

## **Taiwan Atayal children's goal pursuit between the many faces of oppression: A reflection using anti-oppressive practice framework**

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### **Abstract**

Taiwan's Atayal tribe is the third largest of the 16 Indigenous tribes in Taiwan. For the past three centuries, Taiwan's Indigenous people were under colonial rule. Their languages, rituals, way of living, even their identities, disappeared over the years amid colonial oppression and the force of the global economy, neoliberalism reforms and industrial transformation. Using the framework of anti-oppressive practice, this article addresses Indigenous youth in the early to middle adolescent years, beginning with personal stories illustrating the Atayal youth experience of an emerging cognitive ability in adolescence, called intentional self-regulation, that is pertinent to the process of goal management and attainment. The second part of this article draws attention to the socio-historical, educational, and geographical disparities manifested in the everyday lives of Taiwan's Indigenous youth. At the end, this article discusses the intersecting sphere linking personal stories with the disparity the person experiences in broader structures. To foster positive development for Taiwan's Indigenous youth, or any underprivileged youth, this article stresses that the practice of reflexivity is needed in any sphere of interaction, including teacher-student, mentor-mentee, and coach-trainee relationships. Reflexivity allows social workers, teachers, mentors, or trainers to align as closely as possible with the adolescents, starting where the adolescent 'is' rather than where he or she 'should be'.

### **Keywords**

Indigenous youth; anti-oppressive practice; disparity; intentional self-regulation, goal pursuit

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## Introduction

*Victoria beamingly talked about her dream of becoming a DJ. She was 15, and about to leave junior high school and enrol in a vocational high school. Her voice delivered a sense of certainty and determination when describing her plan, detailing how she would finance herself by becoming an auto mechanic and reach out to the music industry through Facebook, DJ courses, and other means. She hoped one day her music could touch the audience in the same way it had touched her when she listened to the DJ she idolised in Magic Power, a Taiwanese rock band.*

Victoria's story might seem typical among 15-year-olds in this era. In some ways, it is. Adolescence is a period of life that involves much self-exploration into who we are and what we want to become. Personal stories, however, are never simply a string of personal-led events. In contrast, the personal thread tangles with the broader social, economical, political, and even historical traces and, together, stories and life paths are created (Clifford, 1995).

Victoria belongs to the Atayal tribe, the third largest of the 16 Indigenous tribes in Taiwan. However, as a whole, Taiwan's Indigenous people are small in number, making up only 2.3 percent of the entire population of Taiwan. For many centuries the island of Taiwan belonged solely to Taiwan's Indigenous people. Today, the majority of Taiwan's inhabitants are descendants of Han immigrants from mainland China. Dating from the late 16th century and throughout the Qing dynasty, Han migrants, mainly from the southeastern coastal provinces (Fukien and Guangdong provinces), left their homes and set sail to the island of Taiwan for better economic opportunities. During the late 1940s, in the aftermath of the Chinese Civil War, another major wave of forced migration began. Thousands of Han mainlanders fled to the island of Taiwan when the National Government (Kuomintang) lost its control of the mainland to the Communist Party of China.

For the past three centuries, similar to other indigenous populations in the world, Taiwan's Indigenous people were under colonial rule (by the Dutch, the Qing dynasty, the Japanese, and the National Government), during which the majority were violently uprooted from where they sacredly called 'home'. Their languages, rituals, way of living, even their identities, disappeared over the years amid colonial oppression and the force of global economy, neoliberalism reforms, and industrial transformation. The integrity of Taiwan's Indigenous people is in danger as they live near the brink of cultural extinction, becoming what Morgaine and Capous-Desyllas (2015, p. 12) described as the "voiceless, dispossessed, and unrecognized".

Using the framework of anti-oppressive practice, this article addresses Indigenous youth similar in age to Victoria—in the early to middle adolescent years, who are marked by physical growth, pubertal development, expansion of social circle and activities, maturation in cognitive reasoning, and an emerging sense of their

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personal future (Lerner & Steinberg, 2009). They grew up and attended school<sup>1</sup> in the Atayal tribal areas in northern Taiwan.

