relationship and positive expectations make up to about half of change success. Establishing a mutually confident relationship between a social worker and a client, on one hand, becomes a useful resource, on the other, it is a necessary, yet not the sole, condition for client empowerment. Finally, such a relationship allows for the alternative views unto client’s spiritual and emotional worlds to open up, which, in its own right, helps to seek for creative and versatile solutions. Let’s think how a client – social worker communication could develop if it would start not from the usual description of a problem, but from the following questions: “What works best in your family?”, “What can you do better than others”. It’s very likely that, as one social worker recalled after having asked such questions, a client will have nothing to say, being taken aback by unexpected and previously unheard question. Yet if we continue asking these questions, eventually different aspects of client life, previously unseen, will unravel. Strengths oriented questions seek to reveal the skills and capacities which have helped client to survive up to this moment and, at the same time, to establish a cooperative relationship.

This adds to the evidence that focusing on a person and on the positive relationships, instead of a problem and services, has a great potential for social work which is yet underutilized. To change that, positive approach to social work by focusing on social support and client strengths elaborates on these components and seeks to incorporate them deeper into everyday social work practice.

Client strengths perspective sometimes is criticized as being rather micro- and meso- environment-bound and having no potential to change inveterated, long-term or systemic problems. It may help to mobilise our potential and increase our self-esteem while facing a sudden or short-term problem but can hardly bring the same results in the presence of long-term factors which are independent of our will. To answer this criticism, it’s useful to refer to prof. S. Witkin’s (2017) approach to strengths perspective. He argues that strengths perspective should not limit itself to personal traits and features. Expansion of view on strengths as being not only personal features, but rather involving components of interpersonal relationships, social status and social ties is necessary. He states that personality is a historic and cultural accomplishment shaped by social ties and communication, therefore its strengths and weaknesses are not internal but externally developed in different

contexts of relationships. Strengths perspective should go beyond just looking for personal traits and engage itself in positioning a person within a field of community perspectives as well as encouraging positive evaluations (Witkin, 2017, 114).

Strengths perspective despite its shortcomings, provides an alternative approach to overly medicalised, individualised, problem-based social work discourse. It gives space for lexicon of hope, future, capacities and belief. Given that the reality is as we create it, focus on strengths is a wonderful opportunity to create a more positive world for us and the people besides us.

## **Conclusions**

Despite focusing exceptionally on positive aspects in social work this article looks to emphasize an importance of balance in social work theory and practice. The dominating problem-oriented paradigm of social work, which established itself as a set of rules and arrangements defining the boundaries of professional attitudes, needs to be counterbalanced by solution-oriented attitudes. Positive approach does not reject or neglect problems, it just calls for an expansion of approach in order to enrich the social work field with alternative ideas. It also strives to achieve a balance in the very concept of “social work”, seeing the “work” component as currently dominating with emphasis on putting a diagnosis, applying a treatment, using the correct intervention methods. At the same time “social” component is underutilized with a lack of focus on social context, relationships and social justice. Thus, positive approach encourages to restore a balance by re-discovering social support theory and client strengths perspective which put priority on a person-in-context, on capacities of a person and his/her environment, on quality of helping relationship, rather than on a problem itself. Social support implies a different type of intervention grounded in systemic and family theories which puts social worker in the backseat, reduces his role of the decision-making expert and emphasizes the power of informal helping relationships. While client strengths approach is a perspective which when adapted might reveal alternative features of a client and the environment thus providing social worker with tools for establishing an effective relationship with a client and finding the best possible solution.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

1. Arendt Hannah. (2005) *Žmogaus būklė* [The Human Condition]. Vilnius: Margi Raštai, 309 psl.
2. Barker Robert L. (2003) *The social work dictionary*. Washington: NASW press, 493 p.
3. Blundo Robert. (2013) Learning and practicing the strengths perspective: Stepping out of comfortable mind-sets. In: D. Saleebey (Ed.). *The Strengths perspective in social work practice*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc., pp. 25-52
4. Cohen Sheldon, Gottlieb Benjamin H. & Underwood Lynn G. (2000) Social relationships and health. In: S. Cohen, L. G. Underwood & B. H. Gottlieb (Eds.). *Social support measurement and intervention: A guide for health and social scientists*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 3-25.

