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The Response of Social Work to the Multicultural Reality in the United States: Reflections and Implications for Taiwanese Social Work *

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Abstract

The multicultural reality in the United States entails a harsh reality of oppressions and various forms of socio-economic injustice. The evolution of policies in the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) represents a shift of recognition and response to this phenomenon. There has been increasing concern in academia for the importance and urgency of enhancing multicultural competence of social work practitioners. This paper introduces and critiques existing NASW and CSWE policies relating to multicultural competence in social work practice and evaluates various conceptual models on multicultural social work practice and education. Implications for Taiwanese multicultural social work education and practices are provided.

Keywords: multicultural social work, cultural competence, social justice, social work education

Introduction

An email message recently arrived in many people's inboxes. It is about Barack Hussein Obama, a candidate for the 2008 United States Presidential election. This message sheds a great deal of light on the issues of multicultural reality in the United States. Here is the original message:

Probable U. S. presidential candidate, Barack Hussein Obama was born in Honolulu, Hawaii, to Barack Hussein Obama, Sr., a Muslim from Nyangoma-Kogel, Kenya and Ann Dunham, an atheist from Wichita, Kansas. Obama's parents met at the University of Hawaii. When Obama was two years old, his parents divorced. His father returned to Kenya. His mother then married Lolo Soetoro, a radical Muslim from Indonesia. When Obama was 6 years old, the family relocated to Indonesia. Obama attended a Muslim school in Jakarta. He also spent two years in a Catholic school. Obama takes great care to conceal the fact that he is a Muslim. He is quick to point out that, "He was once a Muslim, but that he also attended Catholic school."

Obama's political handlers are attempting to make it appear that Obama's introduction to Islam came via his father, and that this influence was temporary at best. In reality, the senior Obama returned to Kenya soon after the divorce, and never again had any direct influence over his son's education. Lolo Soetoro, the second husband of Obama's mother, Ann Dunham, introduced his stepson to Islam. Osama was enrolled in a Wahabi school in Jakarta. Wahabism is the radical teaching that is followed by the Muslim

terrorists who are now waging Jihad against the western world.

Since it is politically expedient to be a Christian when seeking major public office in the United States, Barack Hussein Obama has joined the United Church of Christ in an attempt to downplay his Muslim background. Let us all remain alert concerning Obama's expected presidential candidacy.

This message reveals a number of issues in relation to multicultural society in the United States. First, Barack Obama himself typifies the rapidly changing multicultural reality in the United States. It indicates that his background is diverse in terms of race, religion, country of origin, and family status. Second, the amount of negativity towards Muslim people implied in this message reveals the harsh reality of racism and discrimination deeply rooted in the history of the United States. To a certain degree, the Barack Obama in the United States is similar to a person of multicultural backgrounds in Taiwan. This person might be born in a family with a second generation Chinese mainlander who speaks only Mandarin and married to a foreign bride from Vietnam. This person may be also facing prejudice and discrimination because of his/her diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

A Multicultural Reality¹ in the United States

Racial and ethnic minority populations, people like Obama who is an

¹ The term multicultural reality in this paper refers to the condition of diversity based on differences in cultural and social characteristics. Multiculturalism refers to the recognition of multicultural reality in a given society.

African or Black American, are expanding rapidly in the United States. Two decades from now, the population of all minority groups combined will exceed the current majority White population (Sue and Sue, 1999). In 2000, the racial and ethnic minorities in the United States, including African Americans, American Indians, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, Alaskan Natives, and Pacific Islanders accounted for about 30 % of the total population. By 2025 the total population of these groups is estimated to be above 40 % (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001).

Race and ethnicity is just one dimension of the diversity in the United States. The census data of 2000 indicated that more than 31 million people (11 % of the total population) were born in 170 other countries and for 83 % of them, the primary language spoken at home is the language of their countries of origin instead of English (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005). Another 7,649,510 new international immigrants were added to the population in the period of April 2000 to June 2006 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). Including an estimated 11.1 million illegal immigrants, the foreign born population of the United States reaches 14.6 % of the total population (Adams et al., 2006). The speed of immigration into the United States was temporarily slowed down after the 9/11 event in 2001, but is showing no sign of dwindling as a long term trend. Rather, it is approaching a historic high (Adams et al., 2006).