Anti-oppressive practice embodies a person-centred philosophy (Dominelli, 1996). It is grounded in the individual's life experiences, with a strong emphasis of the intersecting layers of oppression between the individual and the broader social, political, and economical structures in which the individual lives (Moosa-Mintha, 2005). In line with this philosophy, this article begins with personal stories illustrating the Atayal youth experience of an emerging cognitive ability in adolescence, called intentional self-regulation (ISR). ISR is pertinent to the process of goal management and attainment (Gestsdóttir & Lerner, 2007; Gestsdóttir, Lewin-Bizan, von Eye, Lerner, & Lerner, 2009). In Victoria's pursuit of becoming a DJ, she needed to allocate her time, energy, and other resources accordingly so that she could attend DJ lessons and practice, strategise so that the likelihood of success was foreseeable, execute with perseverance, and revise her plans when necessary; all of which are part of ISR. Mastery of ISR allows the individual to experience a sense of possibility and achievement (Gestsdóttir & Lerner, 2008; Gestsdóttir et al., 2009).

Illustration of personal goal pursuit does not complete the story, however. Indigenous youth stories of ISR need to be told and received with an understanding of the disparity experienced by the underprivileged. The second part of this article draws attention to the socio-historical, educational, and geographical disparities which are overtly, covertly or indirectly manifested in the everyday lives of Taiwan's Indigenous youth. At the end, this article discusses the intersecting sphere linking personal stories with the disparity the person experienced in broader structures. Recommendations are provided for guiding social work practitioners, academics, and policy makers in their anti-oppressive work with indigenous youth.

## **Atayal youth's personal stories of goal pursuit**

During the goal process, individuals make choices and take actions. Explicitly described, goal pursuit requires first deciding on goal hierarchy, which is created after carefully analysing a broad range of possibilities and from which selecting and ranking those that the person desires and considers achievable. Then, guided by the goal hierarchy, the individual formulates attainment strategies, making use of available and attainable resources. While monitoring and managing the goal progress, obstacles will likely appear. To avoid loss of the desired goal, the person might try to change or modify strategies, such as redistributing time and energy or

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<sup>1</sup>Before senior high school, peers are mostly from the same tribe.

seeking new skills or additional resources. The individual then might even slightly adjust his or her goal, making it more concrete and realistic (Freund & Baltes, 2002; Gestsdóttir & Lerner, 2007; Gestsdóttir et al., 2009).

Involved in every turn in the goal process is precisely intentional self-regulation (ISR). Literature on self-regulation distinguishes between ISR and organismic self-regulation. Organismic self-regulation, such as circadian rhythms or temperamental attributes, features the physiological pattern and biological-based attributes of the individual that show relative consistency from birth throughout life (Geldhof, Little, & Colombo, 2010), whereas ISR emerges during the adolescent years and involves thoughts and actions that can be actively selected and regulated by the individual to satisfy personal, social, and environmental demands (Gestsdóttir & Lerner, 2007). The emergence of ISR has its developmental underpinnings with respect to brain and identity development during the second decade of life. Changes in grey and white matter in the prefrontal cortex afford the opportunity for increased executive function and cognitive control, making strategic thinking and goal-planning – i.e., ISR – possible (Gestsdóttir, Bowers, von Eye, Napolitano, & Lerner, 2010; Steinberg, 2010). Meanwhile, adolescence is critical for self-development (Erikson, 1963; Sebastian, Burnett, & Blakemore, 2008). As adolescents develop their identity, a more developed sense of self helps orient them toward the future, while their ISR ability guides them during their goal pursuits (Geldhof, Gestsdóttir, Stefansson, Johnson, Bowers, & Lerner, 2015).

Three personal stories of goal pursuit are presented. During middle and late adolescence, adolescents are faced with decisions about their imminent future (Gestsdóttir et al., 2010). It is common for adolescents during this time to try out various activities along the direction they desire. Victoria, John, and Wendy are Atayal children who grew up in their tribal areas, in mountain regions. Between the ages of 14 and 15, they described their life directions toward which they had oriented themselves. These life directions were self-initiated and in which they had invested their time and energy for some time.

