

Social Work Values and Ethics Issues of Universality

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Introduction

The question of whether the social work profession has a set of values that can be claimed by all social workers around the world has been and continues to be an important issue in a growing interdependent world. With the increase in global cooperation and collaborative projects between social work programs worldwide, the similarities and differences in social work values should be explored. Core social work values in nonwestern countries reflect societies in which the importance of community, spirituality, traditional beliefs, social justice/action and economic circumstances are emphasized. In western countries social work values are more concerned with individualism, objectivity, discrimination issues, self-realization and democracy. The purpose of this article is to examine the definition and layers of values, the emergence of social work values, the relationship between social work values and their social context and whether or not it is possible to have universal social work values. It will use the works of Canadian philosopher, Charles Taylor as well as other social work authors and writings concerning values. In particular, it will examine cross-cultural studies that have been conducted concerning western social work values and their relevance in non-western countries. Lynne Healy (2001) states, "there is considerable agreement that some level of universality exists" (p. 165), but draws attention to the difficulties in identifying values that are used and interpreted in a similar way. Codes of Ethics are discussed in relation to values and their universality with practical examples of various countries indigenizing their Code of Ethics. In an era of postmodernism an important question to ask is whether or not there can be a "universal all-encompassing code of ethics which emphasizes universality, inclusiveness and conventional conceptualizations of community" that respects the "diverse interests and plurality of voices characteristic of modern pluralist societies" (Briskman & Noble, 1999, p. 58)? A summary concludes this article.

Values

Definition of values

Charles Taylor defines morality, which includes values or 'goods', as encompassing the individual's relationships with each other. "Debates arise about what is the correct thing to do in situations involving others and responses typically revolve around ideas of rights, duties, obligations and justice" (Abbey, 2000, p. 10). Along with these issues are others concerning a person's sense of dignity, self-respect and a sense of meaning or fulfillment in life. He places importance on the fact that any moral philosophy "must make some contact with how people actually experience their moral lives" (p. 14). Rokeach (1973) defines values as "an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-

state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence" (p. 5). The Oxford Dictionary (1994) defines a value as "standards or principles considered valuable or important in life; moral values" (p. 887). At a social work conference on intercultural issues held in Hawaii in 1966 (Aptekar, 1967) members of a multi-cultural team defined values as

A standard or standards held by a significant portion of a society, reflected in patterns of institutionalized behavior, and predisposing the participants to act in relation to one another within the framework of a commonly understood, although not necessarily consciously controlled, nor logically consistent, referential system (p. 7).

Pincus and Minahan (1973) define values as "beliefs, preferences or assumptions about what is desirable or good for man...they are not assertions about how the world is and what we know about it, but how it *should* be" (p. 38). In short, values are standards or principles that inform the way that we make decisions concerning our personal and professional lives that we consider to be important. "Values are the implicit and explicit ideas about what we cherish as ideal or preferable" (DuBois & Miley, 2005, p.109)

Universal values

One universal value

Charles Taylor (1989) believes that there is one universal value, that of the respect for human life, integrity and well-being. Other social work writers (Aptekar, 1967; Butrym, 1976; Pincus and Minahan, 1973; Reamer, 1987) have understood that this is the one value that is universal and can be seen in most societies in the world. Vaclav Havel (1999) in a speech to the Canadian parliament concerning the state as an institution reveals his ideas of a universal value by stating:

I have often asked myself why human beings have any rights at all. I always come to the conclusion that human rights, human freedoms and human dignity have their deepest roots somewhere outside the perceptible world. These values are as powerful as they are because, under certain circumstances, people accept them without compulsion and are willing to die for them and they make sense only in the perspective of the infinite and the eternal (pp. 6 & 7).

Taylor's (2000) concept of strong evaluation and constitutive goods would support Havel's statement. Constitutive goods are "the powerful and empowering sources (p. 47)" behind the values that we deem as important. Social work's constitutive good could be the respect and dignity of human beings.

Dimensions of value

If we can say that there may be one universal value, are there other values that transcend cultures and subgroups of societies? This has been a continual debate, not just in social work but also in anthropology, sociology, management and other academic disciplines. What is helpful at this point is to look at different dimensions of values in order to understand the interaction between values and society in general. Charles Taylor acknowledges pluralism in values and describes them as “qualitatively different types from one another and cannot always be harmoniously combined, rank-ordered or reduced to some more ultimate or foundational good” (Abbey, 2000, p.12). “There are also other moral ideals and goals – e.g. of less than universal solidarity, or of personal excellence – which cannot be easily coordinated with universalism, and can even enter into conflict with it” (p. 11). He does not believe that all individuals value the same things strongly. This accounts for the belief that values vary across cultures and among individuals (p. 22). Aptekar (1967) would agree and says that societies may hold certain values of less or more importance depending on their societies. The dominance of a value does not mean it is universal, but that it is considered important to that society. He goes on to summarize thoughts from the Hawaii seminar concerning values and describes values in two ways, normative and instrumental.

In general, normative values might be thought of as ends to be served by instrumental values or means...a value, it may be seen, is not just an idea or principle. It may or may not meet with universal acceptance. If it is instrumental, it does suggest action. If it is normative, it connotes strong belief, and a quality of absoluteness (p. 5).