Religious diversity is also rising. The proportion of the U.S. population that can be classified as Christian has declined from 86.2 % in 1990 to 76.5 % in 2001 (Kosmin et al., 2001). Followers of Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Atheism are the fast growing sectors in the past decade. Even within the Christian population, smaller sects shape

a well of diverse beliefs, traditions, and practices.

While Christianity in general is on the decline, the sect of Evangelical/Born Again Christians netted a 42 % gain in between 1990 and 2001. This in general is the group considered as more religious or more committed to their religious practice. They tend to be socially conservative and have supported the Bush administration for the past 7 years. At the same time, those who profess no religious belief or atheists are also fast growing (Kosmin et al., 2001). This is to say that at the same time some are becoming more religious, others are becoming more secular. There is a strong concern that this trend might further polarize the nation. Additionally, with many people's uneasiness towards the fast growing Muslim population after 9/11, it is important to recognize that the religious diversity in the United States is not only undergoing change quantitatively and qualitatively as well.

The picture of diversity would not complete without highlighting the aspect of an aging population. The group of people aging 65 or above grew significantly to represent 12.4 % of the total population at the turn of the century (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). A substantial increase in the number of older people will occur when the baby boomer generation begins to turn 65 in 2011 and is projected to double from 36 million in 2003 to 72 million in 2030 (He et al., 2005). That is a growth from about 12.6 % to 20 % of the total population. By 2050, it is projected to reach 86.7 million. The oldest-old population (those aged 85 and older) is also projected to double from 4.7 million in 2003 to 9.6 million in 2030-and to double again to 20.9 million in 2050.

As it grows in size, the elderly population also grows in its diversity. In 2003, non-Hispanic Whites accounted for nearly 83 % of the U.S. older

population, followed by Blacks (8 %), Hispanics as a whole (6 %), and Asians (3 %). It is estimated that by 2030 the composition of the older population will be 72 % non-Hispanic White, 11 % Hispanic, 10 % Black, and 5 % Asian. Hispanic and Asian will experience quadrupled growth in their older populations in the next 30 years (He et al., 2005).

The Harsh Reality of Racism and Discrimination

As mentioned earlier, the message quoted about Obama provides us with a glimpse of the harsh reality of racism and discrimination. Of course, one who has certain knowledge about how US election politics works would probably think that the message is simply a dirty trick attempting to discredit another candidate, and it is quite normal during the election process. The concern here, however, is not about the attempt to discredit another candidate; rather, it is about the attempt to discredit a candidate by implying certain backgrounds are unfit for presidency. The author distributed this message to his students in a social work research methods class and asked them to identify personal qualities that the message implied or assumed are bad and undesirable. The students correctly pointed out that the message implies being Black, coming from a broken family and being a Muslim is bad and undesirable. Based on this, Obama is bad, undesirable and unfit for the presidency of the United States. The flip side of the coin is the implication that being White, Christian and coming from a good family is good and desirable. This is very much like the proposal of “Native Born Criteria” during the Taiwanese Presidential elections. By suggesting that only native born Taiwanese are fit for the presidency, politicians are trying to capitalize from the old wounds of

ethnic tension in Taiwan.

This message is circulating in the United States through chain emails. The sender of the message is trying to harvest from the old wounds of racism and discrimination and further polarize the nation by restoring the fear factor. Decades after the Civil Rights Movement, the United States is still troubled by the question of how we can all get along. Unfortunately, diversity still goes hand in hand with the harsh reality of interlocking systems of oppressions based on racism, sexism, ableism, religious bigotry, ageism, and countries of origin (Appleby et al., 2007). For example, African Americans continue to be more than twice as likely to be unemployed as Whites, more likely to be homeless, incarcerated, have children in the foster care system and drop out of college (Appleby et al., 2007). Despite the gain in workforce participation, women are still earning 30 % less than men in the same type of job. Native Americans still experience a disproportionately higher number of social and health problems. They are victims of violent crimes at a rate more than twice the national average (Kilborne, 1997). The likelihood of Native Americans dying from alcoholism is almost five times the overall national rate (Levy, 1996). It is not the purpose of this paper to give a comprehensive account of the systems of oppression. The above examples simply illustrate the struggles and disadvantages faced by the diverse minority groups in this country. Obama's opponents' attempt to capitalize on the fear factor indicates that racism, prejudice and discrimination are still a critical factor in American society.

