Finn.J.,Jacobson.M. (2008) Just Practice: *A Social Justice Approach to Social Work (2nd Edition)* Peosta, Iowa. Eddie Bowers Publishing

CHAPTER 2

Imagining Social Work and Social Justice

Social justice is the end that social work seeks, and social justice is the chance for peace.

Ramsey Clark (1988)[1]

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

In Chapter 2 we locate social work within a social justice context. We introduce the idea of "social justice work" and its importance for rethinking social work practice. We examine broadly accepted contemporary definitions of social work in the United States and in an international context, and we ask you to think about the implications of these diverse meanings for social work practice. This sets the stage for locating concepts of social work in cultural, political, and historical contexts. Likewise, we discuss meanings of social justice and pose the following questions:

- What is the relationship between social work and social justice?
- What are the common goals?
- How do their definitions shape the form, content, and context of social work practice?
- How are both social work and social justice tied to questions of difference, inequality, and oppression?
- How do we engage in social justice work in our everyday practice of social work?

We introduce the Just Practice Framework and its five key concepts - meaning, context, power, history, and possibility. The Just Practice Framework will provide the foundation for integrating theory and practice. Key concepts are developed and illustrated through examples and reflection and action exercises. They push us to explore taken-for-granted assumptions about reality - those ideas, principles, and patterns of perception, behavior, and social relating we accept without question. As learners, this moves us beyond the bounds of familiar and comfortable contexts to challenge old beliefs and ways of thinking. We consider the power of language and image in shaping understandings of social problems and social

work. We explore concepts of social work as a critical and transformational practice, consider the social work profession itself as a site of struggle, and seek to open up challenges and possibilities of that struggle (Adams, Dominelli, & Payne, 2005; Allan, Pease, & Briskman, 2003; Ferguson, Lavalette, & Whitmore, 2005) .

JUST PRACTICE FRAMEWORK

Five Key Concepts:

1 - meaning
2 - context
3 - power
4 - history
5 - possibility

SOCIAL JUSTICE WORK

The Idea of Social Work

Each of us has an idea or an image of social work that we carry around in our heads. For some of us this image comes from our experiences as paid or volunteer workers in a state-based agency or community service organization. Others of us may have known social work from the other side, as a "consumer" of services, perhaps as a child in the foster care system, a shelter resident, or a single parent trying to survive on "Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)"[2] Some of us may have little or no experience with the practicalities of social work. Perhaps we have taken a course or two, or we have known social work mainly through its representations in the media where social workers seem to be stereotyped as child-snatching villains or heroes. Nonetheless, we have an impression, a mental image if you will, of social work and what we envision ourselves doing as social workers. Accordingly, each of us has an idea or an image of social justice. For some of us, social justice relates to notions of equality, tolerance, and human rights. Others of us know social justice through its absence, for example, through personal experiences of injustice, degradation, exclusion, and violence.

REFLECTION: **Meanings of Social Work and Social Justice**

Take a minute to consider what social work and social justice mean to you. Most of us take these constructs for granted. We assume we know their meaning. At the same time, we believe others hold these same meanings. What is social work? What is social justice? Now think of the relationship between the two. Might some meanings of social work and the ways in which it is practiced neglect considerations of social justice? What images come to mind? Or might these meanings be inextricably linked, making it difficult to tell them apart? What examples of social work practice illustrate the interrelationship of social work and social justice?

Linking Social Work and Social Justice

The reflection exercise above asks you to think about the meanings of social work and social justice, to explore their relationship, and to make concrete applications to the world of practice. Our bias is that social work should have a middle name - social "justice" work. Thinking about social work as social justice work accomplishes several important goals:

- Social justice work highlights that which is unique to social work among the helping professions (Wakefield, 1988a, 1988b). Few other

professions have identified challenging social injustice as their primary mission (NASW, 1996).

- Social justice work implies that we take seriously the social justice principles of our profession and use these to guide and evaluate our work and ourselves as social workers. In subsequent chapters, we will introduce you to early justice-oriented social workers such as Jane Addams and Bertha Capen Reynolds, who have already paved the way.
- Social justice work reminds us of the need for a global perspective on social work as the forces of global capitalism and practices of free-market neoliberalism leave their mark on our own and distant economies, creating greater gaps between the rich and the poor and transgressing the boundaries of nations and national sovereignty (Ferguson, Lavalette, & Whitmore, 2005; Finn, 2005; Harris, 2005; Keigher & Lowery, 1998; Korten, 2001; Ramanathan & Link, 1999).

Some might say that giving social work "justice" as a middle name is hardly necessary. After all, social justice is a core part of the profession's values. For more than a century social workers have dedicated themselves to improving life conditions for vulnerable and marginalized individuals and groups and advocating for social policies. Social workers have been champions of civil rights and activists for human rights. As Lena Dominelli asserts, "promoting social justice and human development in an unequal world provides the *raison d'etre* of social work practice (2002, p. 4)." However, Dominelli and others have also pointed to social work's long history of implication in systems of containment, control, and paternalism, arguing persuasively that social work is not a chaste profession in terms of perpetuating injustices (Dominelli, 2002; Margolin, 1998; Withorn, 1984). Bob Sapey (2003), writing from the perspective of disability advocacy, contends that, for many "consumers" of service, the notion of "anti-oppressive social work," or social justice work, is an oxymoron, given the ways in which the profession has historically viewed the "client" through a top-down lens that imposes a demeaning status. Thus we cannot assume that by doing social work we are engaged in social justice work. The everyday struggle for social justice demands ongoing vigilance, resistance, and courage.

How far have we progressed? The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt, second inaugural address, 1937

The Challenge of Social Justice Work

We do not need to look far to see that much injustice persists in the world. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is nearly 60 years old, yet violations of human rights and struggles to recognize and realize these rights continue on many fronts. Those struggles force us to ask, what conditions of humanity are necessary

REFLECTION: State of Human Development

In 1990, the United Nations began issuing an annual Human Development Report, documenting the global state of human well-being. The report provides a ranking of countries according to the "Human Development Index" - a composite score that incorporates life expectancy at birth; adult literacy rate; school enrollments; and Gross Domestic Product per capita. In 2005 Norway ranked first among 177 countries, Niger ranked last, and Paraguay in the middle. The United States ranked tenth on the list. The report also highlights the unequal state of human development globally.

Massive poverty and obscene inequality are such terrible scourges of our times - times in which the world boasts breath-taking advances in science, technology, industry and wealth accumulation - that they have to rank alongside slavery and apartheid as social evils.

- Nelson Mandela, 2005

Consider some of these facts:

- The global gulf between rich and poor has grown. The richest 1% has as much income as the poorest 57%.
- More than 1 billion people survive in abject poverty, living on under $1 a day. 40% of the world - 2.5. billion people live on less than $2 a day.
- In 2003 the AIDS pandemic claimed 3 million lives and left another 5 million infected.
- One-fifth of humanity lives in countries where many people spend $2 dollars a day on a cappuccino. Another fifth of humanity survives on less than $1 a day and lives in countries where children die for want of a simple anti-mosquito bed net.
- Someone living in Zambia in 2005 has less chance of reaching age 30 than someone born in England in 1849.
- The world's richest 500 individuals have a combined income greater than that of the poorest 416 million.
- There are still 800 million people in the world lacking in basic literacy skills. Two-thirds are women.
- More than 10 million children die before their fifth birthday each year. Sub-Saharan Africa's share of child mortality is growing. The region accounts for 20% of births but 44% of deaths.
- More than 80 million people, including one in three pre-school children, suffer from malnutrition.
- More than 1 billion people lack access to safe water and 2.6 billion lack access to improved sanitation.
- Some 38 million people are now infected with HIV - 25 million of them in Sub-Saharan Africa. In 1980 child death rates in Sub-Saharan Africa were 13 times higher than in rich countries. They are now 29 times higher.
- The risk of dying from pregnancy-related causes ranges from 1 in 18 in Nigeria to 1 in 8,700 in Canada.

Source: Human Development Report, 2005, pp. 3 - 32

for people to claim the most basic of human rights—the right to have rights (Arendt, 1973, p. 296, cited in Jelin, 1996, p. 104)? Struggles for women's rights continue around the world in the face of persistent gender inequality and violence. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the United Nations in 1989, but children throughout the world continue to be viewed as less than full humans and are exploited in families, factories, sex trades, and armed conflict (Chin, 2003; Healy, 2001; Nordstrom, 1999). Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have taken the United States to task for having the world's highest incarceration rate, further marked by the disproportionate imprisonment of people of color, the systematic sexual abuse of women prisoners, and the growing over-representation of people diagnosed with serious mental illness being held in jails and prisons around the country (Human Rights Watch, 2006). The rights associated with citizenship and "home" are denied to 23 million refugees displaced from their homelands by war and its social, political, and economic devastation (Lyons, 1999, p. 110). How can we speak of universal human rights when more than 1 billion people earn less than one dollar per day, when 800 million adults are illiterate, and when more than 1 billion people lack access to safe water (United Nations Development Programme, 2005)? These are some of the challenging questions we face when we take social justice work seriously.

TAKING A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

Confronting Inequality and Interdependence

Ideological precepts written into the U.S. Constitution over 200 years ago speak of "equality and justice for all." These same precepts continue to feed the fires of revolutionary claims and movements around the world. Yet as Figure 2.1 indicates, the contemporary world is characterized by brutal inequalities of wealth and poverty. As this topsy-turvy image suggests, it is an unstable world with no solid foundation. We argue that the foundation must be built from the bottom up with the help of social justice work. We believe that meaningful engagement with questions of social justice demands a global perspective. We will be reflecting on the history of social justice in U.S. social work, and we will draw from knowledge and practice beyond U.S. borders to challenge and expand our thinking. In this age of transnational movements of people, power, and information, we need an approach to social justice work that crosses national, geographic, cultural, organizational, and professional boundaries and expands our thinking along the way. We need an approach that is transformational, one that "meets the objective of promoting well-being by changing current configurations of inequality and diswelfare that prevent people from realizing their full potential as self-determining agents" (Adams, Dominelli, & Payne, 2005, p. 2).

We find inspiration in the work of international social workers and social welfare organizations for framing a global understanding of social work. For example, the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), in trying to develop a global definition of social work, has identified three concepts that are key to justice-oriented social work: *peace, environment,* and *citizenship* (IFSW, 1997).

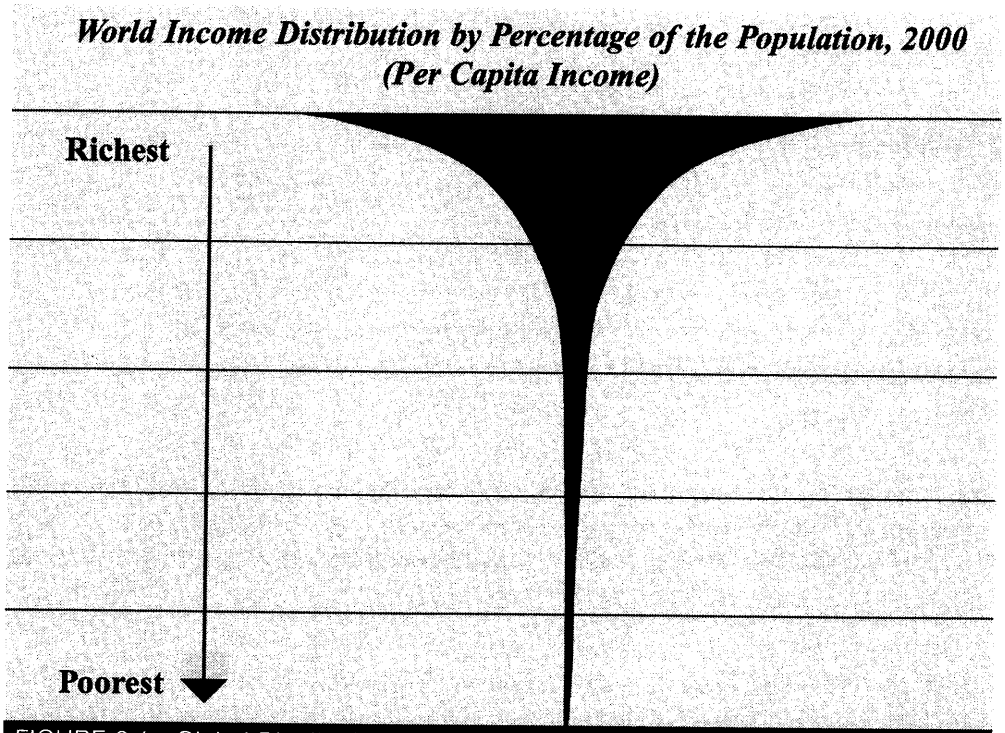


FIGURE 2.1—Global Distributions of Income. Source: UNDP Human Development Report, 2005; Dikhanov, 2005

Oxfam, a nongovernmental international aid organization, argues that we have to attend to the basic rights of subsistence and security before we can address other human rights (Lyons, 1999, p. 9). Karen Lyons, a social work educator at the University of East London, argues that if we are to think of social work and social justice on a global scale for the 21st century, we need to think about poverty, migration, disasters, and their global effects (1999, p. 14). Lynne Healy argues the need to pay simultaneous attention to global interdependence and social exclusion, or the forces of social and economic marginalization that deny whole populations the right to participate in opportunities available in society (2001, p. 101). Jim Ife and Elizabeth Reichert contend that it is imperative for social work to embrace and operate from a human rights perspective (Ife, 2001; Reichert, 2003). Further, the daily headlines across the globe inform us of the ongoing ravages of war and the human and environmental consequences of earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, and other natural and human-made disasters. Clearly, these challenging issues are interrelated, and we will return to them to explore patterns that connect throughout the book.

