



---

TEACHING INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL WORK: A Guiding Framework

Author(s): Samantha Wehbi

Source: *Canadian Social Work Review / Revue canadienne de service social*, Vol. 25, No. 2, International social work / Le service social international Conceptual, Practice, and Research Issues / Enjeux reliés aux concepts, à la pratique et à la recherche (2008), pp. 117-132

Published by: [Canadian Association for Social Work Education \(CASWE\)](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41669889>

Accessed: 24/02/2014 23:21

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Canadian Association for Social Work Education (CASWE) is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Canadian Social Work Review / Revue canadienne de service social*.

<http://www.jstor.org>



---

## TEACHING INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL WORK

### A Guiding Framework

*Samantha Wehbi*

**Abstract:** The push to internationalize the social work curriculum has become increasingly pronounced, as evidenced by scholarship in Canada and elsewhere. How do we include an international perspective in social work education without reproducing inequitable North-South relations? The author proposes a framework to guide teaching international social work, composed of four interconnected components: the importance of context; power across nations; power within nations; and locating sites of resistance and alliances. As examples from the classroom show, these components, taken together, can be used to analyse a social issue from an anti-oppressive perspective so that interventions may reinforce the principles of social justice, human rights, and equity. While the focus here is on teaching, the framework is also potentially useful to analyse issues that may confront social workers in their practice.

**Abrégé :** La volonté d'internationaliser l'enseignement du service social ne cesse de s'accroître, comme en témoignent la littérature en service social au Canada et à l'étranger. Comment intègre-t-on la dimension internationale à l'enseignement du service social sans reproduire le rapport d'iniquité entre le Nord et le Sud? L'auteur propose un cadre d'orientation à quatre volets de l'enseignement du service social : l'importance du contexte; le pouvoir entre les nations; le pouvoir à l'intérieur des nations; et la délimitation des points de résistance et d'alliance. Ainsi que l'illustrent des exemples en classe, ces composantes, une fois conjuguées, peuvent être utilisées pour faire l'analyse d'une question sociale dans l'optique de la lutte à l'oppression de façon à ce que les interventions puissent donner plus de poids aux principes de la justice sociale, des droits de la personne et de l'équité. Bien qu'en l'occurrence, l'accent soit mis sur l'enseignement, le cadre pourrait peut-être se révéler utile pour analyser les enjeux susceptibles d'interpeller les travailleurs sociaux dans l'exercice de leur profession.

---

*Samantha Wehbi is assistant professor in the School of Social Work at Ryerson University.*

**Canadian Social Work Review, Volume 25, Number 2 (2008) / Revue canadienne de service social, volume 25, numéro 2 (2008)**

Printed in Canada / Imprimé au Canada

*THE PUSH* to internationalize the social work curriculum has become increasingly pronounced, as evidenced by scholarship in Canada and elsewhere (for example, Boyle & Barranti, 1999; Boyle, Nackerud & Kilpatrick, 1999; Heron, 2005; Johnson, 1999, 2004; Traub-Werner, Shera, Villa & Peon, 2000). Nagy and Falk (2000) contend that we can no longer “escape our increasing interdependence” (p. 49) and argue for the development of an international consciousness in the social work profession, including social work education. Similarly, Caragata and Sanchez (2002) note the increasing interdependence of nations and peoples and suggest that the internationalization of social work practice and education has become an “imperative” (p. 236). Indeed, as noted by Healy (2001) in her discussion of social work education, “In designing curriculum for the future, the question should not be whether to include international perspectives in social work education; rather, one should ask how educators could conceive of teaching only a nation-specific curriculum” (p. 256).

I argue that the corollary question should be: how do we include an international perspective without reproducing inequitable North/South relations? Here, North and South are used to denote the “broad division of countries in relation to resources and power” (Stubbs, 1999, p. 259). As we navigate the terrain of the internationalization of our curricula, we need to steer clear of the quicksand of diversity and good intentions; as Razack (2002) contends, social work’s focus on “caring” with less attention paid to a critical examination of North/South relations has contributed to “benevolent imperialism” (p. 253). Similarly, Dominelli (2005) alerts us to the potential of social work to reproduce social injustice in our international involvement. Indeed, without a critical theoretical framework that consistently guides curriculum development, we are subject to reproducing these inequities. However, as Midgley (2001) has argued, social workers are “sharply divided” (p. 22) in terms of several key issues related to international social work, including a position regarding the role of the profession and its commitment to social change. Despite these differences, I argue for the need to underpin international social work education with a theoretical framework that emphasizes the profession’s commitment to tackling, as opposed to reproducing, global social injustices (Moldovan & Moyo, 2007).