The Response of Social Work Profession: NASW and CSWE

Social work's response toward the evolution of a multicultural reality and the corresponding harsh environment of oppressive systems has been sluggish. It is only in 1970 that CSWE (Council on Social Work Education) acknowledged ethnic minority groups as their number one priority. Multicultural issues received little attention by professional journal and social work text books. A content analysis of professional journals from 1970 to 1997 revealed that only 8 percent of the articles were related to general multicultural issues or particular cultural groups (Lum, 2000). A study of thirty-two social work practice texts published between 1970 and 1998 also revealed a similar pattern. Of the total pages counted, only 0.0002 percent of them were devoted to multicultural issues.

Nevertheless, the efforts of both NASW (National Association of Social Workers) and CSWE (Council on Social Work Education) are worth mentioning. For NASW, various places in its Code of Ethics (2000) provide guidance on multicultural practice:

1. On the value of Social Justice², it states that social work activities are to “seek to promote sensitivity to and knowledge about oppression and cultural and ethnic diversity.”
2. On the value of Dignity and Worth of the Person, it stresses the importance for social workers to “treat each person in a caring and respectful fashion, mindful of individual differences and cultural and ethnic diversity.”

² There are 6 values specified in the Code of Ethics: service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence. Each value is followed by a set of ethical principles. (National Association of Social Workers, 2000).

3. Cultural competence and social diversity are emphasized as social workers' ethical responsibilities to clients. It states:

- 1) Social workers should understand culture and its function in human behavior and society, recognizing the strengths that exist in all cultures.
- 2) Social workers should have a knowledge base of their clients' cultures and be able to demonstrate competence in the provision of services that are sensitive to clients' cultures and to differences among people and cultural groups.
- 3) Social workers should obtain education about and seek to understand the nature of social diversity and oppression with respect to race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political belief, religion, and mental or physical disability.

The NASW (2000) Code of Ethics constitutes an important step in the acknowledgement of the multicultural reality and social workers' ethical responsibilities. It further directs social workers' attention to the cultural dimension of the strength-based approach and calls for the pursuit of cultural competence in practice. What's lacking, however, is the specificity for guiding social workers' actions. In 2001, under the direction of the National Committee on Racial and Ethnic Diversity, the NASW Standards for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice was adopted by the NASW Board of Directors (NASW, 2001). This document identifies ten standards for culturally competent social work practice. They include ethics and values, self-awareness, cross-cultural knowledge, skills, service delivery, empowerment and advocacy, diverse workforce, professional education, language diversity and cross-cultural leadership. It is a rather

comprehensive treatment of various aspects of culturally competent social work practice.

The introduction of this document serves several purposes. First, it presents a triangular framework of values, knowledge and skills for culturally competent practice. Second, it extends the definition of cultural competence from individual social workers to include institutional requirements. While most discussions on cultural competence emphasize values, knowledge and skills that individual social workers should have, the standards stress the importance of developing culturally competent systems in policies and services delivery. It is argued that five elements must be manifested in service delivery in order for the system to be cultural competent. These elements are: (1) valuing diversity, (2) having cultural self-assessment capacity, (3) being conscious of the dynamics during cultures interacting, (4) institutionalizing cultural knowledge, and (5) developing programs and services that reflect an understanding of diversity between and within cultures (NASW, 2001). Another important step this document takes is the provision of guidelines for interpreting each of these standards. The guidelines provide certain specificity needed for implementation and assessment. For example, under Standard 2 Self-awareness, it suggests that social workers need to move from cultural awareness to cultural sensitivities before achieving cultural competence. Despite its comprehensiveness, the impact of the NASW Standards for Cultural Competence on Social Work Practice in shaping social workers' competence is still yet to be observed. As a membership organization with loose sanctioning power, this document is more useful for training than for the enforcement of compliance.