5. Gottlieb Benjamin H. (1983) *Social support strategies. Guidelines for mental health practice*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 239 p. (Studies in Community Mental Health, Vol. 7.)
6. Gottlieb Benjamin H. (2000) Selecting and planning support interventions. In: S. Cohen, L. G. Underwood & B. H. Gottlieb (Eds.). *Social support measurement and intervention: A guide for health and social scientists*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 195-220.
7. Healy Karen. (2014) *Social work theories in context: Creating frameworks for practice*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 272 p.
8. Herz Marcus & Johansson Thomas. (2011) Critical social work – Considerations and suggestions. In: *Critical Social Work*, Vol. 12, No. 1, pp. 28-45. Retrieved from: <https://ojs.uwindsor.ca/index.php/csw/article/download/5843/4810?inline=1>
9. Ife Jim. (2012) *Human rights and social work: Towards rights-based practice*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 272 p. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511808326>
10. Johnson Luise C. (2001) *Socialinio darbo praktika. Bendrasis požiūris* [Social work practice. Generalist approach]. Vilnius: VU Specialiosios psichologijos laboratorija [Vilnius University Laboratory of Specialised Psychology], 372 psl.
11. Maguire Lambert. (1991) *Social support systems in practice: A generalist approach*. USA: NASW Press, 186 p.
12. Marshall William L. & Marshall Liam E. (2012) Integrating strength-based models in the psychological treatment of sexual offenders. In: *Sexual Abuse in Australia and New Zealand*, Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 53-58.
13. Mattson Marifran & Hall Gibb Jennifer. (2011) *Health as communication nexus: A service learning approach*. USA: Kendall Hunt Publishing, 446 p.
14. Morkūnienė Jūratė. (2002) *Socialinė filosofija: šiuolaikinė mąstymo paradigma* [Social philosophy: A modern paradigm of thinking]. Vilnius: Lietuvos teisės universitetas [Lithuanian University of Law], 147 psl.
15. Pearson Richard E. (1990) *Counselling and social support. Perspectives and practice*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 272 p.
16. Perttula Juha, Väänänen Anna, Godvadas Paulius, Malinauskas Gedas & Gudliauskaitė-Godvadė Jūratė. (2009) Representational identity of social work in academic context: Comparison of Lithuania and Finland. In: *Social Research*, Vol. 1, No. 15, pp. 52-63.
17. Pierce Gregory R., Sarason Barbara R., Sarason Irwin G., Joseph Helene J. & Henderson Ciarda A. (1996) Conceptualizing and assessing social support in the context of the family. In: G. R. Pierce, B. R. Sarason & I. G. Sarason (Eds.). *Plenum series on stress and coping. Handbook of social support and the family*. New York, London: Plenum Press, pp. 3-23.
18. Saleebey Dennis (Ed.). (2013) *The Strengths perspective in social work practice*, 6th ed. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc., 352 p. (Advancing Core Competencies Series.)
19. Sarason Irwin G. & Sarason Barbara R. (2009) Social support: mapping the construct. In: *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, Vol. 26, No. 1, pp. 113-120. SAGE publications.

20. Seligman Martin E. (2010) *Flourish: Positive psychology and positive interventions. The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*. Material from the lecture given on 2010-10-07 at University of Michigan. Retrieved from: [https://tannerlectures.utah.edu/\\_documents/a-to-z/s/Seligman\\_10.pdf](https://tannerlectures.utah.edu/_documents/a-to-z/s/Seligman_10.pdf)
21. Schatz Mona Struhsaker & Flagler Marita Nika. (2004) Examining how professionals describe the Strengths perspective in their practice. In: *The Journal of Baccalaureate Social Work (Special Issue: Social Work Competence for BSWs: from Curriculum Development to Assessment Methods)*, Vol. 9, No. 2, pp. 63-77.
22. Vangelisti Anita L. (2009) Challenges in conceptualizing social support. In: *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, Vol. 26, No. 1, pp. 39-51. SAGE publications.
23. Walker Michael E., Wasserman Stanley & Wellman Barry. (1994) Statistical models for social support networks. In: Stanley Wasserman & Joseph Galaskiewicz (Eds.). *Advances in social network analysis: Research in the social and behavioral sciences*. Sage Publications, pp. 53-78. (Sage Focus Editions, Vol. 171.)
24. Witkin Stanley. (2017) *Transforming social work*. London: Palgrave, 200 p. (Practice Theory in Context Series.)

## **Sociālā darba pozitīvo aspektu atklāšana no jauna: sociālais atbalsts un klienta spēka perspektīvas**

### *Kopsavilkums*

Raksts aplūko sociālā darba pozitīvās puses. Pozitīvā pieeja ietver sevī pozitīvu attieksmi, sociālo kontekstu, un starppersoniskās attiecības sarežģītā realitātē. Pastāv viedoklis, ka uz problēmu orientētām, medikalizētām metodēm un pieejām būtu jāpiekāpjas uz procesu orientētai, dinamiskai un attiecībās balstītai domāšanai, jo tā var veicināt labāku izpratni par izmaiņām, pretrunām un neskaidrībām sociālajos procesos. Modernajā sociālajā kontekstā pozitīvā pieeja sociālajā darbā ietver ne tikai cilvēka stiprās puses un tikumus, bet arī ietver to plašākā sociālās vides kontekstā. Lai aptvertu personiskos, attiecību un sociālos komponentus, sociālā atbalsta un spēka perspektīvas rakstā tiek analizētas kā vienas no iespējamajiem veidiem attīstīt pozitīvās pieejas, iekļaujot tās padziļinātā veidā sociālā darba teorijā un praksē.

**Atslēgas vārdi:** sociālā darba pozitīvie aspekti, sociālais atbalsts, klienta spēka perspektīvas.



### **Dr. sc. soc., assoc. prof. Valdas Rimkus**

Associate professor at Klaipeda University, Department of Social Work, Faculty of Health Sciences (Klaipėda, Lithuania)

Asociētais profesors Klaipėdas Universitātes Veselības zinātņu fakultātes Sociālā darba departamentā (Klaipėda, Lietuva)

Address: H. Manto str. 84, LT-92294, Klaipėda, Lithuania

Phone: +370 46 39 85 50

E-mail: [valdasrim@gmail.com](mailto:valdasrim@gmail.com)