The framework proposed here as a guide to teaching international social work is intended to contribute to the conceptual base of the discussion on the internationalization of social work education. Composed of four interconnected components, it is based on a variety of sources including my reflections on several years of teaching an international social work course (BSW/MSW levels) at two Canadian universities and my experience as a field liaison for BSW students undertaking international social work placements. It should be noted that the students in these

courses and placements were diverse in terms of social location and included mature students with several years of social work practice experience as well as students with no practice background. Some of these students had already undertaken international placements or had volunteered internationally, while others had not yet done so. For some students, information about the countries and the issues they discussed was based on personal knowledge, either because they themselves were originally from the countries under discussion or because of previous practice experience. In other instances, information was gained through library research, guest speakers, course lectures, and student presentations, as well as communication with social workers and social work organizations from the countries in question.

This discussion is also based on my practice experience of global social justice issues in Canada and the South. My own social location as an Arab, Muslim, feminist academic living in the North also informs the discussion on North/South relations. As Bush (2006) maintains, our interpretations of power issues within world relations are dependent on our relative position within the broader historical and contemporary context of these relations; it is therefore important for me to acknowledge the impact of my social location on this analysis.

The proposed framework is unique in the sense that it is a cohesive set of components that could be used as an analytic tool. While the ideas are not original, I have been able to weave them together to provide students with a tool to guide their thinking on international issues; this same framework guides classroom discussions and assignments. My hope is that the framework will prove useful to those interested in teaching international social work in designing curriculum. While the focus is on teaching, the framework is also potentially useful to analyse issues that may confront workers in practice.

### **Guiding framework**

Four interconnected components comprise the proposed framework: the importance of context; power across nations; power within nations; and locating sites of resistance and alliances. Discussion of these components is situated within the broader scholarship on anti-oppression social work and anti-colonialism. Concretely, this implies understanding that individual experiences are shaped by and reproduce power relations operating in everyday relations and situated within broader socio-political contextual realities (Carniol, 2000; Mullaly, 2002; Shera, 2003). Moreover, an anti-oppression framework impresses upon us as researchers, educators, and activists the importance of locating sites of resistance and working with those involved in social justice efforts (Shrage, 2003).

As several authors argue, our role as social work educators and practitioners is shaped and situated within the context of historical colonialism and present-day imperial relations (Razack, 2000; Sewpaul, 2006). Loomba (2005) maintains that colonialism has been a “recurrent and widespread feature of human history” (p. 8). Within this broad context of North/South relations, social work education is implicated in reproducing inequitable North/South relations and the legacies of colonialism (Askeland & Payne, 2006). As Razack (2000) contends, increased attention to internationalization in social work has not meant the adoption of a critical perspective that takes this history of colonialism and contemporary reality of imperialism into account.

### *Importance of context*

The first component of the framework is the importance of context in attempting to understand international social work issues. As several social work educators contend, social work is situated within a broader context, and our teaching efforts must endeavour to elucidate this reality (Anderson, 2006; Saleebey & Scanlon, 2005). However, in discussions of international social issues, context is sometimes reduced to apolitical and simplistic notions of “diversity.” As Bannerji (2000) notes, the increased reliance on the concept of diversity has served to strip away power differences from social relations, while maintaining distinctions between social groups. In other words, while there is recognition of diversity (for example, cultural diversity), there is no understanding that it entails differences in access to power and privilege within a specific context. Steering away from apoliticized and de-contextualized conceptualizations of diversity, the proposed guiding framework focuses on the importance of three interconnected aspects: context of the issue, context of the intervention, and the individual social worker’s location within the context.

The first aspect pertains to the broad context of the issue being studied. Students are encouraged to reflect on the social, economic, political, and environmental aspects of context as they pertain to the issue they are examining. An example from the international social work course arose when students were asked to create a poster describing social work intervention on an issue in a country of their choice. Students were asked to use the framework suggested here to guide their discussion. The team presenting human trafficking in a Balkan country accompanied their poster with a female doll in a cage with an arm chained to the bars and a tag labelling her “for export.” Read within its broader context, and as the group explained, the doll referred to the trade, debt, and gender relations permeating and shaping the context. The group steered clear of oft-heard simplistic cultural explanations; they resisted the temptation to reduce a complex social problem to a lack of respect for women based on some cultural ascription (such as religion or tradition, for example).