### **Victoria's story**

Victoria, whose story was introduced at the beginning of this article, at age 13 had planned to be a policewoman, at age 14, a professional dancer, and not until she was 15 years old did she feel she had found a desired path truly her own. This is how Victoria described DJing, “This is my hobby and my dream. I think of it every day. It brings me life”. She spoke of it with a sense of certainty and commitment, and meanwhile also acknowledged the possible challenges ahead. She said, “Am I afraid of failure? Yes, because it is not easy being and learning to be a DJ. But this is my choice and I will try with all my might to do it”.

Victoria browsed blog entries written by DJs and taught herself the basics. In those blog entries “they said first I have to listen to all genres of music. I cannot

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have any preferences. I have to learn to appreciate music”. Victoria had also reached out to DJs through social media, such as Facebook. She said, “I think even for an accomplished DJ, she needs to network too. It’s important to expand one’s social circles ... [because] the more friends, the more resources, such as information and equipment exchange, etc.”.

Victoria had not taken any formal DJ lessons, but wanted to. Her school’s social worker helped her locate DJ lessons in the city, but the problem was getting there, as Victoria lived far from the city, in a mountain region. Victoria would graduate from junior high school this year. She had mapped out her plan. She said, “I will attend an automotive service and technology program. The program provides paid internship opportunities, and after graduation the entry level salary is about NT\$22,000. I will have enough money to purchase DJ equipment”.

### **John’s story**

John, a 15-year-old, wanted to become a percussionist. He said, “My ultimate goal is to play professionally in a Christian band. If not, I can also be a drum teacher”. John started playing drums when he was 12 years old, during sixth grade. John said, “I have taught myself since 6th grade. Not until the summer between my 7th and 8th grade years did I have the opportunity to take formal lessons, in the school music club. It made a big difference. What I learned during my 8th grade year alone was more than what I had learned in the previous two years, during 6th and 7th grades”.

John excelled at percussion. He won first prize in the adolescent group in a national percussion competition. He stressed the importance of relentless practice. He said:

[Mastering] the basics is really important. Practicing drum rudiments, it’s the same action again and again – trying to be faster and faster. It gets boring, and there are times I just don’t feel like practising. But if I don’t master the basics, I’m not able to play a complete musical piece. It requires discipline to create beautiful-sounding music.

Like Victoria, John would finish junior high school this year. His utmost concern was how to continue learning percussion. He said:

After I graduate, I need to find ways to finance myself so I can continue taking drum lessons, advancing my percussion skills. Money is something my family cannot help me with. When I first learned drumming, my Dad paid for my lessons, but the circumstances got difficult in our family. I’m still debating. If I take on a part-time job during high school, I might not be able to attend church as often as now. I don’t know, because I really would like to play in a Christian band.

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Throughout the interview, John stressed more than once that the key to success, one, is to excel (“I have to be good, really good, so I can achieve my goal.”), and the other is the need to be seen: “Networking might allow me to be known by more and more people. It’s like a ripple: more people knowing me might increase my chance of success”.

### **Wendy’s story**

Wendy, a 14-year-old, in junior high school, said, “I want to be a chef”. She then clarified, “Actually, I don’t like cooking. I prefer making dessert, so I guess I like baking more”. Wendy had been exploring cooking-related activities with encouragement from her mother. She learned through watching YouTube videos. It brought her enormous happiness when she received praise about how tasty her dishes were.

Wendy planned to attend the food and beverage vocational program in the city after finishing junior high school. She was worried, however. She had heard that city school put a lot of pressure on students. She said, “I want to go to vocational school, but I’m so afraid I might quit. I don’t do well under pressure. I get upset with myself when I can’t do things as well as I wish I could. I just give up”. Wendy ruminated over many what-ifs. She said her mother had asked her on many occasions why she gave up so easily. Her mother said to her, “If this is truly what you want to do, you should persist at it, and don’t give up so quickly”. Wendy was worried that she might disappoint her mother. She said, “But what if ... ? I don’t want the tuition money to go to waste”.