Challenging Our Thinking

The challenge of social justice work calls for challenging ways of thinking. That is, we have to challenge ways we have been taught to think and critically engage with perspectives that disrupt our certainties about the world, our assumptions about what is "right," "true," and "good." Our (the authors') own perspectives have been shaped by diverse influences ranging from African American and Italian social theorists and activists (W.E.B. Dubois and Antonio Gramsci) to French philosophers (Michel Foucault), Brazilian and U.S. popular educators (Paulo Freire and Myles Horton), "first" and "third" world feminists (bell hooks, Patricia Hill

Collins, Chandra Talpade Mohanty), critical social and cultural theorists in Europe and North America (Pierre Bourdieu, Henry Giroux, David Harvey, Sherry Ortner, Dorothy Smith, Iris Marion Young) and indigenous scholar-activists (Linda Tuhiwai Smith). We include a selected bibliography of these works at the end of this chapter.

There are common threads among these diverse influences on our thinking. They have challenged us to examine the social construction of reality, that is, the ways we as human beings use our cultural capacities to give meaning to social experience. They pose questions about the relations of power, domination, and inequality that shape the way knowledge of the world is produced and whose view counts. Moreover, they call on us not only to question the order of things in the world but also to be active participants in social transformation toward a just world. To understand social justice work and to engage in justice-oriented practice, we must first think critically about its component parts by looking at meanings of social work and social justice.

MEANINGS OF SOCIAL WORK

Struggles Over Definition

Perhaps there are as many meanings of social work as there are social workers. When adding movement across time and place to the mix, the meaning of social work becomes a kaleidoscope of interpretations. As noted in Chapter 1, there have been struggles for control of social work's definition and direction since its inception. Partially, this struggle is attributable to what some believe is social work's dualistic nature and location, wedged between addressing individual need and engaging in broad-scale societal change (Abramovitz, 1998). A justice-oriented definition of social work challenges the boundaries between the individual and the social. Instead, it considers how society and the individual are mutually constituting—we individually and collectively make our social world and, in turn, through our participation in society and its institutions, systems, beliefs, and patterns of practice, we both shape ourselves and are shaped as social beings (Berger & Luckman, 1966). The progressive U.S. social worker, educator and activist Bertha Capen Reynolds (1942) called this "seeing it whole." Historically, forces both within and outside social work have influenced its dominant definition. In Chapter 3 we follow the course of these tensions and strains as we explore the history of social work in the United States.

First, we start with some commonly held contemporary definitions of social work in the United States and then move to alternative and international definitions. We ask you to consider this question: How is it that a profession that calls itself by one name—social work—can have such diverse meanings and interpretations? Also, think about the different contexts that shape these meanings, and how these translate into different ways of conceptualizing social work practice. How do countries with different dominant value systems from that of the United States practice social work? How do these practices differ from our own? Do practitioners in other national and political contexts understand the meaning of social justice differently than we do in the United States? How do you explain this difference?

Official Meanings

Professions have formalized organizations that oversee their functioning, determine standards, and monitor practice. The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), for example, is the accrediting body for schools of social work education in the United States. CSWE's primary role is to ensure the consistency of knowledge, values, and skills disseminated through social work education. According to CSWE:

> Social work practice promotes human well-being by strengthening opportunities, resources, and capacities of people in their environments by creating policies and services to correct conditions that limit human rights and the quality of life. The social work profession works to eliminate poverty, discrimination, and oppression. Guided by a person-in-environment perspective and respect for human diversity, the profession works to effect social and economic justice worldwide. (CSWE, 2001, rev. 2004, p. 2)

The profession of social work is based on the values of service, social and economic justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, and integrity and competence in practice. With these values as defining principles, the purposes of social work are:

- To enhance human well-being and alleviate poverty, oppression, and other forms of social injustice.
- To enhance the social functioning and interactions of individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities by involving them in accomplishing goals, developing resources, and preventing and alleviating distress.
- To formulate and implement social policies, services, and programs that meet basic human needs and support the development of human capacities.
- To pursue policies, services, and resources through advocacy and social or political actions that promote social and economic justice.
- To develop and use research, knowledge, and skills that advance social work practice.
- To develop and apply practice in the context of diverse cultures. (CSWE, 2001, rev. 2004, Section 1.0, p. 4)

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is the largest organization of professional social workers in the United States. It works to enhance the professional growth and development of its members, both bachelor of social work (BSW) and master of social work (MSW) practitioners. NASW also helps to create and maintain professional standards and to advance social policies. The Preamble to the NASW Code of Ethics contains the following definition of social work:

> The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulner-

able, oppressed, and living in poverty. A historic and defining feature of social work is the profession's focus on individual well-being in a social context and the well-being of society. Fundamental to social work is attention to the environmental forces that create, contribute to, and address problems in living. (NASW, 1999, p. 1)

The *Social Work Dictionary*, published by NASW (Barker, 2003), defines social work as:

- The applied science of helping people achieve an effective level of psychosocial functioning and effecting societal changes to enhance the well-being of people.
- According to NASW, "Social Work is the professional activity of helping individuals, groups, or communities enhance or restore their capacity for social functioning and creating conditions favorable to this goal." (Barker, p. 408)

What do the CSWE and the NASW definitions of social work mean to you? Where do you see common ground and differences? How do these definitions compare with your own definition of social work? Like other definitions of a profession, these embody the value systems of their creators. CSWE and NASW have the power to officially sanction not only how we define social work but also how we outline the parameters of its practice and articulate the values believed to be central to the work. This official sanction refers not only to words and to the language we use to describe what we do but also to the actions we take that exemplify our practice. These definitions are also evolving, responding to pressures from constituents and social conditions. For example, prior to the recent revision of its *Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards,* CSWE did not specifically charge social workers with the responsibility to respond to conditions that limit human rights. In addition, human rights are not discussed further in the policy document, suggesting a lack of clarity regarding *how* to bring them to bear in social work education and practice. Throughout this journey we ask that you return to these definitions from time to time and reflect on the challenges and possibilities of translating words to action.

CSWE and NASW are powerful meaning-makers in defining the nature of social work in the United States. More often than not, social work texts include these definitions of social work in their introductory chapters (for example, see Boyle, Hull, Mather, Smith, & Farley, 2006; Miley, O'Melia, & DuBois, 2007); Sheafor, Horejsi, & Horejsi, 2006). Although these are certainly the most dominant definitions, they are not the only ones. Next, we will look at some alternative meanings, those that challenge and go beyond the dominant definitions. These meanings of social work speak directly of its inescapable political nature and ask us to consider issues of power as they concern social workers' relationships to those with whom they work. As you read the following definitions, write down what you think might be factors that shape different meanings of social work and definitions of the helping relationship.

REFLECTION: Shifting Meanings of Social Work

What meanings are communicated by the CSWE and the NASW in their definitions of social work? How might these meanings guide practice? For example, think of yourself working with children and families or in a health care or community center. Given these definitions, how might you relate to the people, the neighborhoods, and the communities with whom you work? Would your relationships be top-down, bottom-up, or side-by-side? How would you work to promote, restore, maintain, and enhance human functioning? What actions would you take to correct conditions that limit human rights and quality of life? Where would you turn to gain an understanding of human rights? Now let's shift our vision from "inside" the profession and look at meanings of social work from the "outside," through the eyes of those whom social work is meant to serve. For example, imagine yourself to be:

- a homeless person turned away from a full shelter for the third night in a row;
- a 9-year-old child in a receiving home awaiting temporary placement in a foster home;
- a school principal making a referral of child neglect to the local child protection services office;
- an undocumented resident of the United States whose young child, born in the United States, is in need of emergency health care;
- a TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) recipient whose monthly benefit has been reduced for failure to provide proper documentation of a part-time day care arrangement.

How would you define social work through these eyes? As you look at the meaning of social work from an outsider point of view, does this change your conceptions of social work? What concrete actions and results would demonstrate to you that the social work profession is realizing its stated purpose?

Other Meanings to Consider

Social Work as a Transformative Process

Paulo Freire (1974, 1990), a Brazilian educator, argues that social work is a transformative process in which both social conditions and participants, including the social worker, are changed in the pursuit of a just world. Freire is noted for his contributions to popular education, a social-change strategy wherein people affected by oppressive social conditions come together to reflect on their circumstances, become critically conscious of the root causes of their suffering, and take liberating action. (We address popular education further in Chapters 6 and 7.) Freire taught literacy to Brazilian peasants through group discussion that prompted critical reflection on their life conditions. Weiler (1988) writes that Freire:

> . . . is committed to a belief in the power of individuals to come to a critical consciousness of their own being in the world. Central to his pedagogical work is the understanding that both teachers and students are agents, both engaged in the process of constructing and reconstructing meaning. (p. 17)

In Freire's view, social work involves critical curiosity and a life-long, committed search for one's own competence; congruence between words and actions; tolerance; the ability to exercise "impatient patience"; and a grasp of what is historically possible. Similarly, Stanley Witkin (1998, p. 486) asks us to consider social work as contextually relevant inquiry and activity focused on individual and social transformation that promotes human rights, social justice, and human dignity. Robert Adams, Lena Dominelli, and Malcolm Payne (2005) frame social work as a transformational, reflexive, and critical practice with individuals, communities, families, and groups that enhances social solidarity, deepens social interaction, and reduces inequality. They argue that transformation does not mean revolution. It is about continuity as well as change. It is a creative process that moves beyond technique, procedures, and managerialism; it engages with the structures of people's lives (pp. 12-4). They state,

> Ultimately, we may achieve transformation of the service user's situation, the setting for practice, the policy context, and, not least, ourselves. In transforming ourselves, we enhance our capacities for self-awareness, self-evaluation, and self-actualization or personal and professional fulfillment. (p. 14)

These depictions highlight the transformation of both social conditions and ourselves in the process.

Social Work as a Political Process

A number of writers have argued that social work practice is fundamentally a political activity. According to Norman Goroff, those who attribute human problems to personal deficits are assuming a conservative stance that supports the status quo (1983, p. 134, cited in Reisch, 2005). David Gil (1998, pp. 104-108), along with other scholars of social work (Barber, 1995; Fisher, 1995; Reisch, 1997, 1998b), affirms the undeniably political nature of social work and its value system. He believes social work should confront the root causes of social problems by moving beyond mere technical skills. Like Freire, Gil asserts that social work must promote critical consciousness, that is, an acute awareness of the interconnected nature of individuals, families, and communities, and a society's political, economic, and social arrangements. To achieve these ends, Gil contends that social workers must strive to understand their own and others' oppression (and privilege) and consider alternative possibilities for human relations. He, too, argues that there is need for fundamental social change. Dennis Saleebey concurs with Gil as he asserts, "practice that is guided by social and economic justice requires methods that explicitly deal with power and power relationships" (2006, p. 95). Similarly, Adams, Dominelli, and Payne (2005) call on social workers to "connect our interpersonal actions with our political objectives" (p. 2). They contend that our behavior as practitioners "is a social and political statement about how we think social relationships should move forward" and how we confront barriers to social justice (p. 3).

Social Work as Critical Practice

In a similar vein, advocates of *critical social work* argue that the central purpose of social work is social change to redress social inequality. They examine class,

race, gender, and other forms of social inequality and their effects on the marginalization and oppression of individuals and groups. They, too, pay particular attention to the structural arrangements of society that contribute to individual pain (Allan, Pease, & Briskman, 2003). These ideas about social work resonate with Bertha Capen Reynolds' (1934, 1942, 1963) contributions to the profession. Reynolds was a social worker and social work educator in the United States whose life and work modeled a commitment to progressive, justice-oriented social work. Reynolds' work bridged the individual and the social. Like many social workers of her time, she was trained in psychoanalytic techniques, but she never lost sight of the contextual nature of individual problems. Reynolds set forth "five simple principles" she believed necessary to the practice of social work:

1. Social work exists to serve people in need. If it serves other classes, it becomes too dishonest.
2. Social work exists to help people help themselves. . . we should not be alarmed when they do so by organized means, such as client or tenant or labor groups.
3. The underlying nature of social work is that it operates by communication, listening, and sharing experience.
4. Social work has to find its place among other social movements for human betterment.
5. Social workers as citizens cannot consider themselves superior to their clients as if they do not have the same problems (Reynolds, 1963, pp. 173-175).

GET INVOLVED!

Visit the Social Welfare Action Alliance online and learn how you can help build a progressive force for social change. ***http://socialwelfare-actionalliance.org***

Reynolds' understanding of social work continues to inspire individuals interested in social change as attested to by the progressive social work organization founded in her name, formerly the Bertha Capen Reynolds Society, now the Social Welfare Action Alliance.

Michael Reisch has explored the history of radical social work in the United States and argued for the recognition of social work as a political process (Reisch, 1998b, 2005; Reisch & Andrews, 2001). He examines the historic and contemporary understandings and possibilities of *critical* social work and its potential to resist the political and economic inequalities resulting from 21st century globalization. Reisch (2005) states,

> Critical social work challenges conventional assumptions about poverty, race, and gender, and the basic functions of a market-driven political-economic system. In addition, critical social work heightens awareness of the historical and contemporary relationship between social justice and social struggle. (p. 157)

Conceptualizations of social work as a critical, political, and transformational process are central to our understanding of social justice work. Throughout the text we draw on the insights of critical thinkers and practitioners in both challenging the bounds and expanding the possibilities of practice.