The second aspect of context refers to the context of intervention. More specifically, students are encouraged to examine the role of social work in addressing a social issue, starting with how definitions of social work differ across contexts. As Gray and Fook (2004) argue, approaches to practice vary across nations, and our understanding of social work must therefore be "much more contextually oriented" (p. 626). Indeed, through reading the scholarship and research on social work in various countries, students are encouraged to explore whether social work is a recognized player in the intervention process in the country in question. Furthermore, examining this aspect of context means paying attention to the relationship between the state and social workers or those carrying on social work functions, whether or not they are in fact called "social workers." Moreover, examining the context of intervention also implies understanding the organizational context within which intervention takes place. In the example of the presentation on human trafficking, students were able to discuss the tensions between grassroots women's groups intervening at the policy, community, and individual levels and state responses shaped by political agendas. An important implication of this discussion was students' reflection on their own role as future social workers and the role they could potentially play in relation to the state.

The final aspect of context concerns the social location of the social worker and its impact on intervention. I consider myself fortunate to be working within a school of social work that values an anti-oppression analysis and encourages students to examine their social location. Students often struggle with how the various elements of their identity can bear an impact on practice and sometimes limit their discussion to an additive description of these elements of social location: their class, gender, and sexual orientation, for example.

My challenge as an educator is to push students further to a critical understanding of what it means for practice for a social worker to be, for example, of a certain ethnic background or ability status. Abu Lughod's (1991) challenge of the insider/outsider binary is highly useful in this regard. Writing from within the discipline of critical anthropology, the author suggests that seeing oneself as an insider or outsider with regard to a specific culture is simplistic. The author argues against cultural essentializations that fail to take into account the complexity of an individual's social location and relative position within the broader socio-political context. As the author notes, we are always "in relation" to a specific issue or in a specific context, never simply insiders or outsiders; our location will then have an impact on our interventions. As an example, I encourage students undertaking international placements to examine what their social location will mean for them in their anticipated field placements (for example, value differences, access to information, credibility, legitimacy as a practitioner). I also undertake this analysis myself with my students by giving the example of my own Southern

background and what it means when I engage in intervention internationally and in my country of origin.

Interestingly, reflection on social location is often met with resistance and sometimes anger. As one of my international placement students expressed, only after three months of reflection on her social location was she able to stop being angry following a classroom activity in which I had asked students to explore their personal motivations for undertaking an international placement. As a racialized student, she had felt that she would be an “insider” in her Southern placement destination and that her race would automatically indicate to others that she would be “non-oppressive”; challenged to push beyond a descriptive understanding of race and ethnicity, she was forced to confront her own role in unwittingly perpetuating oppression by virtue of her social location as a Northerner. An implication of this realization concerns the need for all students to reconceptualize their motivations for involvement in international placement and to examine how personal social location shapes and informs the decision to engage in international work.

#### *Power across nations*

The second component of the proposed theoretical framework focuses on examining historical and contemporary inequitable North/South practices and relations. I once asked a classroom of first-year BSW students to give me an example of someone they would consider a role model because of her or his contribution towards social justice on a global level. The disconcerting answer was Bill Gates, the wealthy American businessman. In more recent years, I have been subjected to endless examples by my international social work students of the invaluable role played by Oprah, the American television personality, in fighting global social injustices. Not wishing to detract from the focus of the present discussion, I limit my critique of these examples to pointing to the limited understanding of power relations that students sometimes possess. When Gates and Oprah are seen as the new champions of social justice, all is not well in the world of social work education; I am confronted with the certitude that students must be further challenged to examine the workings of power across nations. This analysis is not limited to nations, but extends also to stateless people and Aboriginal populations that may not identify with a colonizing nation.

The second theoretical component includes a discussion of globalization as well as a critical perspective on development and cross-cultural intervention with their potential to reinforce cultural imperialism, “othering,” and a superficial understanding of culture (Asamoah, Healy & Mayadas, 1997; Basu, 2004; Said, 1993, 1997; Wong, Cheng, Choi, Ku, Leba, Tsang & Loo, 2003). In a critical discussion of cultural competence, Williams (2006) explores the limitations of a “postpositivist” par-

adigm of cultural competence in which “culture is understood as part of an identity that is common to members of a group and maintained in a continuous form because of its foundation in their shared experiences” (p. 211). Within this understanding, individual differences are recognized, but similarities are emphasized as the defining feature of the culture of a particular group; the assumption within this conception of culture is that, by knowing these similar (essentialized) features, social workers can practise competently.