While NASW's influence is largely on practitioners, the Counsel on

Social Work Education is more directly related to shaping social work students' values, knowledge and skills. The current CSWE Education Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) was first adopted in 2001 and updated in 2004 (CSWE, 2004). In describing foundation curriculum content, it states: "Social work programs integrate content that promotes understanding, affirmation, and respect for people from diverse backgrounds. The content emphasizes the interlocking and complex nature of culture and personal identity. It ensures that social services meet the needs of groups served and are culturally relevant. Programs educate students to recognize diversity within and between groups that may influence assessment, planning, intervention, and research. Students learn how to define, design, and implement strategies for effective practice with persons from diverse backgrounds." (CSWE, 2004: 9).

The CSWE EPAS does not go on to elaborate the standard by providing interpretation guidelines, nor does it offer a preferred modality for multicultural education for meeting accreditation requirements. This is probably a reflection of insufficient attention from academia devoted to the conceptualization and codification of multicultural social work practice (Galambos, 2003). Nevertheless, it does provide a general direction and boundaries for guiding social work academics in the pursuit of multicultural education.

Cultural Competency– Conceptual Frameworks and Models

There are indeed a number of attempts to provide related models or a conceptual framework for such a purpose. Frequently noted in this regard include Lum (2000), Fong et al. (1999), Appleby et al. (2007), Gutierrez

(1992) and Sue et al. (1998), and Van Soest and Garcia (2003). The following paragraphs provide a brief overview of each of these perspectives.

Doman Lum (2000) in his book *Social Work Practice and People of Color* offers a practical and well-defined model of social work practice with culturally diverse communities. A single family case study is used to provide linkage and integration for the step-by-step description of the process-stage approach. He offers coverage on women of color, refugees, and immigrants and includes information on the five-stage practice process model: contact, problem identification, assessment, intervention, and termination. In essence, Lum's model for culturally competent social work practice includes the components of cultural awareness, knowledge acquisition, skill development, and inductive learning (Fong and Furuto, 2001):

Cultural awareness. It stresses the importance of social workers' understanding and identification of the cultural values that are important to the client's system and to themselves.

Knowledge acquisition. It stresses the importance of social workers' understanding of how cultural values function as strengths in the client's system.

Skill development. It moves from knowledge to application by matching services that support the identified cultural values and then incorporate them in intervention.

Inductive learning. It underscores the necessity of continuous learning to seek indigenous interventions and match cultural values to Western interventions.

Fong et al. (1999) advocate a bi-culturalization practice model. This

model stems from the concern that it may not be a culturally acceptable solution to make a client belonging to an ethnic minority change to fit a Westernized environment or to impose a Western style intervention. It is suggested that social workers should take a part of the client's culture and adapt the Western interventions to accommodate and reinforce the client's worldview. The bi-culturalization model utilizes a five-step process in assessment and intervention (Fong et al., 1999):

Identification. Identify values in the ethnic culture that can be used to reinforce intervention.

Selection. Selecting a Western intervention whose theoretical framework and values are compatible with the ethnic cultural values.

Analysis. Analyzing indigenous interventions in order to discern which technique can be reinforced and integrated with a Western intervention.

Integration. Developing an approach that would integrate the values and techniques of the ethnic culture with the Western interventions.

Application. Applying the interventions and explain to the client how the techniques reinforce cultural values and support indigenous intervention.

Appleby et al. (2007) offer a social functioning perspective and locate culturally competent social work practice in the framework of the person-in-environment. From this perspective, the history of positive and negative experiences of people in the environment provides a context for understanding presenting problems. The impact of power domination, oppression and exploitation on individual social functioning and interpersonal processes are emphasized. Powerlessness should be the focal point of intervention. To a large degree, this is an effort to integrate

multiculturalism into the existing ecological framework (Compton and Galaway, 1989) and the strength perspective (Saleebey, 1989) in social work practice with a specific focus on individual social functioning.

Gutierrez (1992) and Sue et al. (1998) both made significant contributions by directing attention to the macro level of culturally competent practice. Gutierrez (1992) emphasizes that the empowerment of ethnic minorities happens at the macro level with organizational and community change (Gutierrez, 1992). Commenting from the counseling point of view, Sue et al. (1998) recommend the inclusion of personal, professional, and organizational levels for culturally competent practice. They argue that multicultural counseling competence should be able to:

1. Develop personal cultural competence, such as reading literature, using cultural guides, learning to ask culturally sensitive questions.
2. Develop professional competence that is related to the knowledge and skills in conducting assessment and intervention.
3. Develop and propose strategies for organizational cultural competence.