International Meanings of Social Work

International Federation of Social Workers' Definition

Much can be learned about social work when we step outside U.S. soil and learn about its meaning on different social, political, and cultural terrain. Professional organizations other than CSWE and NASW have set forth definitions of social work. For example, the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) is a global organization founded on the principles of social justice, human rights, and social development. IFSW strives to achieve these aims through the development of international cooperation between social workers and their professional organizations. In 2000, IFSW developed a new definition of social work, replacing a definition adopted in 1982 and reflecting the organization's effort to address the evolving nature of social work. In 2001, IFSW joined with another major international social work body, the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW), in agreement on the following as a common definition of social work:

> The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilising theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environment. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work.[3]

It is important to note that the IFSW/IASSW definition specifically addresses human rights and liberation as foundational to social work. How does this compare with the definitions put forth by NASW and CSWE?

Global Interdependence

In keeping with international concerns and connections, other social workers continue to forge new definitions of social work that capture global concerns and ideals. For example, Rosemary Link, Chathapuram Ramanathan, and Yvonne Asamoah (1999) contend that a global approach to social work must view the world as a system of interdependent parts, account for the structures that shape human interactions, and challenge culture-bound assumptions about human behavior. For instance, they point out the culture-bound nature of concepts such as "independence," "self-esteem," and "motivation" that have been predicated on particular modern Western concepts of personhood and the self. They call on social workers to reach for constructs that can relate to differing cultural contexts "such as interdependence of self (with family, village, and community life), social well-being, empowerment, resilience, reverence for nature, artistic expression, and peace" (p. 30). Similarly, Lynne Healy (2001) situates social work internationally as a force for human global change and development. She argues that the concepts of human rights, multiculturalism, social exclusion/inclusion, security, and sustainability are central to social work in a global context (pp. 266-267).

Defining Social Work in Diverse National Contexts

We have chosen the snapshots below to illustrate the meaning of social work in

diverse national contexts. We hope these will spark your interest to investigate other countries on your own. Here are some clues about social work. See if you can guess the country. (Answers in endnotes for this chapter.)

- Social work in this country bears some resemblance to social work in the United States because these countries share a common border. Social work started here at approximately the same time as it did in the United States. This country exported practice methods and philosophies from the United States and Great Britain. In fact, the country's longest serving prime minister was employed at Hull House in Chicago as a caseworker when it was under Jane Addams' leadership. In part, this explains the commonality of social services and policies adopted in this country during the 1940s when compared to the United States (e.g., income security programs, minimum wage legislation, old age security, family allowances, and unemployment insurance). There are also some startling differences. For example, this country created a universal medical care program and a comprehensive and integrated social assistance program in the 1960s (Hopmeyer, Kimberly, & Hawkins, 1995). What factors might account for the different meanings of social work in this country compared to the United States?

- As part of this country's historic ideology, for hundreds of years a good society was a society where the masters at different levels were just and took good care of their subordinates (Frick, 1995). Beginning in the 1930s, this country evolved from the concept of the state as the benevolent caretaker toward a new ideology based on solidarity, democracy, equality, and brotherhood. "Individual rights as citizens were stressed together with the belief in collective solutions to social problems and a preparedness to use the state as an instrument for such solutions" (Frick, 1995, p. 146). What is the meaning of social work in a country that bridges individual rights and collective solutions?

- Social work was initiated in this country by an American missionary who set up an organization based on the Settlement House model in 1926. With funding from a wealthy industrialist of the country, the first school of social work was started in 1936. It focused on urban problems and the needs of the rural immigrant workforce coming to the city for factory work. A second school, heavily supported by the YWCA, was established in 1946, and U.S. influence permeated in the training and practice of social workers for many years. At the same time, however, social work was also being shaped by this country's struggle for independence and its embrace of "modernization and development" in the post-World War II era. In contrast to its U.S. counterpart, social work in this country came to be seen and practiced as a form of social development. (Healy 2001, pp. 23-24; Kuruvilla, 2005, pp. 41-54).

- During the Allied occupation of this country after World War II, social work and a system of social welfare were introduced based on models

developed in the United States. This is a good example of a powerful meaning-maker spreading its ideas of social work to another country. While it may be efficient to buy something ready-made, often a good fit to new surroundings is sacrificed in the process. However, in this country's case there was no other choice. With conquest and domination came the power to impose meanings on a culture and its people. Old meanings were replaced with new ones and in the process, the importance of cultural congruence was ignored. While this country continues to forge an indigenous system of social welfare, social casework is still the dominant model of practice. A continued reliance on imported theories and models of practice has impeded social work's capacity to respond to changing demographic, social, and economic conditions (Healy, 2001; Matsubara, 1992; Okamoto & Kuroki, 1997).

- This was the first country in South America where social work emerged, beginning in 1925. Influenced initially by European models of practice, the profession underwent a transformation during the 1960s. The theories of Paulo Freire, the noted Brazilian popular educator mentioned earlier, who was living in exile in this country, had a transformative influence on both the practice and the teaching of social work. Consciousness-raising and rethinking the power dynamics inherent in the social worker/client relationship became points of reflection that changed the nature of practice. Social workers in this country contested the individualistic, apolitical emphasis of social work in other countries, and critiqued models imported from the U.S. as imperialistic. However, 17 years of military dictatorship (1973-1990), accompanied by a transformation of the economy to a model of free market neoliberalism and repression of social movements and academic freedom, severely affected social work education and practice. While some social work practitioners and educators continue to embrace a critical approach to practice, others have retreated to individualistic, person-changing approaches (Finn, 2005; Jimenez & Aylwin, 1992).[4]

MEANINGS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

Understanding Social Justice in Context

Notions of justice have been debated since the days of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Like social work, the meaning of social justice is contextually bound and historically driven. The ideas we have about social justice in U.S. social work are largely derived from Western philosophy and political theory and Judeo-Christian religious tradition. The *Social Work Dictionary* defines social justice as "an ideal condition in which all members of a society have the same rights, protection, opportunities, obligations and social benefits. Implicit in this concept is the notion that historical inequalities should be acknowledged and remedied through specific measures. A key social work value, social justice entails advocacy to confront discrimination, oppression, and institutional inequities" (Barker, 2003, p. 405). Our

conceptions of justice are generally abstract ideals that overlap with our beliefs about what is right, good, desirable, and moral (Horejsi, 1999). Notions of social justice generally embrace values such as the equal worth of all citizens, their equal right to meet their basic needs, the need to spread opportunity and life chances as widely as possible, and finally, the requirement that we reduce and where possible, eliminate unjustified inequalities.

Some students of social justice consider its meaning in terms of the tensions between individual liberty and common social good, arguing that social justice is promoted to the degree that we can promote positive, individual freedom. Others argue that social justice reflects a concept of fairness in the assignment of fundamental rights and duties, economic opportunities, and social conditions (Miller, 1976, p. 22, cited in Reisch, 1998a). In their 1986 pastoral letter, the U.S. Catholic Bishops' Conference outlined three concepts of social justice[5]:

1. **Commutative Justice** - calls for fundamental fairness in all agreements and exchanges between individuals or private social groups.
2. **Distributive Justice** - requires that the allocation of income, wealth, and power in society be evaluated in light of its effects on people whose basic material needs are unmet.
3. **Social Justice** - implies that people have an obligation to be active and productive participants in the life of society and that society has a duty to enable them to participate in this way. The meaning of social justice also includes a duty to organize economic and social institutions so that people can contribute to society in ways that respect their freedom and the dignity of their labor (U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1986).

A number of social workers and social theorists concerned about questions of social justice have turned to the work of philosopher John Rawls (1995) and his theory of justice. For example, Wakefield (1988a) argues that Rawls' notion of distributive justice is the organizing value of social work. Rawls (1995) asks, what would be the characteristics of a just society in which basic human needs are met, unnecessary stress is reduced, the competence of each person is maximized, and threats to well-being are minimized? For Rawls, distributive justice denotes "the value of each person getting a fair share of the benefits and burdens resulting from social cooperation" both in terms of material goods and services and also in terms of nonmaterial social goods, such as opportunity and power (Wakefield, 1988a, p. 193).[6] Rawls tries to imagine whether a small group of people, unmotivated by selfish interests, could reach consensus regarding the characteristics of a just society. In his book *A Theory of Justice* (1995), Rawls imagines such a small group, selected at random, sitting around a table. He places an important limit on this vision: No one at the table knows whether he or she is rich or poor; black, brown, or white; young or old. He assumes that, without knowledge of their own immediate identities, they will not be motivated by selfish considerations. Rawls concludes that the group will arrive at two basic principles:

1. **Justice as Fairness:** "According to this principle, each person has an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others" (Albee, 1986, p. 897).

2 **Just Arrangements:** "Social and economic inequalities are arranged so that they are both to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged and attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair and equal opportunity" (Albee, 1986, p. 897).

From this perspective, society must make every attempt to redress all those social and economic inequalities that have led to disadvantage in order to provide real equality of opportunity. This demands a redistribution of power; the rejection of racism, sexism, colonialism, and exploitation; and the search for ways to redistribute social power toward the end of social justice (Albee, 1986, p. 897).

Social Workers Conceptualize Social Justice

Reisch (1998a) draws on Rawls' principle of "redress," that is, to compensate for inequalities and to shift the balance of contingencies in the direction of equality, in articulating the relationship of social work and social justice. He argues that a social justice framework for social work and social welfare policy would "hold the most vulnerable populations harmless in the distribution of societal resources, particularly when those resources are finite. Unequal distribution of resources would be justified only if it served to advance the least advantaged groups in the community" (Rawls, 1995; Reisch, 1998a, p. 20). The concept of distributive justice is central to a number of discussions of social justice and social work. For example, in her social work practice text, Marty Dewees (2006) states that social justice concerns the means by which societies allocate their resources, which consist of material goods and social benefits, rights, and protections. Dorothy Van Soest and Betty Garcia (2003, p. 44) write, "Our conception of social justice is premised on the concept of distributive justice, which emphasizes society's accountability to the individual. What principles guide the distributions of goods and resources?" Van Soest and Garcia address five perspectives on distributive justice that help us grasp the complexity of the concept and critically examine our own thinking. Three of these perspectives—utilitarian, libertarian, and egalitarian—are prescriptive in nature, speaking to a view of what social justice should be. Another, the racial contract perspective, offers a description of the current state of society and the unequal system of privilege and racism therein. A fifth view, the human rights perspective, makes human rights central to the discussion of social justice (p. 45). Van Soest and Garcia's overview of these five perspectives is summarized in Figure 2.2.[7]

Dennis Saleebey (1990, p. 37), a pioneer in the development of a strengths perspective, has also explored the meaning of social justice for social work. He contends that the following conditions must be met to achieve social justice:

1. Social resources are distributed on the principle of need with the clear understanding that such resources underlie the development of personal resources, with the proviso that entitlement to such resources is one of the gifts of citizenship.

2. Opportunity for personal and social development are open to all with the understanding that those who have been unfairly hampered through no fault of their own will be appropriately compensated.

Five Perspectives on Distributive Justice

1 Utilitarian	Justice is arrived at by weighing relative harms and benefits and determining what maximizes greatest good for greatest number.
2 Libertarian	Distribution of goods and resources occurs by natural and social lottery and is inherently uneven. Justice entails ensuring the widest possible latitude of freedom from coercion regarding what people accumulate and how they dispose of it.
3 Egalitarian	Every member of society should be guaranteed the same rights, opportunities, and access to goods and resources. Redistribution of resources is a moral obligation to ensure that unmet needs are redressed.
4 Racial Contract	Addresses the current state of society, rather than the way things "should" be. Argues that the notion of the "social contract" as the basis of Western democratic society is a myth. The contract did not extend beyond white society. Thus white privilege was a constitutive part of the "social contract" and must be dismantled in the struggle for social justice.
5 Human Rights	Social justice encompasses meeting basic human needs; equitable distribution of resources; and recognition of the inalienable rights of all persons, without discrimination.

FIGURE 2.2

3. The establishment, at all levels of a society, of agendas and policies that have human development and the enriching of human experience as their essential goal and are understood to take precedence over other agendas and policies, is essential.
4. The arbitrary exercise of social and political power is forsaken.
5. Oppression as a means for establishing priorities, for developing social and natural resources and distributing them, and resolving social problems is forsworn.

How does this fit with your understanding of social work and social justice? Where do you find these principles honored in social work practice? Where do you find them violated? How should you as a social justice worker respond to that violation?

Summary

These important efforts to conceptualize the meaning of social justice and its relation to social work help us begin to map the challenging territory ahead. Even as these writers spell out principles of social justice, they reveal how complex the concept becomes as we try to translate it into policies and practices. And if we look

closely at these brief discussions above, we see that they, too, are filled with certainties grounded in particular worldviews that value particular understandings of individual personhood, rights, equality, and fairness. However, as Lyons (1999) reminds us, these certainties may not fit with other culturally grounded conceptualizations of social relations or selfhood. How do notions of cultural rights, which are of critical importance to indigenous people, fit into these depictions of social justice? How should group or collective rights be recognized and addressed?