An essentialized understanding of culture is evident in some social work literature on cross-cultural practice, such as in the plethora of books on competent cross-cultural practice that have flooded social work schools in relatively recent years. Without singling out a specific text, I note that the common feature among these works appears to be the presentation of social groups as homogeneous and reduced to a collection of so-called cultural attributes with which social workers should become familiar to practise sensitively; there is usually very little, if any, emphasis on power relations and how these may shape lived experiences.

Writing from within the Canadian context, Tsang and George (1998) critique this tendency in the social work literature and argue for the need to include an understanding of the power relations and the “systemic context of culture” within cross-cultural social work practice (p. 85). This idea is echoed by Wong and her colleagues (2003), who argue that an analysis of power relations has been virtually absent from discussions of cultural competence within the social work literature, and much discussion of culture has assumed a “conception of culture as stable and monolithic” that must be problematized (p. 153). As an example, in his discussion of how Muslims and Arabs have been treated in the West, Edward Said, the late Palestinian-American academic, critiques this tendency to homogenize by arguing that “it’s assumed we’re talking about a quintessential core of attributes, most of them fantasies about the Other with a capital O” (Barsamian & Said, 2003, p. 122).

A chapter on working with Lebanese clients—my own ethnic background—in one such textbook was filled with such superficialities and was so lacking in a complex understanding of the intersection of elements of social location such as gender and religion, to name a few, that I was compelled to write to the editors; the response was that the author of that chapter was himself Lebanese and therefore someone with “insider” knowledge! Suad Joseph, the Lebanese-American anthropologist, provides an example of delving deeper into a society to understand what matters to people beyond the mere surface of cultural explanations. In her research on the custom of visiting within Lebanese society, she steers clear of simplistic cultural arguments and notes that the hospitality and constant visits between neighbours and extended family members are related to the underdevelopment of the formal governmental sector in Lebanon, combined with the effects of the war (Joseph, 1983, 1991,



1993, 1994). Thus the habit of visiting others, sometimes unannounced, is not reduced to a quaint cultural attribute of “friendliness” but is seen as a reflection of broader power relations shaping the contemporary and historical context of Lebanon.

Many of my students take the international social work course expecting it to be a “how-to” guide on working with peoples of various cultural backgrounds. For many, the history of war, debt, current trade practices, and environmental relations between North and South is new information to which they had not been previously exposed, even at the graduate level. Students who have been exposed to this information have usually gained it through courses outside social work (such as economics, geography, or political science). The information they have so acquired may not have included links between power relations across countries and their impact on social work intervention.

A relevant example occurred in one of the international social work courses I taught in which graduate students gave presentations on the situation of women in Afghanistan at the start of the war, when Western forces had invaded the country to “liberate” it from the reign of the Taliban. To begin their presentation, they asked a few women students to cover their heads and faces with veils, in reference to the repressive policies of the Taliban. Being a feminist of Muslim background and having my own issues with the veil, my concern with this activity was not with the students’ critique of veiling practices. On a much more profound level, I challenged students to examine how the veil has historically been used as a symbol of powerlessness and victimization of women in Southern contexts and how this is now used by Northern nations to justify their own acts of terrorism and war (Bush, 2006). The challenge was then to draw links to what this meant for us as social workers operating in the midst of these inequitable global relations. An important implication of this challenge concerns the need for us as educators to remain vigilant in confronting what may seem like innocuous manifestations of cultural sensitivity. It is important to lay bare the power relations inherent in representations of culture and to examine from whose vantage point and to what end culture is being defined.

To impress upon students the importance of examining power across nations, I have on occasion relied on an assignment that asks them to participate in student presentations on social work in various countries. Their participation consists of attending the presentation and writing a reflection log on the workings of power across five of the dozen countries discussed. This challenging exercise confronts students with the less than neutral interconnectedness of nations and peoples: in other words, they are encouraged to think about how environmental policies in one context bear an impact on the economic situation of a segment of the population in another context, among other examples. An implication of this type of critical exercise is the need for students to push beyond stereo-

typical cultural conceptions, such as those about traditions or religion, to an examination of the multilayered realities of power that lead to specific social conditions. Instead of simply knowing how social work operates in a particular country, students are asked to push beyond the descriptive level to see how social work is embedded within a broader network of power relations.