This perspective of macro level competence is also reflected in the NASW Standards for Cultural Competent Social Work Practice (NASW, 2001) in that the five elements previously mentioned are argued to be needed in service delivery in order for the system to be culturally competent.

Van Soest and Garcia (2003) and Garcia and Van Soest (2006) approach cultural competence from the social justice perspective. They suggest that “culturally competent social work involves effective interventions with diverse clients coupled with a commitment to promote social justice” (Garcia and Van Soest, 2006). Diversity itself implies

socioeconomic injustice that is often the result of oppression and discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, age, and other factors (traditionally called various “isms,” such as racism, sexism, ageism, and ableism). Culturally competent social work practice should not only understand oppression, but more importantly develop knowledge and skills to promote social and economic justice effectively. Using the river metaphor (Derman-Sparks and Brunson-Phillips, 2001), four fundamental components of a conceptual framework interlocking cultural competence and social justice are proposed:

1. Acknowledgement of the centrality of racism in understanding all oppressions. In other words, even there are various “isms,” issues in relation to race and racism are the core of attention.
2. Recognition of racism as a form of human relations involving domination and exploitation that produces a socioeconomic class system.
3. Appreciation of the complex interaction of racism with the systematic dynamics of other forms of oppression based on gender, class, sexual orientation, ability, age, and so on.
4. Attention to the learning process when engaged in it. It is argued that “a major transformation is ultimately called for at the level of a paradigmatic shift in one’s way of thinking about difference that appreciates difference and thus diminishes and even extinguishes the exercise of domination and power based on difference.” (Garcia and Van Soest, 2006: 52-53).

There is no doubt that diversity is not merely a colorful cultural showroom. How we wish that to be the case. The reality paints a picture of domination and exploitation that goes along with each of the various

aspects of diversity, be it in race, gender, ability, or country of origin. Socioeconomic inequality and injustice are often the harsh outcomes of complex multicultural interactions. Garcia and Van Soest (2006) point to the very core of the problems- socioeconomic injustice that is closely tied with a multicultural reality. It is also true that the struggle for socioeconomic justice in the United States historically is intertwined with the issues of race and racism. However, placing racism at the very core of analysis has the tendency to further polarize the already polarized array of racial and ethnic groups. Increasing incidences of one minority group acting against the other, such as African Americans against new Korean immigrants in New York, give doubt to the validity of putting racism at the core of analysis for diversity. It is even easier to see the limitation of focusing on racism as a way of approaching cultural competence if urban-rural disparity is brought into the picture.

Critiques and Implications for Taiwanese Social Work

The above discussion highlights the responses of the social work profession toward the combination of a multicultural society and the current reality of systems of oppression in the United States. Policies addressing these issues from social work organizations including the NASW and CSWE are discussed. A brief review of existing conceptualizations of culturally competent social work practice is also provided. The scope of this paper does not allow for an in-depth critique of each of the documents and conceptual models. The following paragraphs, however, provide a critique of the overall situation of multicultural social work practice and education. Implications for Taiwanese social work are

also discussed.

Multicultural Awareness or Competence

Van Soest (1995) charged that despite social work education's support of multiculturalism, the actual practice scantily reflects its espoused commitment to social justice. Galambos (2003) echoed that sentiment and advocated a move from cultural awareness to cultural competence. It has been more than 20 years since the first conception of Lum's (1986) cultural competence model that includes awareness, knowledge, skills and inductive learning. The success of bringing multiculturalism from merely a cognitive awareness to a behaviorally verifiable competence is still very limited in social work.

The recent surge of interest in multiculturalism in Taiwan is a very positive development. Nevertheless, the historical development of such a movement in United States illustrate the possible pitfalls of focusing for too long and too narrowly on the domain of cultural awareness, rather than advancing to developing more complete cultural competency. The author's suggestions in this regard are two-fold. First, it is beneficial to carefully assess various models and adapt and modify the ones that are more consistent with Taiwanese contexts. Second, there is an urgent need for indigenous research to contextualize the theories and practices in cultural competence. Unique circumstances in Taiwan call for distinctive conceptualization and codification of cultural competence that will meet the needs of social development in Taiwan.