Similarly, there are particular understandings of resources, development, and compensation assumed in discussion of rights and justice that also may hold very different meanings to different groups. For example, the notion of monetary compensation for harm done to people or a group is a very historically, culturally, and socially particular idea. For many people, it is inconceivable, even offensive, to negotiate a material compensation for personal or social harm. These conceptualizations of justice also speak to broad societal responsibilities. These responsibilities cannot be readily confined to the concerns and obligations of particular states or nations. These are issues that cross borders. If we limit our focus on the situation of justice within a given state, we miss the questions of fundamental inequalities among states and the transnational policies and practices that maintain and justify them. Can one make meaningful claims for social justice in the United States if those claims are premised on the exploitation of people outside U.S. borders? As Lyons (1999) notes, citizenship as it is conceptualized and practiced at the national level is inherently exclusionary when we consider the differences in power and access to resources among states. If we take the principles of distributive justice, social justice, and environmental sustainability seriously then we have to develop an international or transnational perspective on what we mean by the obligations of citizenship. This is a big challenge, and one that we will keep with us as we build our road to social justice by walking it.

Thus far, we have been probing the multiple meanings of social work and social justice and the dynamic relationship between them. We have encountered differing perspectives about the nature of the profession, the meaning and power of social justice therein, and the implications for practice. In order to effectively engage with these diverse meanings and explore the interplay of social work and social justice, we need to examine questions of difference and the relationship of difference to forms and practices of inequality and oppression.

Reflection on Distributive Justice

Return to the quote by Franklin Roosevelt on p. 15. What perspective on distributive justice seems to inform the message from his second inaugural address? How did that perspective influence the direction of social welfare policy under Roosevelt?

THINKING ABOUT DIFFERENCE, OPPRESSION, AND DOMINATION

Beyond Diversity

The practice of social justice work and the complexities inherent in meanings of social justice call on us to examine questions of difference, oppression, and domination. We will do so throughout the book, and we encourage all of us to do so in our everyday lives. It is not enough to talk about and celebrate human diversity. We need to go further and challenge ourselves to address the historical, political, and cultural processes through which differences and our ideas about difference

are produced (Dirks, Eley, & Ortner, 1994; Hill Collins, 1990; Van Soest & Garcia, 2003). As Beth Glover Reed and colleagues (Reed, Newman, Suarez, & Lewis, 1997, p. 46) argue, "recognizing and building on people's differences is important and necessary, but not sufficient for a practice that has social justice as a primary goal." For social justice work, "both *difference* and *dominance* dimensions must be recognized and addressed. Developing and using individual and collective critical consciousness are primary tools for understanding differences, recognizing injustice, and beginning to envision a more just society" (Reed et al., 1997, p. 46). We have to look not only at differences, but also at the ways in which differences are produced and their relationship to the production and justification of inequality. We are challenged to recognize and respect difference at the same time that we question how certain differences are given meaning and value. We need to work collectively to understand and challenge connections among forms of difference, relations of power, and practices of devaluation.

Difference

Let's think for a moment about the concept of difference. How do we categorize human difference? What are the "differences that make a difference," so to speak? What meanings do we give to particular forms of difference in particular contexts? What meanings do we give to the categories through which social differences are named and marked? How do we construct images of and assumptions about the "other"—a person or group different from ourselves? Too often, the marking of difference also involves a devaluing of difference, as we have witnessed historically and continue to see today, for example, in the social construction of race, gender, or sexual orientation. Author H.G. Wells (1911) presents a classic example of difference and devaluation in his short story, "The Country of the Blind." Nuñez, an explorer and the story's protagonist, falls into an isolated mountain valley and is rescued by the valley's curious inhabitants. Once Nuñez realizes that all of the residents are blind and have no conception of "sight," he muses, "in the country of the blind the one-eyed man is king." He assumes that, by virtue of his sight, he is superior to the valley's residents. The residents, in turn, find Nuñez unable to respond to the most basic rhythms and rules of their society. They see him as slow and childlike, and they interpret his nonsensical ramblings about this thing called "sight" as another sign of his unsound mind (Wells, 1911). Wells skillfully illustrates the ways in which our constructions and (mis)understandings of difference are linked to assumptions about worth, superiority, and inferiority, and ways in which they inform relations of domination and subordination.

In our social work practice we are called upon to be constantly vigilant of the ways in which ahistorical understandings of diversity—or calls for appreciating the "sameness" of our underlying humanity—may blind us from recognizing the ways in which unjust structural arrangements and histories of exclusion and oppression shape the meaning and power of difference. In writing about the shortcomings of traditional social work models in the Australasian and Pacific region, Ingrid Burkett and Catherine McDonald argue that these models "have a tendency to blind practitioners to the particularities of, for example, Australia's colonial past in which racism and intolerance for difference figure highly" (2005, p. 181). They continue, "While political rhetoric celebrates Australian multiculturalism, the re-

ality has been the containment of diversity that continues to exoticize the Other and promote erroneous ideas of the existence of fixed separate cultures (Bhabba in Harrison, 2003) rather than encourage ongoing engagement with difference" (2005, p. 181). In other words, Burkett and McDonald argue that surface rhetoric of diversity may constrict rather than expand honest exploration of difference. Might their critique be relevant for social work practice in the United States as well? We will revisit these themes as we elaborate the foundations and possibilities of social justice work in the following chapters.

REFLECTION: Meanings of "Race" and the Making of Difference

One of the most powerful social categories for making and marking human difference is that of "race." As social scientists have acknowledged, "race" is a social, not biological, concept. It is a complex social construction with profound human consequences. Read the American Anthropological Association's statement on race that follows and consider the following questions: Does this discussion of "race" inform or challenge your thinking? How so? Why is history important in understanding the concept of "race?" What questions does this raise about other categories of difference and the social meanings given to forms of human diversity? Where else do we see human difference constructed in terms of "rigid hierarchies of socially exclusive categories?" Is it possible to think of human difference outside of hierarchies and categories? How might a critical examination of the concept of "race" inform social justice work?

The following statement was adopted by the Executive Board of the American Anthropological Association in May 1998, based on a draft prepared by a committee of representative anthropologists. The Association believes that this statement represents the thinking and scholarly positions of most anthropologists.

> In the United States both scholars and the general public have been conditioned to viewing human races as natural and separate divisions within the human species based on visible physical differences. With the vast expansion of scientific knowledge in this century, however, it has become clear that human populations are not unambiguous, clearly demarcated, biologically distinct groups. Evidence from the analysis of genetics (e.g., DNA) indicates that most physical variation, about 94%, lies within so-called racial groups. Conventional geographic "racial" groupings differ from one another only in about 6% of their genes. This means that there is greater variation within "racial" groups than between them. In neighboring populations there is much overlapping of genes and their phenotypic (physical) expressions. Throughout history whenever different groups have come into contact, they have interbred. The continued sharing of genetic materials has maintained all of humankind as a single species.
>
> Physical variations in any given trait tend to occur gradually rather than abruptly over geographic areas. And because physical traits are inherited independently of one another, knowing the range of one trait does not predict the presence of others. For example, skin color varies largely from light in temperate areas in the north to dark in tropical areas in the south; its intensity is not related to nose shape or hair texture. Dark skin may be associated with frizzy or kinky hair or curly or wavy or straight hair, all of

which are found among different indigenous peoples in tropical regions. These facts render any attempt to establish lines of division among biological populations both arbitrary and subjective.

Historical research has shown that the idea of "race" has always carried more meanings than mere physical differences; indeed, physical variations in the human species have no meaning except the social ones that humans put on them. Today scholars in many fields argue that "race" as it is understood in the United States of America was a social mechanism invented during the 18th century to refer to those populations brought together in colonial America: the English and other European settlers, the conquered Indian peoples, and those peoples of Africa brought to provide slave labor.

From its inception, the modern concept of "race" was modeled after an ancient theorem of the Great Chain of Being, which posited natural categories on a hierarchy established by God or nature. Thus "race" was a mode of classification linked specifically to peoples in the colonial situation. It subsumed a growing ideology of inequality devised to rationalize European attitudes and treatment of the conquered and enslaved peoples. Proponents of slavery in particular during the 19th century used "race" to justify the retention of slavery. The ideology magnified the differences among Europeans, Africans, and Indians, established a rigid hierarchy of socially exclusive categories, underscored and bolstered unequal rank and status differences, and provided the rationalization that the inequality was natural or God-given. The different physical traits of African-Americans and Indians became markers or symbols of their status differences.

As they were constructing US society, leaders among European-Americans fabricated the cultural/behavioral characteristics associated with each "race." Linking superior traits with Europeans and negative and inferior ones to blacks and Indians. Numerous arbitrary and fictitious beliefs about the different peoples were institutionalized and deeply embedded in American thought.

Early in the 19th century the growing fields of science began to reflect the public consciousness about human differences. Differences among the "racial" categories were projected to their greatest extreme when the argument was posed that Africans, Indians, and Europeans were separate species, with Africans the least human and closer taxonomically to apes.

Ultimately "race" as an ideology about human differences was subsequently spread to other areas of the world. It became a strategy for dividing, ranking, and controlling colonized people used by colonial powers everywhere. But it was not limited to the colonial situation. In the latter part of the 19th century it was employed by Europeans to rank one another and to justify social, economic, and political inequalities among their peoples. During World War II, the Nazis under Adolf Hitler enjoined the expanded ideology of "race" and "racial" differences and took them to a logical end: the exterminations of 11 million people of "inferior races" (e.g. Jews, Gypsies, Africans, homosexuals, and so forth) and other unspeakable brutalities of the Holocaust.

"Race" thus evolved as a world view, a body of prejudgments about human differences

and group behavior. Racial beliefs constitute myths about the diversity in the human species and about the abilities and behavior of people homogenized into "racial" categories. The myths fused behavior and physical features together in the public mind, impeding our comprehension of both biological variations and cultural behavior, implying that both are genetically determined. Racial myths bear no relationship to the reality of human capabilities or behavior. Scientists today find that reliance on such folk beliefs about human differences in research has led to countless errors.

At the end of the 20th century, we now understand that human cultural behavior is learned, conditioned into infants beginning at birth, and always subject to modification. No human is born with built-in culture or language. Our temperaments, dispositions, and personalities, regardless of genetic propensities, are developed within sets of meanings and values that we call "culture." Studies of infant and early childhood learning and behavior attest to the reality of our cultures in forming who we are.

It is a basic tenet of anthropological knowledge that all normal human beings have the capacity to learn any cultural behavior. The American experiences with immigrants from hundreds of different language and cultural backgrounds who have acquired some version of American culture traits and behavior is the clearest evidence of this fact. Moreover, people of all physical variations have learned different cultural behaviors and continue to do so as modern transportation moves millions of immigrants around the world.

How people have been accepted and treated within the context of a given society or culture has a direct impact on how they perform in that society. The "racial" world view was invented to assign some groups to perpetual low status, while others were permitted access to privilege, power, and wealth. The tragedy in the United States has been that the policies and practices stemming from this world view succeeded all too well in constructing unequal populations among Europeans, native Americans, and peoples of African descent. Given what we know about the capacity of normal humans to achieve and function within any culture, we concluded that present-day inequalities between so-called "racial" groups are not consequences of their biological inheritance but products of historical and contemporary social, economic, educational, and political circumstances.

- American Anthropological Association, Washington, DC, 1998.

The Concept of Positionality

We construct human difference in terms of cultural practices, gender, racial/ethnic identification, social class, citizenship, sexual orientation, and other forms of identification. Our "*positionality,*" or location in the social world, is shaped in terms of these multiple identifications. Our positionality configures the angle from which we gain our partial view of the world. For some, that is a position of relative privilege and for others, a position of subordination and oppression. As Bertha Capen Reynolds reminds us, it is the mission of social justice workers to align themselves

with those who have experienced the world from positions of oppression and work to challenge the language, practices, and conditions that reproduce and justify inequality and oppression. To do so we must recognize and learn from our own positionality, consider how we see and experience the world from our positioning in it, and open ourselves to learning about the world from the perspectives of those differently positioned. As Reed et al. (1997) contend:

> Although some people suffer a great deal more than others, positionality implies that each and every one of us, in our varied positions and identities as privileged and oppressed, are both implicated in and negatively affected by racism, sexism, heterosexism, homophobia, classism, and other oppressive dynamics. The recognition of positionality, and of one's partial and distorted knowledge, is crucial for individuals of both dominant and subordinate groups, or we all contribute to perpetuating oppression. (p. 59)

Positionality is an unfamiliar word in our vocabulary. We hope you will find it to be a useful concept in thinking about the ways in which our understanding and worldviews are shaped by our various locations in the social world. In the following side bar, Carol Hand, a professor of social work at The University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, shares a story and assignment that she uses in helping students engage with the concept of positionality.

The Paradox of "Difference" and the Importance of Self-Awareness

By Carol A. Hand

Introduction

As an *Ojibwe* educator and practitioner, I know that the significance of difference is an ever-present challenge. Differences are more than skin deep and have profound consequences for our ability to understand others, and hence to be of service to those who need assistance. Yet to emphasize difference without recognizing the shared humanity that unites us can reify divisions and socially constructed power differentials. Two stories illustrate this paradox.

The *Parable of the Nile* describes the danger of ignoring the significance of difference. Briefly, the story tells of a monkey that was swept into the raging Nile by torrential rains. Just as the monkey reached the end of its endurance, it spied a branch hanging over the water and was able to pull itself from the river and was thus saved from drowning. Wishing to spare another from death, the monkey reached down into the turbulent water to save a fish that was struggling against the current, and lifted the fish into the air. The monkey was baffled by the fish's lack of gratitude. To take this parable to its logical conclusion, we should refrain from any actions that are intended to help others who are different.