### *Power within nations*

Discussions of power across nations and peoples sometimes lead into the trap of homogenization. This trap can be avoided through an analysis of power differences and the operation of power within nations. The importance of this key component was evident in the example of international adoptions. Interestingly, at the time of writing, the International Federation of Social Workers has no policy on international adoptions. As very few authors have pointed out, international adoptions are not a straightforward matter, but actually highlight power relations not only across nations, but also within them (Herrmann & Kasper, 1992; Hollingsworth, 2003). Yet, for most of my students, international adoption is seen unequivocally as a means of ensuring the best interest of the adopted child. Without fail, whenever I have raised this issue in class, the beginning of discussion is fraught with tension as I, and a handful of students, challenge the dominant discourse of "life is better in the North."

Relying on the stories of Aboriginal populations in Canada and specifically how children and families have been treated (MacDonald & Attaran, 2007; Schwager, Mawhiney & Lewko, 1991), I often remind students of the social injustices perpetrated in a Northern context. This example allows me the opportunity to challenge the idea of homogeneity and to shift the discussion into an examination of how power differences across social locations within and across nations determine who has the right or privilege to adopt internationally and domestically, who is being adopted, and who is likely to be a birth mother, among other salient points. I also offer examples from my work on disability rights and against homophobia in Southern contexts (Wehbi, 2004, 2007; Wehbi & El-Lahib, 2007) to highlight the social differences within nations and how these may in turn have an impact on how a social issue such as adoption is experienced.

By falling into the trap of homogenization, we gloss over power differences and fail to accord attention to the impact of social relations on defining people's experiences (Humphrey, 1999). As a result, broad statements about North and South can be made, thereby negating a history of oppression and resistance in these contexts. To work with students on confronting this tendency, I often rely on a reflection/discussion classroom activity that I then expect them to pursue throughout their assignments. Specifically, I choose an example of a social issue such as

international adoption from Southern to Northern contexts and provide an illustration, typically from a media story with which students are likely to be familiar (for example, the singer Madonna's adoption of a child from Malawi). I then ask the students to analyse and discuss the following: social location of the child, the birth parents, and the adoptive parents; the actual process of adoption and the role social workers have played, if any; whose voices have been heard the loudest throughout the process (in other words, whose side of the story we have heard); and the impact of international adoption on both the Southern community from which the child was taken and the adoptive community. I also make links to the other components of the theoretical framework by asking students to examine how the context, including local and international social policies and legislation as well as power relations across nations and peoples, may have influenced this case of international adoption.

As is the case in examinations of power across nations and the importance of context, activities and assignments that challenge students to deconstruct appearances of homogeneity and to examine the impact of social relations within nations are often met with initial resistance. Many students express being left with the frustrating feeling that what they had considered to be a solution to a global injustice (such as international adoption) is not so just after all. An important implication of this frustration is the need for us as educators to provide students with the resources and information necessary to counterbalance their conceptions of powerlessness and victimization. Thus the final component of the proposed framework seeks to highlight the potential of resistance for social change.

### *Resistance and alliances*

A consequence of neglecting power differences within and across nations and peoples is that the history and current practices of people's resistance are often hidden from view. Foreign aid and collaborations have historically been based on an individualist charity perspective (Hancock, 1989; Moldovan & Moyo, 2007) or the wishes of the funder (Armstrong, 2004; Drucker, 2003; Markowitz & Tice, 2002) as opposed to being genuine alliances promoting social justice. Not surprisingly, for many of the social work students whom I have encountered, the difference between social justice and charity is unclear, as is the potential role they can play to contribute to the former.

Moreover, if the North is seen as the saviour with no social problems of its own to tackle, the South becomes primarily identified with marginalization, and acts of resistance are not brought to the fore: how can we be allies to those who themselves are not resisting? Chowdhry and Nair (2004) argue that colonial constructions of Southern "others" have represented them as inferior and in need of saving; these representations of

inferior otherness have been crucial in maintaining Northern influence within international relations. As Bush (2006) argues, conceptions of the North as having a civilizing mission to carry out in the South have historically and in present times been used to justify imperialism.

Social work literature offers another example of the potential to reproduce North/South inequities in an article on cross-cultural disaster relief work undertaken in Honduras by MSW students. The article claims that these six students from the United States, who stayed in Honduras for two weeks, actually taught the members of a small, isolated community how to work collectively: "Prior to the students' arrival, each family was basically fending for themselves" (Puig & Glynn, 2003, p. 59). While I do not wish to argue with the claims of the authors, relying on a critical analysis of cross-cultural practice and the history of North/South relations, I can risk the conjecture that these students were not single-handedly responsible for introducing a sense of community into this isolated village in the span of two weeks. Without detracting from the efforts of these students, it is nonetheless important to question what power relations allow such claims to be made (and published). As Abram, Slosar and Wells (2005) observe, for much too long the North's involvement in the South has been premised on the erroneous and limited belief that we (the North) are going to help or educate them (the South). In contrast, the authors argue that international exchanges and placements should resist "professional imperialism" (p. 173) by assisting social work students in learning *from* their Southern counterparts about unjust North/South relations.