In Victoria, John, and Wendy’s stories, they spoke unanimously about the instability or lack of financial and extracurricular resources during their goal process. Use of intentional self-regulation aims to help maximise resources, minimise bumps in the road, and alleviate the impact of obstacles, so the person can navigate toward his or her desired destination (Gestsdóttir & Lerner, 2007). However, Victoria, John, and Wendy’s stories reveal that for Indigenous youth the road to the future might be a bumpy one, with few resources and many obstacles. Victoria and John both struggled for financial means and opportunities for career networking to support their dreams. Wendy did not have means other than YouTube videos to further test out her desired life path as a pastry chef. Try to imagine John’s achievement if he had had uninterrupted financial support for drum lessons since 6th grade. The teens’ instability and lack of experience can be traced throughout history and seen in their time as a form of oppression experienced by Indigenous people in the broader social, political, and economical contexts.

In the next section, we draw attention to the socio-historical, educational, and geographical disparities experienced by underprivileged Indigenous youth.

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## Disparity

In analyses between Atayal and Han youth in Taiwan, Yang (2017) found that the Indigenous and Han groups in their early to middle adolescent years did not differ much in their overall performance of ISR behaviour. That is, when ISR behaviour was examined including every step in the goal process (e.g., formulating and implementing goals and adjusting resources or revising goals upon encountering obstacles), little to none was reported between the two ethnic groups with respect to mean differences in their ISR. This is consistent with findings in an ethnically diverse American youth sample (Bowers, Gestsdóttir, Geldhof, Nikitin, von Eye, & Lerner, 2011). Bowers and colleagues also found that the majority of their early and middle adolescent sample presented similar levels of ISR.

However, Yang (2017) noticed that the Atayal youth in her sample scored lower than the Han youth in their confidence in self and resource availability when facing obstacles. Like how Wendy was concerned that she might give up on her goal when pressure arose, or how John foresaw his imminent dilemma of being torn between financing his goal (a part-time job) and his Christian faith (being part of a Christian band in the future). The personal stories of Victoria, John, and Wendy hinted at the intersecting socio-historical, educational, and geographical disparity experienced by Indigenous youth who live in Taiwan's mountain regions. Although differences in overall ISR behaviour were not obvious between Indigenous and Han youth during early to middle adolescence, Indigenous youth likely encounter more obstacles in their goal pursuits. Obstacles as a result of social division and structural inequalities were clearly manifested in Victoria, John and Wendy's stories. Oppressive experiences might prevent the disadvantaged from developing their full potential. It is thus of utmost importance to be aware of and understand the disparity of power experienced by Indigenous youth in every intersecting sphere between social-historical, educational, and geographical structures, so that appropriate and sensitive services that are tailored toward their needs and not restricted by resources available in the public or private domains can be afforded to them.

Below we illustrate the scope of disparity in socio-historical, educational, and geographical structures experienced by Taiwan's Indigenous youth who live in mountain regions.

### Socio-historical disparity

Similar to other indigenous populations in the world, Taiwan's Indigenous people were under colonial rule for over 300 years from the 17th to 20th centuries. The colonisers – whether during the period of Dutch rule, late Qing dynasty, Japanese colonisation (1895–1945), or the National Government's regime (Kuomintang, 1949 until the lifting of martial law in 1987) – acted as individuals or enacted

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through policies instilling the beliefs that their knowledge, values, and way of living were superior and were also the exclusive reality.

Taiwan's Indigenous people are a branch of the Austronesian people. They have resided in Taiwan since long before the arrival of the Dutch, in the 17th century.

The island of Taiwan, formerly known as Formosa, is off the southeastern coast of mainland China, with strategically located neighbouring China to the west, Japan to the northeast, and the Philippines to the south. Taiwan's strategically important location was clearly evident during World War II as the Japanese used Taiwan as the springboard for their military invasion to the South East Asia.

Taiwan was important to the colonisers for two reasons: The first is political, and the second is economical. Taiwan is rich in plain soil and forest land. Dating from the late 16th century, Han migrants began to arrive in Taiwan for a better economic opportunity. The Han established domesticated agricultural communities in the lowlands and coastal plains, claiming the land as theirs. This contrasted with the ideology and the hunter-gatherer style of living of Taiwan's Indigenous people. For one, there was no concept of 'property' among the Indigenous people (Liao, 1998): land belongs to the tribe or the family, not an individual. Taiwan's Indigenous people's dealings in land or goods with common Han people or those with official ranks were hardly fair. Brute force and deception were often involved (Nokan, 1992).