An image shared by Joel Goldsmith (1961) provides another way of looking at difference. If one imagines looking at the earth from the moon, one sees distinct land masses, continents and islands that are separated by vast expanses of water. Each is alone and appears distinct. If one looks deep enough, below the surface of the water, one finds that they are in reality connected. From this vantage point or

worldview, the monkey's actions make perfect sense. These two perspectives, or "positions," illustrate the paradox of making sense of "difference" in a way that promotes understanding and life-affirming action.

One first step for reconciling these two perspectives is cultivating critical self-awareness. Understanding how one makes sense of the world, how one has been socialized to see oneself and others who are "different," and the values that underlie the meaning of differences, are crucial dimensions to explore on an ongoing basis. In an effort to explore how to promote critical self-reflection for social work graduate students, I designed an exercise to encourage students to begin to develop an understanding of their "positionality" and its effect on relations with clients, peers, and people in positions of authority. The class assignment, named a *positionality montage*, is required for the Human Behavior in the Social Environment Class (HBSE II: Difference, Diversity, and Oppression) during the second semester of the foundation year. The assignment, described below, has had a profound effect on many MSW students.

Positionality Montage Description

An important course objective is to encourage class members to reflect critically on their own "positionality," and how it affects their worldview and values, influences understanding of difference, and shapes interaction with others. This assignment is designed to focus on understanding self in relation to history, meaning, context, and power as a foundation for self-aware professional practice.

So why is the assignment called a montage? According to *Webster's Dictionary*, montage is the "art or process of making a composite picture by bringing together into a single composition a number of different pictures and arranging these ... so that they form a blended whole while remaining distinct" (1984, p. 922). Positionality reflects many dimensions. For the purposes of this class, the dimensions include:

1. race/skin color/ethnicity/nationality/first language,
2. gender,
3. socioeconomic class,
4. age,
5. sexual orientation,
6. religion/spiritual belief system, and
7. ability/disability.

This assignment is designed to encourage critical self-reflection by exploring each of these dimensions, to gain an understanding of what each of these dimensions means personally, how these meanings developed, how your life has been shaped by larger social interpretations of these dimensions singularly or in combination, and how these meanings affect your stance toward difference. Or more clearly stated, the purpose is to answer the questions "Who am I?" and "How does this affect how I relate to others who are different?" These are complex questions, and the answers are ever-changing. In order to make the task more doable, the assignment has four components. The first is a brief description of six categories. The second component is a more in-depth discussion of the remaining dimension. The choice of which category to focus on in more depth should be based on what you feel has been the most important influence on your personal and/or professional development, or that dimension that has been the most "invisible," and thus perhaps the most taken for granted. The third component is to describe or synthesize how these seven dimensions interlock, providing a specific example that illustrates the effect in your work with those in authority, peers, and clients. The final component is a brief description of any new insights and implications for future practice.

You are encouraged to be creative with this assignment. You can interweave photographs, a family tree, documents or stories from ancestors, family celebrations, or rituals based on cultural/ethnic roots, songs, videos, and so forth.

Final Thoughts

Critical self-awareness is an essential foundation for effective social justice work. Before one can "shift center" as Andersen and Collins recommend, one must be aware of one's center. Yet, critical self-awareness is but one of many steps in the complex, life-long process of understanding and embracing diversity. Relating to diversity is a multidimensional endeavor that involves not only seeing one's position at present, but also reflecting on one's experiences within the contexts of personal and world history, power differentials, and socially constructed meanings of difference. It requires understanding one's privileges and oppression. And it requires the courage to make mistakes and to look foolish and the grace to face conflict as one takes the initiative to be a bridge. It is my belief that we can find common ground based on honoring the richness of others' experiences and perspectives.

References:

Andersen, M. L. & Collins, P. H. (2004). *Race, class, and gender: An anthology* (5th ed.) Belmont, CA: Thompson Wadsworth.

Goldsmith, J. (1961). *The thunder of silence*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers.

Webster's encyclopedic unabridged dictionary of the English language (1984). New York: Gramercy Books.

Carol A. Hand, a member of the *Sokaogon* Band of the *Ojibwe* Tribe, is an Associate Professor at The University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh. She developed the exercise at The University of Montana.

Discrimination

A critical understanding of difference requires a clear grasp of *discrimination.* As Van Soest and Garcia (2003) describe:

> Discrimination represents an action intended to have a "differential and/or harmful effect on members" of a group (Pincus, 2000, p. 31). It has been characterized as responses that create distance, separation, exclusion, and devaluation (Lott, 2002). Pincus (2000) suggests that individual and institutional discrimination represent behavioral and policy actions that are intended to have a harmful effect, whereas structural discrimination refers to policies and behaviors that may be neutral in intent yet have negative, harmful consequences on target groups. When discrimination is buttressed by social power it represents racism and oppression. When not backed by social power, biased behaviors represent individual discriminatory actions. (p. 33)

Food for Thought: Four Components of Discrimination
(Link and Phelan, 2001)

1. Distinguishing between and labeling human differences
3. Linking the labeled persons to undesirable characteristics
4. Separating "them" (the labeled persons) from "us"
5. Culminating in status loss and discrimination that lead to unequal outcomes or life chances.

What are some examples of these components of discrimination from contexts of social work practice? What are some examples of unequal outcomes or life chances? What are some ways to challenge discriminatory practices?

Oppression

Oppression may be defined as the unjust use of power and authority by one group over another. It may entail the denial of access to resources, silencing of voice, or direct physical violence, and it denigrates the humanity of oppressor and oppressed. Van Soest and Garcia (2003, p. 35) argue that there are common elements in all forms of oppression. These include:

- Oppression bestows power and advantage on certain people who are regarded as the "norm" against whom others are judged (e.g., white, male, heterosexual).
- Oppressions are maintained by ideologies of superiority or inferiority and by threat (and reality) of both individual and institutional forms of violence.
- Oppressions are institutionalized in societal norms, laws, policies, and practices.
- Oppression works to maintain the invisibility of those oppressed.

As Van Soest and Garcia (2003, p. 32) describe, racism is one form of oppression that is deeply entrenched in the United States. Racism as defined by Bulhan (1985, p.13, cited in Van Soest & Garcia, p. 32) is the "generalization, institutionalization, and assignment of values to real or imaginary differences between people in order to justify a state of privilege, aggression, and/or violence." Racism works through the complex interplay of psychological, sociopolitical, economic, interpersonal, and institutional processes. Van Soest and Garcia argue that a critical awareness of racism is the foundation for learning about experiences of oppression, given the primacy of racism in American life (p. 33).

Five Faces of Oppression

Feminist philosopher Iris Marion Young identifies "five faces of oppression" to distinguish among various ways in which oppression is manifest in people's everyday experience. Where do you see examples of these forms of oppression in your community? What are some ways in which you could interrupt and challenge these forms of oppression?

Exploitation: Steady process of the transfer of the results of the labor of one group to benefit another group. Denial of the social and economic value of one's paid and unpaid labor. Examples include unsafe working conditions, unfair wages, and the failure to recognize the labors of whole sectors of a society, such as women's work as caregivers.

Marginalization: Creation of "second-class citizens" by means of the social, political, and economic exclusion of people from full participation in society, who are often subjected to severe material deprivation as a result.

Powerlessness: Denial of access to resources and of the right to participate in the decisions that affect one's life. Lack of power or authority even in a mediated sense to have a meaningful voice in decisions.

Cultural Imperialism: Imposition of dominant group's meaning system and worldview onto another group such that the other group's meaning systems are rendered invisible and "other," thus marking the other group as different and deviant.

Violence: Systematic violation, both physical and structural, leveled against members of oppressed groups. Unprovoked attacks, threats, reigns of terror, humiliation, often accompanied by a high degree of tolerance or indifference on the part of the dominant society.

Adapted from Iris Marion Young (1990), *Justice and the Politics of Difference.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Domination

Patricia Hill Collins (1990), writing from her positioning as a black feminist woman, argues that we cannot think of difference, oppression, and domination in "additive" terms. Instead, she challenges us to critically examine interlocking systems of oppression, such as those of racism, classism, and sexism, their systematic silencing of "other" voices and ways of knowing the world, and their power in determining and (de)valuing difference. She writes,

> Additive models of oppression are firmly rooted in the either/or dichotomies of Eurocentric, masculinist thought. One must either be Black or white in such thought systems—persons of ambiguous racial and ethnic identity constantly battle with questions such as, "What are you, anyway?" This emphasis on quantification and categorization occurs in conjunction with the belief that either/or categories must be ranked . . . Replacing additive models of op-

> pression with interlocking ones creates possibilities for new paradigms. The significance of seeing race, class, and gender as interlocking systems of oppression is that such an approach fosters a paradigmatic shift of thinking inclusively about other oppressions, such as age, sexual orientation, religion, and ethnicity. (p. 224)

Hill Collins asks us to think in terms of *matrices* of domination. She further states,

> In addition to being structured along axes such as race, gender, and social class, the matrix of domination is structured on several levels. People experience and resist oppression on three levels: the level of personal biography; the group or community level of the cultural context created by race, class, and gender; and the systemic level of social institutions. Black feminist thought emphasizes all three levels as sites of domination and as potential sites of resistance. (p. 227)

Hill Collins challenges us to recognize the critical perspectives of those who have experienced the world from positions of oppression and to engage in critical dialogue and action to challenge and change relations of power and domination that reproduce social injustice. Similarly, Van Soest and Garcia (2003, p. 37) note that, given the complexity of our positionalities, we may simultaneously be targets of oppression and bearers of privilege. As social justice workers it is important to be mindful of the ways these forces converge in our own lived experience and be open to learning about the experiences of others. In order to meaningfully engage in social justice work, we must start by both honoring difference and critically examining its production. We need to recognize our own positionalities in the social world and the fact that our worldviews are always partial and open to change. We have to "learn how to learn" about other people, groups, and their experiences (Reed et al, 1997, p. 66). We turn now to an overview of the Just Practice Framework, which will be our guide to that process.

The Social Justice Scrapbook

Each class member brings to class newspaper and magazine articles that illustrate value dilemmas and social justice challenges. Take time as a class each week to review and discuss one another's contributions to the scrapbook. As a class, build a collective archive of social justice over the course of the semester. One member of the class could take on the job of archivist, or the class as a whole might revisit the collection at the end of the term and decide how to organize and present the material gathered. Another option is to take time outside of class to review the scrapbook and reflect on the issues raised. How are concepts and practices of difference, oppression, and domination revealed? What "isms" play out in these accounts? How are they being challenged? What "isms" have you internalized? Where do you find your views and values most challenged? How would you address the challenge?

ACTION

JUST PRACTICE FRAMEWORK: MEANING, CONTEXT, POWER, HISTORY, AND POSSIBILITY

As we mentioned in the introduction, the Just Practice Framework emerged from our own practice, reflection, and long-term dialogue regarding the meaning of social justice work and the challenges of linking thought and action. The process of integrating social work and social justice to build a coherent understanding of social justice work revolves around five key concepts and their interconnections: *meaning, context, power, history,* and *possibility*. These key concepts are the foundation of the Just Practice Framework. This framework brings together a set of interrelated concepts that help to explain social justice work and guide the development and implementation of Just Practice principles and skills.

Take a minute to consider the following questions: How do we give *meaning* to the experiences and conditions that shape our lives? What are the *contexts* in which those experiences and conditions occur? Who has the *power* to have their interpretations of those experiences and conditions valued as "true?" How might *history* and a historical perspective provide us with additional contextual clues and help us grasp the ways in which struggles over meaning and power have played out and better appreciate the human consequences of those struggles? And how do we claim a sense of *possibility* as an impetus for just practice? We will expand on these key concepts through this book. We begin with a brief introduction of each concept in this chapter to provide a foundation for future reflection.

Meaning

Meaning is often defined as the purpose or significance of something. All human beings are meaning-makers. We make sense of the world and our experiences in it through the personal lenses of culture, race, place, gender, class, and sexual orientation. We come to new experiences with a history that influences our ways of making sense of our circumstances. Sometimes we share meaning with others based on commonalities of social experience and life circumstances. Often, however, we differ from others in how we come to understand ourselves, others, and the events and circumstances surrounding our lives. Think for a moment about the partiality of our knowledge, the difficulty we have in fully understanding another person's experience or what sense this person makes of happenings and circumstances. For this very reason, in social work practice it is essential that we attempt to understand how others make sense of their world and the commonalities, tensions, and contradictions this creates as we compare their meanings with our own. At the same time we need to stay mindful of the partiality of our own understanding. Just Practice means grappling with the ways in which we individually and collectively make sense of our worlds. Meanings can constrain us, keep us stuck, or create new possibilities for ourselves and the people with whom we work.

Searching for meaning requires reflexivity. This is the act of reflection, a process of self-reference and examination. It is a foundational skill upon which to build the knowledge base and skills of just practice. Although it may not appear to

be the case, reflection takes practice. It requires going beyond surface content to contemplate meanings, to submerge oneself in thoughtful reverie, to question taken-for-granted assumptions about reality, to consider the significance of situations and circumstances, and to share these thoughts with others through critical dialogue and critical question posing. Critical dialogue "is the encounter between men [sic], mediated by the world, in order to name the world" (Freire, 1974, p. 76). It is a process of engagement with others to develop, recreate, challenge, and affirm meaning. Critical question-posing differs from ordinary question-posing. Critical questioning asks learners to make connections among seemingly disparate issues or events or to discover the underlying themes that resonate or have a pervasive influence for an individual, group, organization, or community.