A useful way of challenging students to think critically about some of the issues raised above is to engage them in experiential activities such as document analysis and activities that attempt to take learning outside the classroom by linking to broader acts of alliance and resistance. In one such activity, I brought students the profile descriptions and brochures of Canadian foreign aid agencies that were members of the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC) and asked them to analyse the underlying theoretical orientation of each agency. To their surprise, many focused on what Jaffee (1998) considers individualist and liberal notions of development, such as human capital and modernization, without much reference to structural North/South inequities (for examples, see the description of profiles on the CCIC website, <http://www.ccic.ca/whoswho/>).

In another exercise, I asked students to develop an awareness-raising advertising campaign on "Third World" debt following a lecture on the topic in the international social work course; they then posted their ads in a central location at the School of Social Work as an educational opportunity for other social work students and professors. In another year of the same course, students joined a fair trade campaign at the university as a direct result of classroom discussions of the topic. In both examples,

students expressed the feeling that they had been able to see firsthand how they could contribute to social justice efforts.

I have also relied on my own practice experience and the experience of other practitioners from the field (as guest speakers) working with marginalized populations in Southern contexts who have fought for their own rights, starting with a grassroots level of community organizing. I have also used historical examples to show that resistance to oppression was not invented by the North. In the process, I have asked students to reflect critically on the power relations that contribute to a situation in which the activism of Northern pop music stars on issues of "Third World" poverty is more present in the public mind than the work of Southern activists and their allies currently fighting injustice on a daily basis in their own communities (see the many examples in the *Upstream Journal*, the publication of the Montreal-based Social Justice Committee, on the committee's website at <http://www.s-j-c.net>).

As some of my students have expressed, exposure to concrete examples of communities fighting the oppression they experience is empowering in that these examples nuance and render more complex a situation that is often painted as monolithic in its bleakness and hopelessness. In the words of Edward Said, "people don't give up if they are beaten down. They in fact hold on even more resolutely and stubbornly" (Barsamian & Said, 2003, p. 8). The challenge I encourage my students to undertake, then, is to see past the constructions of victimization. In doing so, I encourage them to locate sites of resistance in their chosen community of work and to learn to be allies by resisting the passivity they may have or the perception of passivity they may have imposed on those they consider to be "victims" of oppression.

## Conclusion

A theoretical framework based on an analysis of power and valuing the promotion of social justice is needed when we examine international social issues. It is even more crucial, within a broader context of a neoliberal push governing international relations and national policies in Canada, to equip social workers with a theoretical framework that guides their actions in confronting social injustice. The proposed theoretical framework and educational activities may be helpful in guiding students towards the development of a social work practice that promotes social justice. With its interconnected components of the importance of context, analysis of power across as well as within nations, and the value of locating sites of resistance and learning to become an ally, the proposed framework aims to offer students the opportunity to develop a socially just understanding of international issues.

Gray and Fook (2004) argue that, while consensus may be lacking on a definition of international social work and on universal values, the

main concern and questions for the profession should be how to find “ways to best achieve the goals of social justice and of making the world a better place” (pp. 637-638). As educators, we are constantly confronted with the complex realities of our field within a global political climate unfavourable to this social justice vision. Relying on an anti-oppressive and anti-colonial theoretical framework to guide our teaching about international issues, we can impress upon our students their own potential contributions towards this vision of social work, wherever their practice may take them.