It is found that the combination of Lum's model and McPhatter (1997)'s Cultural Competence Attainment Model are worth considering. Lum (2000) approaches cultural competence itself from a componential

view as mentioned earlier: awareness, knowledge, skills, and inductive learning. McPhatter (1997) proposes a developmental view in assuming that competence acquisition may take place in thinking, feeling, sensing, and behavioral dimensions. Three components are postulated:

1. Grounded Knowledge Base: This involves a critical analysis of the major gaps and weaknesses in the knowledge base and the reformulation of a new knowledge base derived from the evolving multicultural reality.
2. Enlightened Consciousness: This involves reordering of worldview and shifting of consciousness. This is the area involving the recognition of multicultural reality, the plights of the oppressed, and a commitment for change. In Taiwan, there is no shortage of research in pointing out the increasing cultural diversity because of the rapid immigrations and cross-cultural marriages. New immigrants in Taiwan come primarily from two groups: foreign labourers and foreign born spouses. According to recent government statistics (Ministry of Interior, 2006b), there are more than 500,000 foreign immigrants currently in Taiwan and more than 30% of them are from Vietnam. More than one out of every six marriages in 2005 was cross national and one out of every 8 babies was born to a foreign spouse (Ministry of Interior, 2006a). There is also no less studies in portraying the plights of the foreign labors and especially the foreign born spouses. Of critical importance for Taiwan, however, is the reconstruction of the concept of justice in relation to various social issues. For example, we probably need to reshape our approach to foreign brides by moving from a utilitarian to an equalitarian perspective of justice.

Alternatively, a simple (but not easy) recognition of the concept of citizenship (Carens, 2000) and the associated political and basic human rights may be able to go a long way in addressing the plights of many within the increasingly diverse and polarized Taiwanese society. In other words, how to treat people from diverse cultures, including foreign born spouses should not be based on how much they have contributed to the Taiwanese society. Instead, the need for treating them well stems from simply because it is their rights to be treated as such as members of the Taiwanese society. They are not merely tools and resources at the disposal of any other groups or individuals in Taiwanese.

3. Cumulative Skills Proficiency: This is an ongoing process of skills development, valuing other's worldviews, and moving towards accepting and engaging a culturally diverse client population.

Evaluation and Measurement

Closely tied with the issues of awareness and competence mentioned earlier is the lack of progress in the evaluation and measurement of cultural competence. In spite of achievements in various conceptualizations and emerging practice models, measures of practitioners' roles in implementation have yet to be designed and tested (Green et al., 2005). The most frequently used measure in social work is probably the Cultural Competencies Self-Assessment Inventory developed by Lum (2003). This inventory intends to measure the four areas of cultural competencies postulated by Lum (2000): cultural awareness, knowledge acquisition, skills development, and inductive learning. Green et al. (2005) propose a Multicultural Competency Inventory by including

subscales for the measurement of skill, awareness, knowledge and relationship. While reliability and validity issues have been tested on both measures and reported to be satisfactory, both suffer from being exclusively self-report measures. They could have served well for educational purposes, but fall short of being reliable instruments for measuring practitioners' cultural competencies. Unfortunately, self-report is still the most prevailing method in measuring cultural competence. Social work as a whole still has a long way to go from coming up with measures that are capable of evaluating cultural competencies in an effective and reliable manner. For Taiwanese social work, any attempt at adopting these measures needs to be aware of their limitations. Still, it will probably be more profitable to develop a contextualized instrument and observational mechanism that suits the unique Taiwanese environment instead of being limited by what exists in the American social work profession.