REFLECTION: **Meaning**

Take a moment to think about the word "welfare." What images do you associate with the word? Would you describe those images as generally positive or generally negative? How do they compare to the images you associate with "well-being?" Political debates regarding "welfare reform" over the past 25 years have served to vilify both the concept of "welfare" and those who receive certain forms of public support. Poor, single mothers, especially women of color, have been held responsible for a host of social ills. Their status as "welfare recipients" has become a source of condemnation. How has the meaning of "welfare" shifted over time? What would a social welfare policy look like that embraced an understanding of welfare as "a state of health, prosperity, happiness, and well-being?"

Context

Context is the second key concept. Context is the background and set of circumstances and conditions that surround and influence particular events and situations. Social work's legacy, and what distinguishes it from other helping professions, is its fundamental view of individuals, groups, organizations, and communities within a larger framework of interactions. These considerations include cultural beliefs and assumptions about reality and social, political, and economic relationships. Context shapes meaning and helps us make sense of people, events, and circumstances. We know this only too well when we take something (person or life event) out of context and attempt to understand it devoid of its surrounding. If we ignore context, our interpretation of a situation is myopic. We see only that which fits on the slide but nothing beyond the microscope. We miss the intricate connections, patterns, and dynamic relationships. In sum, context shapes what is seen as possible or not possible (Locke, Garrison, & Winship, 1998, p. 14).

We often think of social work practice in terms of interpersonal, organizational, community, and sociopolitical contexts. While for analytic purposes we may focus on one at a time, our practice plays out in these multiple and mutually influencing contexts. Consider for a moment the context of agency-based social work practice. Social workers work in organizations situated in communities and neighborhoods. The characteristics of communities and neighborhoods differ. Some have an abundance of resources and helping networks and others have to make do with little but their own ingenuity. Communities and organizations have distinct cultures that include spoken and unspoken rules and established patterns of com-

monly shared values and beliefs. Organizations, for example, are generally funded by state, federal, or private sources, each of which mandates funding allocations, types of services, who can be served, and the rules and regulations for receiving services. As we expand our contextual horizons, we discover that state and federal policies are linked to services, and these also are embedded with assumptions about what constitutes a social problem and how it should be addressed. Policies are, in effect, cultural snapshots framed by particular assumptions and philosophies of what is true, right, and good. Think for a moment about how these various contexts influence and shape both the worker and the work.

REFLECTION: **Rural Context of Practice**

Imagine yourself in western rural America. You are a child protective service worker working in a two-person agency. The town you practice in has a population of barely 2,000 inhabitants, and the locals are quick to say there are more cattle than people. The nearest metropolis is a full day's drive away. The community has few social service resources and those that exist are staffed much like your own agency, mostly solo operations that are understaffed and overworked. Although policies that govern your work are decided in the legislative chambers hundreds of miles down the road, they shape your daily existence from the supplies you are allocated to the procedures that structure your work. This ranching community takes pride in its rugged individualism. Families survive and thrive by sheer grit and stubborn determination during long winters when the wind-chill factor can reach 60 degrees below zero. Take a few minutes to think about the various ways in which your child protection work might be affected in this situation by context. What comes to mind?

Power

Power is the third key concept. Numerous scholars have investigated its meaning and proposed interpretations ranging from the abstract to the practical. Generally, the idea of power embodies purpose or intent. Dennis Wrong (1995, p. 2) defines power as the "capacity of some persons to produce intended and foreseen effects on others." Some have viewed power from a standpoint of exclusion, domination, and repression. However, Homan (2004, p. 43) argues that, "Power is not to be confused with dominance. Power is based on the ability to provoke a response. Power can be used to dominate, to collaborate, or to educate." Power can be manipulative but it does not have to be. Michel Foucault (1979) describes power as follows:

> What gives power its hold, what makes it accepted, is quite simply the fact that it does not simply weigh like a force that says no, but that it runs through, and it produces things, it induces pleasure, it forms knowledge, it produces discourse; it must be considered as a productive network which runs through the entire social body much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression. (p. 36)

There are many ways to conceptualize power. French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1984) writes about the importance of symbolic power. He describes symbolic power as the power to impose the principles of the construction of reality

on others. He argues that this is a key aspect of political power. Others have pointed to the power of language and rhetoric, the power of emotion, and the power of collective memory as sources for resistance and motive forces for action on the part of people in less powerful positions (Freire, 1990; Gramsci, 1987, Kelly & Sewell, 1988; Tonn, 1996). Through a workshop they conducted in Tapalehui, Mexico, Janet Townsend and her colleagues learned that poor, rural Mexican women had something to say about power (Townsend, Zapata, Rowlands, Alberti & Mercado, 1999). The women, activists in grassroots organizations, joined academic women to discuss women's power, roads to activism, and possibilities for transformative social practice. Drawing from the women's on-the-ground experience, the authors identified four forms of power: (1) power over, (2) power from within, (3) power with, and (4) power to do. They describe *power over* as institutional and personal forms and practices of oppression that often serve as poor women's first reference point in discussion of empowerment. As women get out of their houses and come together to share their struggles and hopes with other women, they begin to discover the *power from within*. They discover *power with* others as they organize to address the conditions that affect their lives. They articulate the *power to do* in concrete, material terms, such as making money, designing projects, and getting funding. Through close attention to accounts of lived experience, the authors are able to present a nuanced view of the ways in which poor rural women give meaning to and negotiate the relations of power that affect their lives.

Four Forms of Power

(1) power over
(2) power from within
(3) power with
(4) power to do

What meaning does power have for you? Who or what has the power to affect your own or another's behavior? How is power created, produced, and legitimized, and what are the varied ways in which it can be used? How might power influence the nature of the relationships you form in social work practice with those with whom you work and those for whom you work?

Meanings of Power

ACTION

As a class, take turns bringing in images of what power means to you. The images may be of your own creation, photos or texts from magazines, a collage, and so forth. Describe these images in class, place them in a container with other classmates' contributions, and pass the container on to a classmate. The classmate has the responsibility of carrying the container home, adding his or her own image, and bringing the image and container back to the next class meeting. At the end of the term, as a class, engage in a collective decision-making process regarding what you wish to do with the images. For example, you could design a collage incorporating all of the images and hang it in a public place where it may evoke further dialogue. The exercise creates an opportunity to reflect on both individual and collective representations of power. It demands responsibility on the part of the participants, and it opens discussion regarding many forms of power.

Take a moment to think about how these understandings of power might translate into your work as a social worker. What does power mean to the social worker? Is it about control or being in charge? Does it connote expert knowledge or knowing what is right for others? To what forms and sources of power might you have access as a social worker? What sorts of cautions and challenges does power evoke in practice? Can you think of examples from social work that illustrate Townsend et al.'s notions of power over, power from within, power with, and power to do?

History

History is the fourth key concept. The dictionary defines history as "a chronological record of significant events, as of the life or development of a people or institution, often including an explanation of or commentary on those events" (American Heritage Dictionary, 2000). Jenkins (1995, pp. 20-21) describes history as being composed of individual discrete facts that paint a "picture of the past" made up of the impressions of the historian. History is also defined as a story or a tale, hinting that it might fall somewhat short on truth value. This latter definition gets at the socially constructed, mutually constituted nature of knowledge (Gergen, 1999), which suggests that to understand history, it is important to know the storyteller. Clearly these definitions indicate that history is much more than an objective reporting of the facts.

Howard Zinn (1995, pp. 7-9) illustrates well the inescapable ideological presence of the historian in *A People's History of the United States*. For example, he recounts the European invasion of the Indian settlements in the Americas and the heroizing of Christopher Columbus in the stories of history read by school children. Forgotten in most historical reports is an alternative story of America's discovery, one less inclined to see the genocide of Indian people and their culture as a reasonable price to pay for progress (p. 9). Zinn (1995) suggests that the closest we can come to objectively reporting the past is to consider all the various subjectivities in a situation. These subjectivities include the opinions, beliefs, and perceptions of the historian. Carr (1961) also reminds us of the importance of the historian and the historian's social and historical background when he tells us, ". . . the facts of history never come to us 'pure,' since they do not and cannot exist in a pure form; they are always refracted through the mind of the recorder" (p. 16). Innumerable factors affect perceptions. These include gender, race, class, religion, sexual orientation, and political ideology, to name a few. Whereas the historian may be able to accurately report chronology, that is when a specific event occurred, where it occurred, and the players involved, the event is storied through the layered nuance of the historian's perspective. History, then, is at best a partial perspective.

Paulo Freire (1990, p. 9) adds yet another dimension to the meaning of history and understands it as a critical factor in shaping the work of justice-oriented social workers. He envisions ordinary people as active players in its creation. Freire contends that we are historical beings, meaning that, unlike animals, we are conscious of time and our location in time. History is a human creation and we are continually making history and being shaped by history:

> As I perceive history, it is not something that happens necessarily, but something that will be made, can be made, that one can make or refrain from making. I recognize, therefore, the importance of the role of the subjective in the process of making history or of being made by history. And this, then, gives me a critical optimism that has nothing to do with history marching on without men, without women, that considers history outside. No, history is not this. History is made by us, and as we make it, we are made and remade by it. (Freire, 1974, pp. 3-4)

Freire's understanding of history resonates with that of the members of the Kensington Welfare Rights Union, a Philadelphia-based poor people's organization dedicated to ending poverty and championing economic human rights. They state, "We are readers of history. Especially for leaders and organizers from the ranks of the poor, reading and interpreting history is a matter of survival" (Baptist & Bricker-Jenkins, 2002, p. 197). This idea that we are all makers of history opens up spaces of possibility and hope as people engage with life to create history and be created by history. With these definitions in mind, let us consider why history is important to our work as social workers. The following sidebar offers an opportunity to reflect on why history matters.

REFLECTION : **Connecting with History**

Take a moment to think about the life experiences that have shaped your decision to become a social worker. Share your story with fellow students in pairs or in small groups. When did you decide to become a social worker? What social, political, economic, familial, or cultural circumstances, situations, or events shaped your decision? What other careers had you considered? What made you change your mind? Or perhaps you are still undecided about your career goal. As you share your story with other classmates, do you discover similar influences that affected your decisions to become social workers? What do you notice about the histories of other students that differ from your own? How might history influence the way in which social work is practiced? Now take a moment to think of an important historical event occurring at the time of your birth, or during your formative years, for example, threat of nuclear war, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Vietnam War, the "first" Gulf War, President Kennedy's assassination, the Challenger explosion, the passage of *Roe v. Wade*, or the September 11th attack on the World Trade Center. What historical events stand out, and how have they affected your way of perceiving or acting in the world? How might a historical perspective be helpful to your work as a social worker? Take a moment to write down a few reasons and discuss them with others.

Possibility

Possibility is the fifth key concept. This concept asks us to consider what is historically possible and to move beyond the past and the present to contemplate alternatives for the future. A sense of possibility enables us to look at what has been done, what can be done, and what can exist. It engages us in reflection, and helps us formulate a vision of something different. It is a way to get unstuck from deterministic, fatalistic thinking of "that which has been will always be." As historian E. P. Thompson reminds us, it is possible for people to make something of themselves other than what history has made of them (Thompson, 1966).

Possibility challenges us to think differently about practices, people, and programs. It draws attention to human *agency*, or the capacity to act in the world as intentional, meaning-making beings, whose actions are shaped and constrained, but never fully determined by life circumstances. Australian social work educators Anthony Kelly and Sandra Sewell (1988) write about "a trialectic logic," or a logic of possibility, as a key part of community building. They write: "The task of a trialectic logic is to grasp a sense of wholeness which emerges from at least three sets of possible relationships among factors. . . it is out of the context of their

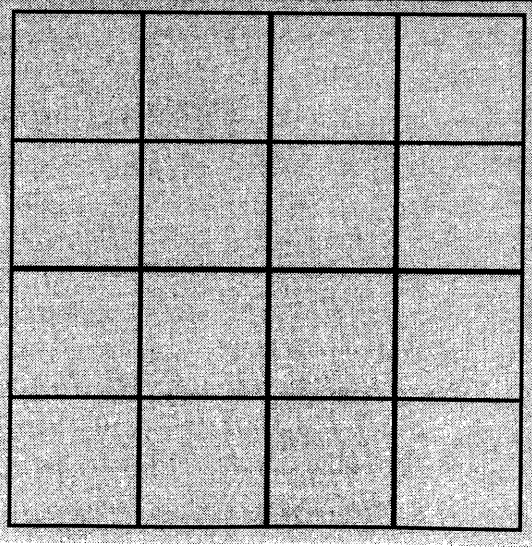
interdependent relationships that new insights into social realities can emerge, and hence new ways to solve problems" (pp. 22-23). As we expand our possibilities for thinking, we may change the way a problem is perceived and envision new possibilities for action. Kelly and Sewell exemplify the logic of possibility with the title of their book, *With Head, Heart and Hand.* They write,

> Knowing, feeling and doing describe three human capacities, each one important in itself. No one of these, by itself and without addition of the other two is enough. Even taken in pairs, no two are sufficient without the third:
>
> - **head and hand** (without **heart)** is a familiar combination in public life—the politician or public administrator whose feelings are blocked, or considered irrelevant;
> - **heart and hand** (without **head**) leads to impulsive and undisciplined action;
> - **head and heart** (without **hand)** leaves us stuck with knowledge and good intentions, but with no action direction to pursue.
>
> To bring all three together, in a piece of work or in a relationship or to an understanding of our context, is to expand a social reality to at least three factors. **Head, heart** and **hand** points to a quality of wholeness—even if an attempt at wholeness—in life and work. (pp. 23-24)

It is this spirit of hope and sense of possibility that we wish to infuse in the thinking and practice of social justice work. Throughout the text we will share the stories of courage and inspiration from people who have confronted contradictions and worked to transform oppressive life circumstances into spaces of hope, places of possibility, and bases for critical and creative action.