Deep in Taiwan's mountains were camphor laurel trees, largely located in the Atayal territories, which were of important military and economic value at the time to the Qing and the Japanese. Camphor was an essential substance for gunpowder. Beginning in the late 19th century and throughout the Japanese colonisation, the Qing and the Japanese aggressively and violently advanced their operations, seizing control of territories in the mountain areas. They were confronted by armed resistance from Taiwan's Indigenous people. Many Indigenous people were eradicated.

The Wushe Rebellion, in 1930, was the last major uprising against the Japanese; in which the death toll of Atayal tribal members reached nearly one thousand. Afterward, Japanese colonisation administered tight control over the Indigenous people. Many tribes were forced to resettle in the plain areas. Their tribal chief was appointed by the Japanese and their children received Japanese education (Nokan, 1992). The Wushe Rebellion marked a bitter beginning for the Indigenous people, as for many decades they lived shamefully with no name and no say about their lives (Hsieh, 2017).

The island of Taiwan was returned to the National Government (Kuomintang) in 1949. Although the National Government did not implement any active policies on the Indigenous people, this did not stop the Han from seeking out those

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valuable resources in the mountains. Businesses such as mining, quarrying, lumbering, even tourism, all tried to sneak their way into the mountains, the home of the Indigenous people.

In the 1960s, global economic opportunities brought forth by neoliberalism, market-opening reforms, and industrial upgrading and transformation led to a so-called 'Taiwan economic miracle', producing many more skilled, professional, managerial, and administrative jobs (Clark & Clark, 2016). This, however, did not benefit Taiwan's Indigenous people. Although it seemingly provided more job opportunities to the Indigenous workforce, in reality these opportunities were the left-behind, unskilled labor jobs (e.g., construction and factory work), with more health and safety hazards at work and fewer chances for career advancement (Wang, 2011).

Colonial oppression wiped out almost everything held dear by Taiwan's Indigenous people. During the 300 years of colonisation, their tribal ancestry, languages, ideology and way of living, even their pride as hunter-gatherers, disappeared. Not until the rise of the Indigenous movement in the 1980s did the impact of political, social, and economical oppression on Taiwan's Indigenous people begin to be formally and openly reviewed. The movement continues currently, calling for the rights of the Indigenous people to their identity, land, self-governance and self-determination.

### **Educational disparity**

Since the beginning of the colonial period, compulsory primary education was enforced by the Japanese colonial government, requiring all Han and Indigenous children to learn Japanese. Education was a means to pacify the colonised and make them believe that Japanese culture and customs were the exclusive, superior reality. Through education, the Japanese colonial government successfully made Japanese the exclusive language during their 50-year rule in Taiwan. When Japanese colonisation ended, the Japanese literacy rate among Indigenous children was estimated at 90 percent.

Also, through education, the Japanese colonial government instilled the belief that *putasan*<sup>2</sup> (facial tattooing), an important custom of the Atayal tribe that symbolises one's maturity and achievement, was uncivilised and that those who practiced it

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<sup>2</sup> In Atayal tradition, *putasan* indicates one's identity and status within the tribe. *Putasan* signifies that an individual is coming of age and thereafter is an active member of the tribe under the discipline of *gaga* (the Atayal ancestral belief system that guides individuals in their roles and behaviour). It is also practiced as honouring achievement and contribution: for men, they have to prove and demonstrate themselves as skilled hunters; for women, they have to show excellent weaving ability at the loom.

were barbarians. *Putasan* was prohibited by law at the time, and if any children had facial tattoos, they were not allowed to attend school.

The National Government (Kuomintang), similar to the Japanese, continued enforcing assimilation through language policies, requiring that at school only Mandarin, the dialect used in Beijing <sup>3</sup>, was allowed. Any dialects other than Mandarin, including those used by Hakka Han or Min Han, were not encouraged. The curriculum was mainly evolved around Han culture. Almost no materials were related to the Indigenous culture, and even if included, they were likely biased or wrongly depicted.