### REFERENCES

- Abram, F. Y., J. A. Slosar & R. Wells (2005). “Reverse Mission: A Model for International Social Work Education and Transformative Intra-national Practice.” *International Social Work* 48, no. 2, 161-176.
- Abu-Lughod, L. (1991). “Writing Against Culture.” In R. G. Fox, ed., *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present* (pp. 137-162). Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.
- Anderson, D. K. (2006). “Mucking through the Swamp: Changing the Pedagogy of a Social Welfare Policy Course.” *Journal of Teaching in Social Work* 26, no. 1/2, 1-17.
- Armstrong, E. (2004). “Globalization from Below: AIDWA, Foreign Funding, and Gendering Anti-violence Campaigns.” *Journal of Developing Societies* 20, no. 1/2, 39-55.
- Asamoah, Y., L. M. Healy & N. Mayadas (1997). “Ending the International-Domestic Dichotomy: New Approaches to a Global Curriculum for the Millennium.” *Journal of Social Work Education* 33, no. 2, 389-402.
- Askeland, G. A., & M. Payne (2006). “Social Work Education’s Cultural Hegemony.” *International Social Work* 49, no. 6, 731-743.
- Bannerji, H. (2000). “The Paradox of Diversity: Construction of a Multicultural Canada and ‘Women of Color’.” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 23, no. 5, 537-560.
- Barsamian, D., & E. W. Said (2003). *Culture and Resistance: Conversations with Edward W. Said*. Cambridge: South End Press.
- Basu, S. (2004). “AIDS, Empire and Public Health Behaviorism.” *International Journal of Health Services* 34, no. 1, 155-167.
- Boyle, D. P., & C. Barranti (1999). “A Model for International Continuing Education: Cross-cultural Experiential Professional Development.” *Professional Development: The International Journal of Continuing Social Work Education* 2, no. 2, 57-62.
- Boyle, D. P., L. Nackerud & A. Kilpatrick (1999). “The Road Less Traveled: Cross-cultural, International Experiential Learning.” *International Social Work* 42, no. 2, 201-214.
- Bush, B. (2006). *Imperialism and Postcolonialism: History, Concepts, Theories and Practice*. Toronto: Pearson Education Limited.
- Caragata, L., & M. Sanchez (2002). “Globalization and Global Need: The New Imperatives for Expanding International Social Work Education in North America.” *International Social Work* 45, no. 2, 217-238.

- Carniol, B. (2000). *Case Critical: Challenging Social Services in Canada* (4th ed.). Toronto: Between the Lines.
- Chowdhry, G., & S. Nair (2004). "Introduction: Power in a Postcolonial World: Race, Gender, and Class in International Relations." In G. Chowdhry & S. Nair, eds., *Power, Postcolonialism and International Relations: Reading Race, Gender and Class* (pp. 1-32). New York: Routledge.
- Dominelli, L. (2005). "Community Development across Borders: Avoiding Dangerous Practices in a Globalizing World." *International Social Work* 48, no. 6, 702-713.
- Drucker, D. (2003). "Whither International Social Work? A Reflection." *International Social Work* 46, no. 1, 53-81.
- Gray, M., & J. Fook (2004). "The Quest for a Universal Social Work: Some Issues and Implications." *Social Work Education* 23, no. 5, 625-644.
- Hancock, G. (1989). *Lords of Poverty: The Power, Prestige, and Corruption of the International Aid Business*. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press.
- Healy, L. M. (2001). *International Social Work: Professional Action in an Interdependent World*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Heron, B. (2005). "Changes and Challenges: Preparing Social Work Students for Practicums in Today's Sub-Saharan African Context." *International Social Work* 48, no. 6, 782-793.
- Herrmann, Jr., K., & B. Kasper (1992). "International Adoption: The Exploitation of Women and Children." *Affilia* 7, no. 1, 45-58.
- Hollingsworth, L. D. (2003). "International Adoptions among Families in the United States: Considerations of Social Justice." *Social Work* 48, no. 2, 209-217.
- Humphrey, J. C. (1999). "Disabled People and the Politics of Difference." *Disability & Society* 14, no. 2, 173-188.
- Jaffee, D. (1998). *Levels of Socio-economic Development Theory*. Westport, CN: Praeger.
- Johnson, A. K. (1999). "Globalization from Below: Using the Internet to Internationalize Social Work Education." *Journal of Social Work Education* 35, no. 3, 377-393.
- Johnson, A. K. (2004). "Increasing Internationalization in Social Work Programs: Healey's Continuum as a Strategic Planning Guide." *International Social Work* 47, no. 1, 7-23.
- Joseph, S. (1983). "Working Women's Networks in a Sectarian State: A Political Paradox." *American Ethnologist* 10, 1-22.
- Joseph, S. (1991). "Elite Strategies for State-building: Women, Family, Religion and State in Iraq and Lebanon." In D. Kandyoti, ed., *Women, Islam and the State* (pp. 176-200). London: Macmillan.
- Joseph, S. (1993). "Connectivity and Patriarchy among Urban Working-class Arab Families in Lebanon." *Ethos* 21, no. 4, 452-484.
- Joseph, S. (1994). "Brother/sister Relationships: Connectivity, Love, and Power in the Reproduction of Patriarchy in Lebanon." *American Ethnologist* 21, 50-73.
- Loomba, A. (2005). *Colonialism/postcolonialism: The New Critical Idiom* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.
- MacDonald, N., & A. Attaran (2007). "The Jordan Principle: Governments' Paralysis." *Canadian Medical Association Journal* 177, no. 4, 321.