REFLECTION : Probing the Possibilities

Take a close look at this figure. How many squares do you see? Now get together with a classmate. Compare numbers and the ways you counted the squares. Working together, can you expand the possibilities and find more squares? What are some other concrete examples of expanding the possibilities once you are able to see things from another perspective?



Putting It All Together

Meaning, context, power, history, and possibility and the ways in which they interrelate provide a framework for critical analysis (see Figure 2.3). They provoke us to question our assumptions about reality and make us look at how certain assumptions gain currency at certain moments in time. As a foundation for social justice-oriented social work practice these key concepts invite us to question received truths. We use them as a point of departure and a framework for reflection. How are certain ideas accepted as true? How have those ideas changed over time? What evidence is brought to bear to support their truth claims? What goes without saying in our assumptions and actions? How do rather arbitrary ideas about what constitute "correct" social relationships and behaviors, values, and concepts come to be seen as "natural" and "true"?

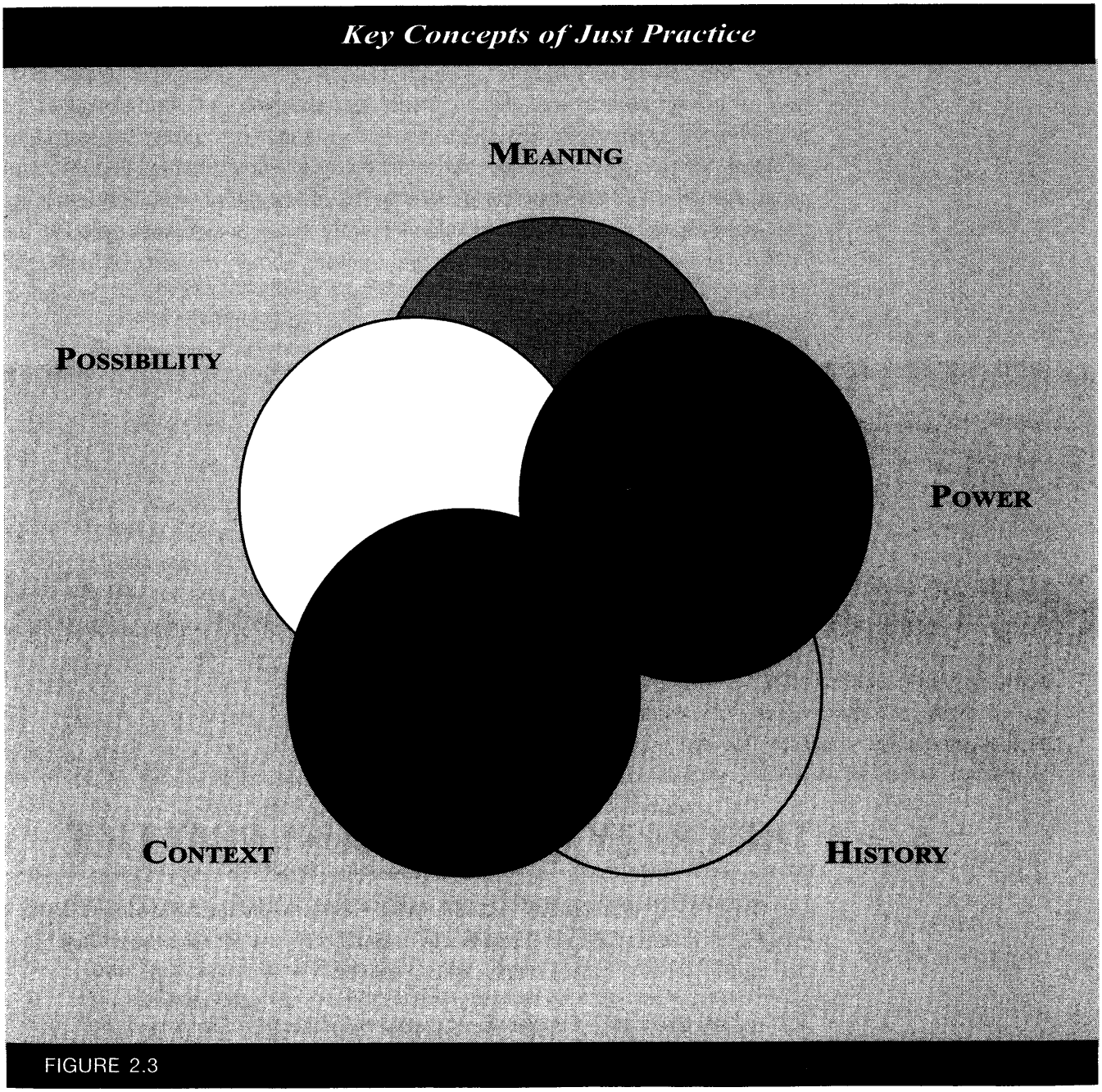


FIGURE 2.3

Think for a moment about some of the arbitrary concepts that shape the way we think and act in the world. For example, concepts of time and money, the side of the road on which one drives, or the people one considers to be family. Over time, these arbitrary and variable concepts have become structured, institutionalized, and rule-bound in differing sociocultural contexts. They have become infused with meaning. We have been learning about and absorbing those meanings just like the air we breathe since infancy. We have learned some of these rules so well that they seem natural, given, and absolutely true. They are so much a part of our experience that they go without saying. If we encounter someone who lives by a different set of rules, our response is often to think that her rules are wrong while ours are right. In other words, the deep meanings of these taken-for-granted certainties have become intertwined with our power of judgment and our valuing of good and bad or right and wrong.

Social justice work challenges us to examine the social construction of reality, that is, the ways we use our cultural capacities to give *meaning* to social experience. It guides us to look at the *context* of social problems and question the relations of *power*, domination, and inequality that shape the way knowledge of the world is produced and whose view counts. It forces us to recognize the importance of *history* and a historical perspective to provide a window into how definitions of social problems and the structuring and shaping of institutions and individuals are time-specific and contextually embedded. Finally, social justice work opens up the *possibility* for new ways of looking at and thinking about programs, policies, and practices, and to envision the people with whom we work and ourselves as active participants in social transformation toward a just world.

REFLECTION : **The Five Key Concepts**

Take a minute to reflect on something that is very meaningful to you. Perhaps it is a photo or letter that brings to mind a special person or event. Maybe it is a small daily ritual practiced with people you love, such as kissing your children goodnight. Or it might be a family or religious celebration in which you participate or a routine that is practically a part of who you are. Think about the meaning you give to and take from this object or action. How has that meaning been shaped? What are the contexts or the events and circumstances surrounding this object or action? Have these changed over time? Imagine the loss of this meaningful part of your life. Who or what might have the power to take it from you? How might you respond? These are questions about meaning, context, power, history, and possibility. We ask that you hold on to the images from this exercise as one way of staying personally connected to the key concepts of social justice work.

THE CRAZY QUILT OF JUST PRACTICE

University of Montana MSW alumna Annie Kaylor wrote the following reflection essay after reading Chapter 2 and being introduced to the five themes of Just Practice during her first semester in graduate school.

> *My great-grandmother held a crazy quilt and told a story of my family by pointing to each piece of fabric and explaining where each piece came from. A crazy quilt is created by small sections of*

scrap fabric and old clothing that are pieced together to create a beautiful quilt. One piece of the quilt was from her mother's apron, parts of a worn baby blanket, and a section of her father's work shirt. Each small piece told a story that became part of a large story of my family. Such are the concepts of meaning, context, power, and history that come together to create unique "quilts" of our lives to explain our story and where we dream of being in the future.

Just Practice describes the five key concepts of social work in separate sections, but after reading and contemplating the text it is apparent that the concepts overlap and work together. The cover of our textbook [1st Edition] shows the key concepts of social work as puzzle pieces that fit together. I propose that the five key concepts are more like pieces in a crazy quilt; a quilt is not as rigid as a puzzle and is freer flowing. A quilt can wrap around a person to show, "This is who I am and where I come from." I think back to our first day of orientation several weeks ago when we all came together for the first time. We each in a sense wore our "quilts" around us to show others our story and how we came to be at the orientation.

The first key concept listed in the text is meaning. The text states that one needs to have self-reflection and examination to search for meaning. I pose an additional need for a person to move outside one's comfort zone and really challenge oneself and face adversity. A person should live in and be exposed to poverty and oppression firsthand in order to be able to fully relate to others in those situations. Actually living the experience will assist an individual to develop critical questions and more feasible solutions to the social problems in our society. In addition, a person experiences immense personal growth when faced with adversity. During my 2 years in the volunteer service, I lived in poverty, faced oppression, and experienced discrimination. These experiences added to my "quilt" and help me to understand the struggles my clients face.

The concept of context helps one to understand the social, political, economic, and cultural aspects of where a person comes from. The text states that policies are cultural snapshots. This statement rings true with Child and Family Services' (CFS) policy that emphasizes prioritizing the placement of children with relatives. This allows the children to be reared in their culture and ensures their family's values and traditions are passed on to the next generation. In a recent experience, CFS policy directed me to go against the recommendations of multiple professionals on a treatment team by placing the children with relatives who were not as skilled as other therapeutic foster family options. The State of Montana recognizes the importance of family preservation and this is apparent in policy at CFS.

The key concept of power has many different definitions and may be interpreted in a positive or negative manner. I have a very broad scope of power in my life. In my position as a case manager at CFS, I have the power to remove children from abusive situations. I also have the power to work with birth parents and empower them to seek change in their lives to be reunited with their children. I chose to use my power in my position to "empower" my clients by using a family-focused and strengths-based approach. In my lifetime, I have witnessed an individual having power over another person in a domestic violence dispute, an individual having power from within to overcome an addiction to alcohol, power with to organize community members to protest violence, and an individual with the power to do what is necessary by completing a treatment plan and being reunited with her children.

The text states that history paints a "picture of the past." In my mind, a person's whole "quilt" speaks of her history. The "quilt" tells of the context from which a person comes, the meaning she has found in life and the power struggles she has faced. We as social workers need to understand a client's history or "quilt." I have worked with many clients who shared with me their life stories of growing up in dysfunctional families or being in foster care themselves. One cannot practice good social work without knowing the possible generations of family problems that have influenced the individual. One needs to look to the root of the problem to be able to successfully work with a client. We must know a client's history to empower the person to make changes and move forward.

The fifth concept of possibility asks us to look beyond the past and present to what the future may hold. Possibility is interconnected with meaning, context, power, and history because one must know where she comes from and who she is to be able to move forward and plan for the future. When we engage clients in working on treatment plans, we are looking at the root of the problems but also to the future by planning for reunification and success of the parents. Possibility is the part of the "quilt" that one may picture in his mind and plan for but is not actually sewn to his "quilt" yet because he has not yet lived the experience.

Meaning, context, power, history, and possibility: Five basic words, yet they mean so much to the profession of social work. In my interpretation, these key concepts come together to form a figurative "quilt" of each person's life. The experiences and life histories of individuals are pieced together in a "quilt" to tell a story. Everyone has a "quilt" to share, and we cannot practice just social work without seeing and understanding another person's "quilt."

CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter we have examined the meanings of social work and social justice and the relationship between them. We have attempted to expand our thinking on the meaning of social work by looking beyond U.S. borders. We have argued that social justice work demands that we take questions of difference, inequality, and oppression seriously. In so doing, we are challenged to probe the ways in which differences are produced and how they map on to values. We have introduced five key concepts that constitute the Just Practice Framework, and we have offered opportunities for both action and reflection. We close this chapter with a powerful essay by John Brown Childs that provides an opportunity to reflect on the themes of meaning, context, power, history, and possibility. In Chapter 3 we turn to questions of history.

Teaching-Learning Resource: Reflections on the Themes of Meaning, Context, Power, History, and Possibility

The following essay poignantly addresses the themes of meaning, context, power, history, and possibility that are at the heart of social justice work. Take a moment to read and reflect on John Brown Childs' story. What feelings does the story evoke? How does he challenge dominant views of "race" and "difference"? What lessons for social justice work can be learned?[8]

Red Clay, Blue Hills: In Honor of My Ancestors

by John Brown Childs

> In every place visited among the Sakalava we found events and names recalled by tradition still living in memory... we have heard the Sakalava invoke these names in all important activities of their social life and recall with pride these events...
>
> Charles Guillain (1845), cited in Raymond K. Kent, *Early Kingdoms in Madagascar, 1500-1700*

I must speak about my ancestors. It is from them that I have received the desire to contribute to the best of my ability to what I hope is constructive cooperation leading to justice, equality, and peace in the world. I owe it to them to make these comments. What I say in these pages flows from two great currents, the African and the Native American, whose confluence runs through my family and infuses my spirit today. In the 1990s, when I went to visit my family in Marion, Alabama, my cousin Arthur Childs, who had served as a lieutenant in World War II in Burma, and who was the family storyteller, took me immediately to the cemetery, where in the midst of red clay dust he told me the histories of those who had passed on.