Demonizing the Majority

The undeniable fact of oppressions associated with ethnic minorities has led to a gradual development of a tendency in demonizing the majority. Some of the practice models, for example Garcia and Van Soest (2006), put race and racism related issues at the focal point of analysis. The overwhelming tendency in exposing "white shame" might have severely restricted the possibility of a healthy dialogue. White male bashing in the public, in the classroom, and in public media is considered acceptable, at least tolerated, but any negative criticism toward an ethnic minority group, especially made by a White person, would very likely result in strong negative reactions. Similarly, Christian bashing is acceptable and

sometimes even considered heroic, but any negative comments toward other religious groups could result in the charge of not respecting other religions. Again, the dialogical process needed in a multicultural society is hampered. It is essentially true that diversity encompasses genuine respect for everybody, including members from the majority group.

The situation in Taiwan may be a little different, but the principle is the same. The change of political power during the past 10 years resulted in or at least exacerbated a subtle form of prejudice against the traditionally called *wai sheng ren*-people from other provinces of China. The degree to which the demonization of *wai sheng ren* has contributed to the ethnic tension in Taiwan is something worth investigating.

The Demoralization of Diversity

Another concern of multiculturalism in American social work is the phenomenon of demoralization. It is true that historically, moral concern has been incorporated to justify various forms of oppression. Services were denied, for example, for the lack of proper “work ethics,” or for being gays or lesbians. Nevertheless, the correction of this historical error does not require the need to demoralize everything. Demoralizing everything could result in the phenomenon of every thing goes-nothing is wrong so every thing is right. There is a subtle pressure in social work to accept a single unified moral standard regardless of different ethnic or religious backgrounds. An obvious example is the issue of homosexuality. It is one thing to believe that none should be deprived of services and respect because of their sexual orientation, while it is another to ask every one to approve homosexuality on a moral ground. It is important to make that distinction. True diversity encompasses respect for other people’s moral views, as long

as that view does not act out to restrict other's basic human rights.

The resurging interest in aboriginal culture and Taiwanese traditions is an encouraging phenomenon. However, we should be cautious in not to accept every part of the aboriginal culture or Taiwanese tradition as good and desirable. The public media actually is revealing such a tendency. For example, while understanding and respecting how our ancestors worshiped various spirits is important, it should not take us back to the very practice that our ancestors might have given up because of the progression in their world views and logical reasoning. Social workers should also have the wisdom and courage to point out the disempowering aspect of the spirituality that their clients might adhere to.

Challenges for Social Work in Taiwan

Given the limited scope of this article, the author does not intend to engage in a comprehensive overview of the current conditions of multiculturalism in Taiwanese social work. The above discussion does reveal a number of areas that might pose challenges to the development of social work in Taiwan. The following paragraphs outline such challenges in order to serve as points for further investigation and discussion.

Social Work Professional Value and Ethics

A review of the Taiwanese Social Work Codes of Ethics instituted in 1998³ reveals a couple of concerns needing to be addressed. First, among

³ The Code of Ethics was established by the Ministry of Interior on July 27, 1998. There have been various attempts for revising the Codes. The most recent effort resulted in a draft proposal in March 03, 2006 by the National Association of Licensed Social Workers. The review made in this article is based on the official 1998 version.

all 18 items in the Codes of Ethics, only item #2 touches on the issue of diversity. It states that social workers should provide services to clients based on the principle of equality regardless of differences in sex, age, religion, ethnicity, and so on. While this statement itself is correct and is needed, it could easily become a “token” principle-something that is good in principle but with no directives for implementation. Second, the articulation of the Codes of Ethics suffers from a lack of systems perspective. This is revealed in an almost exclusive focus on the interface between social workers and individual clients. A number of items, such as #10, 13, 15, 16, and 18 do indicate the need for social workers to coordinate with other professionals, to enhance professional capacity, and to be mindful of social policies, social environment, and social justice. Nevertheless, the statements basically place social workers in a position of passive reactions. There is a lack of explicit charge to social workers to proactively confront systems and ideologies that might be incubating injustices. In this regards, the NASW Code of Ethics in the United States (NASW, 2000), and especially the NASW Standards for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice (NASW, 2001) could serve as useful referencing points for contemplating the codes of ethics in Taiwan.