- Markowitz, L., & K. W. Tice (2002). "Paradoxes of Professionalization: Parallel Dilemmas in Women's Organizations in the Americas." *Gender & Society* 16, no. 6, 941-958.
- Midgley, J. (2001). "Issues in International Social Work: Resolving Critical Debates in the Profession." *Journal of Social Work* 1, no. 1, 21-35.
- Moldovan, V., & O. Moyo (2007). "Contradictions in the Ideologies of Helping: Examples from Zimbabwe and Moldova." *International Social Work* 50, no. 4, 461-472.
- Mullaly, B. (2002). *Challenging Oppression: A Critical Social Work Approach*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.
- Nagy, G., & D. S. Falk (2000). "Dilemmas in International and Cross-cultural Social Work Education." *International Social Work* 43, no. 1, 49-60.
- Puig, M. E., & J. B. Glynn (2003). "Disaster Responders: A Cross-cultural Approach to Recovery and Relief Work." *Journal of Social Service Research* 30, no. 2, 55-66.
- Razack, N. (2000). "North/South Collaborations: Affecting Transnational Perspectives for Social Work." *Journal of Progressive Human Services* 11, no. 1, 71-91.
- Razack, N. (2002). "A Critical Examination of International Student Exchanges." *International Social Work* 45, no. 2, 251-265.
- Said, E. W. (1993). *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Said, E. W. (1997). *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*. New York: Vintage.
- Saleebey, D., & E. Scanlon (2005). "Is a Critical Pedagogy for the Profession of Social Work Possible?" *Journal of Teaching in Social Work* 25, no. 3/4, 1-18.
- Schwager, K. W., A. Mawhiney & J. Lewko (1991). "Cultural Aspects of Prevention Programs." *Canadian Social Work Review* 8, no. 2, 246-254.
- Sewpaul, V. (2006). "The Global-Local Dialectic: Challenges for African Scholarship and Social Work in a Post-colonial World." *British Journal of Social Work* 36, no. 3, 419-434.
- Shera, W., ed. (2003). *Emerging Perspectives on Anti-oppression Practice*. Toronto: Canadian Scholar's Press.
- Shrage, E. (2003). *Activism and Social Change: Lessons for Community and Local Organizing*. Peterborough: Broadview Press.
- Stubbs, S. (1999). "Engaging with Difference: Soul-searching for a Methodology in Disability and Development Research." In E. Stone, ed., *Disability and Development* (pp. 257-279). Leeds, UK: The Disability Press.
- Traub-Werner, B., W. Shera, B. M. R. Villa & N. T. Peon (2000). "International Partnerships: A Mexico-Canada Social Work Education Project." In Bill Rowe, ed., *Social Work and Globalization* (supplementary issue of *Canadian Social Work, Canadian Social Work Review, Intervention*) (pp. 184-197). Ottawa: Canadian Association of Social Workers.
- Tsang, A. K. T., & U. George (1998). "Towards an Integrated Framework for Cross-cultural Social Work Practice." *Canadian Social Work Review* 15, no. 1, 73-93.
- Wehbi, S., ed. (2004). *Community Organizing against Homophobia and Heterosexism: The World through Rainbow-coloured Glasses*. New York: Haworth Press.
- Wehbi, S. (2007). "Obstacles and Facilitative Factors to Community Organizing on Disability Issues in Lebanon: Case Study of the Lebanese Physical Handicapped Union." *International Social Work* 50, no. 1, 67-78.



- Wehbi, S., & Y. El-Lahib (2007). "Organizing for the Voting Rights of People with Disabilities in Lebanon: Reflections for Activists." *Equal Opportunities International* 26, no. 5, 449-464.
- Williams, C. C. (2006). "The Epistemology of Cultural Competence." *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services* 87, no. 2, 209-220.
- Wong, Y. R., with S. Cheng, S. Choi, K. Ky, S. Leba, K. Tsang & L. Yoo (2003). "Deconstructing Culture in Cultural Competence: Dissenting Voices from Asian-Canadian Practitioners." *Canadian Social Work Review* 20, no. 2, 149-167.