Indigenous activists have advocated for change in the primary and secondary school curriculum since the 1980s, requesting that schools have more freedom to include culturally specific materials in their lesson plans. They are wary that Indigenous languages, identity and other cultural elements are at the brink of extinction, as almost no young adults can speak their tribal languages. A breakthrough came in the 1990s when a Wulai elementary school added the Atayal language courses to its curriculum. It was the first time an indigenous language was made part of formal education. A second breakthrough came in the 2000s, although its impact was limited. This time a new policy was enacted stating that pupils at elementary and secondary school had the right to learn dialects of their choice, including Hakka, Minnan, or indigenous languages. Most schools did not embrace the meaning behind this policy, however, and allocated very little time (one hour per week) for dialect learning. The year 2014 was an exciting milestone for the Indigenous activists, who had fought many years for flexibility in the educational system. This year the Acts of Experimental Education passed legislation allowing schools the flexibility to tailor their curriculum to their pupils' needs. Many schools in the tribal areas had long yearned for this.

One elementary school even changed its name, from the Han name to *Puma*, which in Atayal means “carrying the tribal lineage and heritage and bringing prosperity to the tribe”. Afternoon lessons at *Puma* elementary school are taught by Atayal elders, artisans in Atayal ethnic crafts, parents, teachers and the school principal. Together they prepare Atayal lessons for their children. The lessons are taught in the classroom and the field, and the curriculum includes Atayal arts and literature, tribal history and geography, age organisation, ancestral guidance, and practical wisdom.

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<sup>3</sup> Beijing was the capital of the Republic of China, which was found in 1912 after the overthrow of the Qing dynasty.

## **Geographical disparity**

Just as Victoria could not locate any DJ learning opportunities in her region, material limitations such as shortages in extracurricular resources are present in the rural or mountain areas of Taiwan. Economic opportunities are also limited. Parents of many Indigenous youth are forced to leave home and work in the city. Financial and work constraints often leave them with no choice but to leave their children at home under the care of grandparents.

Another example is school locations. Schools are not easily accessible for all Indigenous children. While elementary schools do tend to be in the tribal community, junior high schools are often farther away, but still within commuting distance. Senior high schools, however, are located in the city areas, requiring Indigenous youth to relocate. This puts Indigenous youth at a disadvantage. As they transition to a new school and a new city and experience a heightened sense of being the minority, they are far away from home in an unfamiliar place, with minimal social support available in the immediate surroundings.

## **Discussion**

This article addresses Indigenous youth in their early to middle adolescent years, who grew up in Taiwan's mountain regions. They were born almost 20 years after the rise of the Taiwan Indigenous movement in a society in which indigenous voices are increasingly better heard in the mainstream media and through music, film and art. But Victoria, John, and Wendy's stories reveal the very truth that structural and material limitations still exist. More than that, what is disguised beneath their stories is the complex and intersecting nature of multiple forms of oppression. Restricted financial and extracurricular resources are one form, which might consequently shape Indigenous youth's opportunities and sense of possibility. The more pervasive form of oppression is the kind that inflicts a person's worldview of the self (Morgaine & Capous-Desyllas, 2015), which operates at the personal and institutional or structural levels, and becomes collective beliefs that are shared between people in the same community, tribe, and society.

The Indigenous youth addressed in this article were born near the change of the millennium. This, however, does not mean they are not affected by the 300-year socio-historical, economical, political oppression which happened long before their time. Oppression puts a dent on a person's view of self, others, and the world. And the form of oppression endured by Indigenous youth's parents, grandparents, great-grandparents and other tribal members is most pervasive and devastating, as the existence of the tribe and its language and culture was on the line. When the victims of oppression internalise this experience, it passes on to the next generation- not through force but as a form of collective beliefs (Baines, 2017).

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These internalising, prejudiced beliefs are embedded within the individual's consciousness and tend to conjure biased interpretation about the self, others, and the world. Hsieh (2017) once said that the stigma endured by the Indigenous people operates like an insulant, barring any positive sense of self and keeping them feeling like undesired others.

Self-related belief about ability and effort is related to prior personal success or failure, as well as the way the person is socialised in his or her environments (Trommsdorff, 2012). When obstacles emerge during the goal process, the decision to persist or give up is based on the individual's assessment of self and the situation – that is, assessment of the level of difficulty imposed by the obstacle and his or her own ability to tackle the obstacle. In other words, self-related belief affects how decisions are made during the goal process. Using Wendy as an example, she viewed the food and beverage program as a means to achieving her goal. She voiced commitment, but meanwhile she doubted her ability and whether her effort would sustain if obstacles arose. Wendy did not have much confidence in her ability to mitigate the obstacle she foresaw. If she failed, she would likely be crushed by mounting self-blame.