Standards of Social Work Education

Again, the scope of this paper prevents from an in-depth analysis of Taiwanese social work education. In spite of of many talks in the past few decades, unified standards for regulating social work education in Taiwan are still fluid. While social work in Taiwan is aspired to pursue a professional status, we need to realize that professional status does not come without a systematic knowledge base to guide and sanction the

education and the professional socialization of social workers. What makes it difficult in coming up with such standards is that social work is a matter of heart (compassion), art (creativity and flexibility), and science (knowledge and skills). To incorporate all of them into a unified package is a challenge. Nevertheless, no profession is to exist without a unified knowledge base. It is probably the one of the most urgent matters in Taiwanese social work education, to institute a functional regulatory body to articulate and implement social work educational standards that would be suitable for the unique environment of the Taiwanese society. For achieving this, paying special attention to standards on cultural competencies is inevitable. The CSWE Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (CSWE, 2004) could be a referencing point as it provides a general direction and boundaries for such an endeavor. Its lack of specificity and implementation guidelines should be important lessons for Taiwan as well.

On the matters of either social work codes of ethics or social work educational standards mentioned above, a challenge for Taiwanese social work is on how to decrease the governmental and administrative regulatory stipulations by increasing social work professional and autonomous regulatory considerations. Both NASW and CSWE in the United States are non-governmental, voluntary, and autonomous organizations. The Codes of Ethics and Educational Policies are passed by their respective boards of directors.

Advocacy

The rapidly changing multicultural reality pushes the issue of advocacy to another level of urgency for social work in Taiwan. To be

effective, we need to face the issue of injustices squarely. Passively reacting to the systematic barriers of client's problem is not sufficient. A congruent theoretical foundation grounded on theories of justice and perhaps citizenship, is needed for guiding the development of proactive practice behaviors and modalities. The political climate in Taiwan might have discouraged many social workers from being political active. Nevertheless, what we need to realize is that social work is ultimately political if we take it correctly and seriously. Here being political does not mean to be entangled with the elections of officials and representatives. It simply means to bring the affairs of our clients into the public policy arena and into the conscience of the general public. We cannot afford to watch the victimization of foreign brides and labor immigrants, for examples, by the unjust public policies, and merely pacifying the victims with remedial services. We have the moral obligation to address the problems at the public policy level and to prevent the tyranny of the system from happening at the first place. This requires us to step out of that with which we are comfortable and to build solidarity with the diverse oppressed populations. Solidarity is not an act of giving; it is rather an act of common struggle with the disadvantaged and oppressed for a unified goal toward social justice.

Conclusion

This paper describes the multicultural reality and related racism and discrimination in the United States. The social work profession's responses to the reality are reviewed and critiqued. The situations and development in the United States might help shed light on the Taiwanese multicultural

social work practice and education. It is important to note that developing individual cultural competency starts from knowing one's own culture. Likewise, concepts and models for multicultural social work practice and education need to come from the reflections of the social work profession as a whole. While it is beneficial to learn how others do multicultural social work, only through critical reviews of others' models and continuous self-examinations can we derive models that are suitable for the Taiwanese unique contexts. If diversity entails power differentials, injustice and exploitation (and it does), social workers cannot expect to be effective while remaining as spectators of the evolving scenes of injustices. How much do we know about the plights of the oppressed and to what degree do we identify with their struggles? What should be our conceptual framework of socioeconomic justice? How should the Social Work Codes of Ethics and educational standards be revisited to reflect social work's commitment to the oppressed and the disadvantaged in the Taiwanese multicultural society? In the practice dimension, how can advocacy obtain its rightful place of urgency and importance? Before attempting to adopt or modify other's models and to conceptualize and codify specific multicultural social work practice, these are the important questions needing to be addressed.

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美國社會工作對多元文化境況的回應： 省思及借鏡*

林木筆**

中文摘要

美國社會多元化伴隨著種族歧視等社會不公義的狀況，美國社會工作者協會（NASW）及美國社會工作教育協會（CSWE）政策的演變呈現出社會工作對此現象的回應，如何提升社會工作者的多元文化工作能力也是學術界關心的主要課題之一。本文介紹及檢視美國NASW及CSWE現有關於多元文化社會工作的政策，多種多元文化工作與教育的理論架構及模式，並同時提供台灣社會工作多元文化教育與實務發展一些意見。

關鍵字：多元文化社會工作、多元文化知能、社會公義、社會工作教育

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