The African-Malayo grandmother of my grandmother of my grandmother of my grandmother, known as The Princess to her captors, was born in Madagascar, an island peopled by populations from the Pacific and Africa. In 1749, the Princess was a member of a Madagascan delegation on board a French ship bound for France, where she apparently was to go to convent school. Their ship was captured by English privateers. All the Madagascans on board were captured and sold into slavery in the English colonies. My ancestress found herself in chains, being sold as property to a Thomas Burke, a leading figure in North Carolina government, to be given as a wedding present for his new wife at a wedding ceremony in Norfolk, Virginia (Bond, 1972, 22). The story handed down within both the Burke family and my relations is that when "the Princess was brought first to the Virginia plantation where she began her career as a slave, the other enslaved Africans acknowledged her royal origin and gave her the respect due to one of her background" (Bond, 1972, 23).

The descendants of the Princess established their families in the red clay country of Marion, where they (as property of whites) had been transferred through the infamous network of the slave trade. Marion, in Perry County, Alabama, has for a long time been a dynamic wellspring in southern African-American life. Marion is where my father's forebears, Stephen Childs and family, created the Childs Bakers and Confectioners, Growers, and Shippers store on Main Street. This store was an economic bulwark of the African American community there. My father, born in the heart of what had been the slave-holding region of the southern United States, was named after John Brown, the revolutionary fighter who gave his life in the battle against slavery.

Marion is where James Childs and nine other African-Americans, newly liberated from slavery after the Civil War, established the first African American school, The Lincoln Normal School, in the late 1860's...

The school's teachers were housed in a building that had been taken away from the Ku Klux Klan, whose aim was to keep people of African descent in subordination and indignity...

Lincoln Normal School went on to become an influential African-American educational institution. Dr. Horace Mann Bond noted the broad community significance of the Perry Country Lincoln Normal School in his study of Black American Scholars, which analyzes the roots of southern African-Americans holding Ph.Ds after the Civil War...

Among my relatives influenced by Lincoln Normal was William Hastie, a civil rights legal advocate and the first African-American federal circuit court of appeals judge, as well as an important participant in President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "Black Cabinet." In 1943 Hastie resigned a government position as assistant to the U.S. Secretary of War to protest over racial segregation of the African-Americans in the U.S. military.

My Childs family relations, along with other African Americans in Marion, worked in the midst of Ku Klux Klan country, to create Lincoln Normal School as a sustaining community in the midst of a dangerous, often lethal environment of racial oppression. They sought to use their roots in the rural and small-town Deep South as a basis for construction of a bastion of justice and dignity.

I was born in 1942 in the Roxbury ghetto of Boston, Massachusetts. As a small child I lived in a housing project called Bataan Court. My birthplace is only a few miles north of a state recreational park; there, in the Blue Hills is a body of water called by its Native American name *Punkapoag*, which means "the Place of the Fresh Water Pond." Punkapoag is where some of my mother's Native-American ancestors once lived. My relations were members of the Algonkian confederacy known as the Massachusetts—or to be more precise, *Massachuseuck*, which means "The Place of the Big Hills." The Massachusetts nation, like many Native American nations, was an egalitarian confederacy comprising several communi-

ties such as the Punkapoag, the Nipmuck, and Neponset, and the Wesaguset.[1]

Closely related neighbors of the Wampanoag ("The People of the Dawn"), who, as with the Nipmuck ("The People of the Fresh Water Place") today are vibrant communities in Massachusetts, these ancestors of mine encountered Europeans under the command of Giovanni de Verrazano in 1524. Verrazano described the Massachusett as a "most beautiful" people who were "sweet and gentle, very like the manner of the ancients." They were, he observed, expert sailors who can "go to sea without any danger" in boats made "with admirable skill" (Brasser, 1978, p. 78). Almost one hundred years later, in 1614, Captain John Smith, while "visiting" the Massachusett, described their land as " the paradice [sic] of all these parts" (Salwen, 1978, p. 170). This paradise was soon decimated by the wave of epidemics that ravaged much of new England as larger ships carrying more Europeans brought diseases such as smallpox, to which native peoples had no immunity...

The Massachusetts people were particularly hard hit this way. Their population plummeted from an estimated thirty thousand to a few hundred by the mid 1650s. By that time, the surviving members of those nations that had been undermined were forcibly concentrated into small villages called "Praying Towns" where they were supposed to adapt to and adopt Christianity. One of these towns was Punkapoag, originally the main home of the Massachusetts, but later turned into a mix of concentration camp/ refugee center...

Many of the Praying Town inhabitants, the so-called Praying Indians, although they provided men to serve in colonial militias (against the French) were attacked, dispersed and killed. For those who survived, and for their descendants, such atrocities clearly drew the final bloody message that their ancient homelands were no longer the richly textured environments of deeply rooted free-life, but had to a large degree become the places of tears. Many Narragansett, Pequod, Mohegan, Massachusett, and other natives were now exiles "in the land of the free" (Lyons, 1992). As a coherent cultural entity, the Punkapoag community of the Massachusett confederacy, with it members forced into exile and finding intermarriage with other peoples the only means of survival, ceased to exist as a social whole.

Responding to the long decades of cultural erosion and terrorism directed against them, a gathering of Christian native peoples, including some of my ancestors, under the leadership of Rev. Samson Occom—a Mohegan man and a Presbyterian minister who had struggled against great odds to attain his "calling"—sought and were generously given land by the Oneida nation in what in now New York State. It was there, in a 1774 ceremony, that they were adopted as "the younger brothers and sisters" of the Oneida.

My Native American ancestors, whose family name had become Burr, intermarried with the Oneida. Eventually, in the early 1800s, they moved back to their ancestral homeland of Massachusetts (see Doughton, 1998). Eli and Saloma Burr, my great, great, great grandfather and grandmother,

settled in the western part of Massachusetts near Springfield. Eli and Saloma, and their children Vianna, Fidelia, Alonzo, and Albert, are listed in the 1868 Massachusetts State "Indian" census as Oneida people. Eli's grandfather has been an "Oneida chief" according to these state records. Eli and Saloma's children married African-Americans, including Zebadee Carl Talbott, a sharpshooter and "one of the best pistol shots in the country" according to a *Springfield Republican* report. One of the grandchildren, James Burr, became well known as an African-American inventor.

A 1915 obituary in the Massachusetts *Springfield Republican* newspaper noting the death of one of their grandsons, John Burr, contains information that could have only come from the Burrs, namely, that his ancestors were originally from "Ponkapog," Massachusetts, and that they had been adopted by the Oneida in the 1700s. So, well over 100 years after their ancestors had left New England for the Oneida sanctuary of Brothertown, the Burrs still carried the memories both of their Massachusetts origins and of the importance of their adoptive Oneida homeland.

From these currents of Massachusueck/Brothertown-Oneida and Africa came my mother Dorothy Pettyjohn, who was born in Amherst, Massachusetts. She became a teacher who, as a young woman, went to "Cotton Valley" in Alabama of the 1930s to teach in a school for impoverished rural African-American children not far from Marion and its Lincoln Normal School. It was there that she met and married my father. So, the waves of oppression, crashing over many peoples, driven from their land, forged many of them into complex syntheses of memory and belonging that link African and Native America for me.

In 1835, Alexis de Tocqueville's soon to be famous, vast overview of the young United States, entitled, *Democracy in America*, was published. Among his otherwise astute descriptions based on his travels in "America," Tocqueville inaccurately pictures what he calls "the three races of the United States." These are, he says, "the white or European, the Negro, and the Indian" which he claims are always distinctly separate populations. Concerning "the Negro" and "the Indian" he writes that these "two unhappy races have nothing in common, neither birth, nor features, nor language, nor habits" (1954, p. 343; for an epic depiction of the cross-currents created by oppression in the Americas, see Galeano, 1985).

If this assertion by Tocqueville were true, then I could not exist, given my African and Native American currents that have flowed together for more than two hundred years. My family relations cannot be compartmentalized into these rigid sealed-off categories such as those suggested by Tocqueville. Nor can the depths of their courage be plumbed by his superficial description of the "unhappy races," no matter how terrible their tribulations as they have flowed through so many valleys of oppression. Today I recognize that from Punkapoag in Massachusetts, and Brothertown in New York State, to Lincoln Normal School in Alabama, my relations were among those establishing roots in what they hoped would be sustaining

communities that could buffer people against the forces of hatred while offering solid ground for justice and dignity. I know that my connection to my ancestors is not only genealogical, as important as that is. My connection to them is also that of the spirit. I have for many years worked alongside those trying to create places of freedom from injustice. I continue to do so today. I now understand, after years of my own internal development, with guidance from elders and friends, that this work of mine is propelled by those currents flowing from the springing hopes of my ancestors.

I do not feel like one of those "crossing border hybrids," now so much discussed by scholars who examine post-modernity. Nor does the older Latin American term "Zambo" for "half Black/ half Indian," describe how I know myself. It is not in such a divided fashion that I recognize my existence. To the contrary, in the language of my Algonkian ancestors, *Noteshem*—I am a man—who stands at *newishewannock,* "the place between two strong currents." Without these two distinct streams there can be no such "in-between place" to be named as such. But, at the same time, this place is real and complete unto itself. In the same way, I emerge a full man, not a simple bifurcated halfling, from the two strong currents of Africa and native America. It is this *newishewannock* that marks the place of my spirit, and that propels me today.

---

[9] Such confederacies were fluid, and their composition could change over time.

References:

Bond, Horace Mann. *Black American Scholars: A Study of their Origins.* 1972, Detroit, Mich: Balamp.

Brasser, T.J. "Early Indian-European contacts," In *Handbook of North American Indians,* 1978, ed. Bruce Trigger, et al. Washington D.C., Smithsonian Press.

Doughton, Thomas, L. "Unseen Neighbors: Native Americans of Central Massachusetts: A People Who had 'Vanished.'" In *After King Philip's War: Presence and Persistence in Indian New England,* 1998, ed. Colin G. Calloway. Hanover, N.H.: University Presses of New England.

Galeano, Eduardo. *Memory of Fire* (3 volumes), 1985. New York: Pantheon.

Kent, Raymond K. *Early Kingdoms in Madagascar, 1500-1700,* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Lyons, Oren. "The American Indian in the Past." In *Exiled in the Land of the Free: Democracy, Indian Nations, and the U.S. Constitution,* 1992, ed. Oren Lyons et al. Santa Fe: Clear Light.

Salwen, Bert. "Indians of Southern New England and Long Island, Early Period." In *Handbook of North American Indians,* 1978, ed. Bruce Trigger et al. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution.

Tocqueville Alexis de. *Democracy in America.* 1960, New York: Vintage.

Questions for Discussion

1. What insight can be gained from an understanding of social work beyond U.S. borders?

2. What are some social justice issues affecting residents of your community? What understandings of social justice stem from these issues?

3. In what ways have you experienced the valuing and devaluing of difference?

4. What challenges does the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (Appendix A) pose for social work? What are some ways in which you would incorporate UDHR principles into your practice of social justice work?

5. How do you make sense of the key concepts of meaning, context, power, history, and possibility through your reading of John Brown Childs' story of "Red Clay, Blue Hills: In Honor of My Ancestors"?

Suggested Readings

DuBois, W.E.B. (1989). *The souls of black folks.* New York: Bantam.(Originally published in 1903)

Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, 1972-1980.* (Ed. and Trans. C. Gordon). New York: Pantheon.

Freire, P. (1974). *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* New York: Seabury Press/Continuum.

Giddens, A. (1979). *Central problems in social theory: Action, structure, and contradiction in social analysis.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Giroux, H. (1981). *Ideology, culture & the process of schooling.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the prison notebooks.* New York: International.

Hill Collins, P. (1990). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment.* Boston: Unwin Hyman.

hooks, b. (1994). *Feminist theory from margin to center.* Boston: South End Press.

Horton, M. (with Judith Kohl and Herbert Kohl). (1998). *The long haul: An autobiography.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Mohanty, C. (1991). Under western eyes: Feminist scholarship and colonialist discourses. In C. Mohanty, A. Russo, & L. Torres (Eds.), *Third world women and the politics of feminism* (pp. 51-80). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Ortner, S. (1989). *High religion: A cultural and political history of Sherpa Buddhism.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Smith, D. (1987). *The everyday world as problematic.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Smith, L. Tuhiwai (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples.* London: Zed Books.

Young, I. M. (1990). *Justice and the politics of difference.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

End Notes

[1] From Ramsey Clark (1988) Social justice and issues of human rights in the international context. In D. S. Sanders & J. Fischer (Eds.), *Visions for the future: Social work and the Pacific Asian perspective* (pp. 3-10). Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

[2] TANF is the title of the time-limited public assistance program that replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) as a result of the 1996 welfare reform in the U.S. TANF is not an entitlement program. The program entails work requirements and places a cap on benefit eligibility.

[3] According to the IFSW website (www.ifsw.org): "This international definition of the social work profession replaces the IFSW definition adopted in 1982. It is understood that social work in the 21st century is dynamic and evolving, and therefore no definition should be regarded as exhaustive." The definition was adopted by the General Meeting of the International Federation of Social Workers, Montreal, Canada, July, 2000.

[4] Key for countries: Canada, Sweden, India, Japan, and Chile.

[5] These points are drawn from U.S. Catholic Bishops (1986). *Economic justice for all: Pastoral letter on Catholic social teaching and the U.S. economy.* The excerpts quoted here correspond to points 69, 70, 71, and 72 in the Pastoral Letter.

[6] For a more thorough discussion of Rawls' concept of distributive justice and its relation to social work see Jerome Carl Wakefield's important articles "Psychotherapy, Distributive Justice, and Social Work," Parts I and II, *Social Service Review*, 62(2/3), 1988.

[7] This table is based on Van Soest and Garcia's discussion in *Diversity Education for Social Justice* (2003, pp. 44-50).

[8] Permission to reprint this essay courtesy of John Brown Childs.