But can this really be seen to be her responsibility? In the nine-year, obligatory education she received before vocational school, the Han-style curriculum and teaching provided few opportunities for her to experience success. Few resources were available in her region for her to test out her baking interest. Furthermore, her worldview of the self, which is learned through socialisation and shared between people in the same community and tribe, was likely prejudiced and biased.

Wendy's story demonstrates the vicious cycle of oppression. Centuries-long oppression has likely induced an oppressive worldview of the collective self for Taiwan's Indigenous people. The impact of oppression cannot be underestimated, as research has demonstrated that minority status alone could not sufficiently explain Native American youth's dropping-out behaviour. It was the oppressive worldview that predicted the youth's negative outcome at school (Swisher & Hoisch, 1992). The structural inequalities, social division and centuries-long oppression Indigenous youth experience as individuals and as tribal members influence the way they interpret themselves, as well as their relationships and opportunities; affecting their sense of possibility of pursuing dreams and goals and becoming the person they want to be.

### **Recommendations for practices**

As adolescents are still developing, there is more plasticity in their body, brain, and mind, providing space for them to mature and to be shaped by their environments so that they are prepared for their future adult role (Lerner, Lerner, & Benson, 2011). Plasticity, on the one hand, means potential, but on the other hand, it can make the youth vulnerable. The development of the underprivileged like Taiwan's

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Indigenous youth might be vulnerable if their being is socialised in, and shaped by, environments negligent of the complex nature of oppression and social division. Most Indigenous people in Taiwan are at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder on a range of indicators, including employment, education, and health. In addition to the socio-historical, educational, and geographical oppression discussed earlier, the Indigenous youth addressed in this article grew up experiencing class differences and facing stereotypes such as being people especially prone to substance abuse. Adolescents are resources to be developed and, according to developmental psychologists such as Richard Lerner and Jacquelynne Eccles (Lerner et al., 2011; Eccles et al., 1993), this is best achieved when environments and services are tailored toward the individual. Through the lens of anti-oppressive theory, appropriate environments and services for Indigenous youth require thorough assessment of the participant as well as the workers, acknowledging their differential positions with respect to experiences in social division, the differential nature of oppression, as well as collective experiences of oppression (Morgaine & Capous-Desyllas, 2015).

Reflexivity is critical in anti-oppressive practice, challenging social workers to continuously be aware of their own social identity and values and the impact of which on the social worker-participant relationship. With reflexivity, social workers can be vigilant about the presence and shift of power as a result of differences at the individual, organisational, or societal level experienced by themselves and those they work with (Burke & Harrison, 2004). Reflexivity thus allows social workers to align as closely as possible with the participant, starting where the participant 'is' rather than where the worker thinks they 'should be' (Sakamoto & Pitner, 2005).

To foster positive development for Taiwan's Indigenous youth, or any underprivileged youth, this article stresses that the practice of reflexivity is needed in any sphere of interaction, including teacher-student, mentor-mentee, and coach-trainee relationships. Teachers, mentors, and coaches are people other than parents who might contribute significantly to adolescent development. All of us are members of specific social groups, to which social status and meaning are attached. The same goes for teachers, mentors, and coaches. So, any act initiated by teachers, mentors, or coaches is associated with the initiator's status with respect to class, sex, ethnicity, and/or profession, and when teachers, mentors, and coaches ignore the impact of differences and power in relationships, they might unknowingly reproduce feelings of social division and inequality.

Anti-oppressive practice needs to be applied, in addition to social work settings, to educational systems, sport programs, and community organisations. As social workers, teachers, mentors, and trainers, it is important that we identify our own social position and be aware of the power associated with these positions so that social workers and other adults who are significant to the youth can minimise any

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deleterious effects of division or oppression during interaction with Indigenous youth and on the work they do together. Anti-oppressive practice creates a respected space for Indigenous youth to feel empowered and entitled, and become the people who they want to be.

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