Other scholars have described different dimensions of values as preferred conceptions of people, preferred outcomes of people and preferred instrumentalities for dealing with people (Levy, 1973); as terminal and instrumental (Pike, 1996; Rokeach, 1973); as primary and secondary values (Mullaly, 1997) and as primary and instrumental values (Pincus and Minahan, 1973). Rokeach (1973) defines terminal values as “being self-centered or society-centered, intrapersonal or interpersonal in focus. Such en-states as salvation and peace of mind, for instance, are intrapersonal while world peace and brotherhood are interpersonal” (p. 8). He defines instrumental values as “moral values which refer only to certain modes of behavior...and those that could be called competence or self-actualization values” (p. 8). Charles Taylor (1989) states that our belief in the respect for human life has, in the modern world, come in the form of rights. The right to life, dignity, freedom of opinion and freedom to live as one pleases are important values in the western world. These rights can be seen in professional disciplines including social work. Although important to western societies, Taylor “maintains that they do not provide a sufficient way of dealing with all, or even some of the most important, social conflicts and problems” (Abbey, 2000, p. 130). It is in the area of rights that values become muddled and confused. How can the right to life, stemming from the universal value of the dignity and respect of individuals, exist alongside the fact that people are killed daily through capital punishment, abortion and genocide? Taylor would say that those violating this value would claim to be upholding it in another way. For example, concerning capital punishment one

group would say the person on death row has a right to life while others say innocent citizens also have a right to life. Or the Hutu's in Rwanda have a right to live without the Tutsi's around while others would say that the Tutsi's have a right to life. Although Taylor admits that there are certain groups in society who are abused or disrespected on the pretext that they are less than human he still adheres to the one universal value of respect and dignity of the individual. Apteekar (1967), Rokeach (1973) and Taylor (2000) highlight the fact that values are not always in keeping with psychological or cultural reality. Value conflicts exist everywhere and values that are opposite one another can and are operating at the same time in all societies. Acting against our own values can also be influenced by drugs and by media brainwashing in order to obtain a response that may go against ones values. This can be seen in the horrendous crimes committed during civil wars in countries like Rwanda where most people would agree with the right to life, dignity and freedom but where genocide of a particular ethnic group occurred due to ethnicity and years of oppression. Or the right of every child to live when in reality 10.6 million children around the world, under the age of five, died needlessly in 2003 (Unicef, 2004). Even when these value systems are grossly violated the respect and dignity of the individual continues to be a universal value. Taylor (2000) would say that individuals do not always act according to their values and this causes feelings of loss, failure, weakness and frustration. When a value is adhered to it causes pride, satisfaction and achievement. Even when values are not adhered to, Apteekar (1967) would say that a value remains a value even when it is violated in society.

Summary

There are different dimensions to values of which some may be considered universal while others are more societal and value-laden. Taylor (Abbey, 2000) identifies moral outlooks operating at two different levels: 1) life goods (values) level, what makes life worth living; and 2) constitutive goods (values), a deeper, less obvious but fundamental constitutive good. With the identification of one universal value, the issue of different levels of values and their strength and weaknesses in cultural contexts, the way in which values change from one culture to another, plus the emerging different philosophical understandings of life and morality, difficult questions are posed concerning universal social work values. Many social work values would be regarded as instrumental values that reflect the societal structures in which the profession exists and seem to be non-transferable. This brings into question the idea of a "shared unified value system and moral perspective which are represented in universalist and uniform codes" (Briskman & Noble, 1999, p. 60). "Social work's often prescribed best ways of or orthodoxies of helping are based not only on the prevailing values but also on dominant, often Eurocentric, theoretical assumptions and methods" (Martinez-Brawley, 1999, p. 334). Taylor (Abbey, 2000) would acknowledge value conflicts but states that "how compatible particular goods (values) are can only be determined through the process of reflection, debate, discussion and possible recontextualization" (p. 42). He also states that in order to understand other cultures, one has to understand their own. "By better understanding the history and specificity of their culture, westerners can come to identify the spiritual and moral dimensions woven into their cultural beliefs. This will make them more open to the value of other cultures and more receptive to the fact that the moral

and spiritual values woven into them, although differing from the western ones, are not some strange aberration but an inherent aspect of human culture" (p. 73). In a dialogue concerning the issue of universal social work values it is therefore important to understand the origin and history of those values.

Emerging social work values

History of social work values

Biehal and Sainsbury (1991) state the importance of knowing ones value base.

A complex totality of contributory factors amalgamates into a 'common sense' of social work (a package of taken-for-granted 'truths') through which the skills and values of 'good' practice are perceived and/or rationalized. The precise boundaries of 'common sense' vary among individual workers: each worker will be more or less influenced by particular theories and 'traditions' and the setting of practice (p. 247).

"Values shape our beliefs and attitudes and, in turn, our beliefs and attitudes shape our values" (DuBois & Miley, 2005, p. 109). The social work profession is known to have begun in the United States and Great Britain with the philosophical influences of Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Lock, etc. (Reamer, 1993). In the early years of social work, professional values centred on improving the conditions of the poor through rehabilitation into Judeo-Christian values which included "guidance to escape the evils of intemperance, laziness and idleness (DuBois & Miley, 2005, p. 111). Reamer (1990; 1994) suggests that over the years, social work values have changed from concerns about the morality of clients to the morality of social work, professional behaviour and actions of the social work profession. Mullaly (1997) discusses different modern paradigms that have influenced or are compatible with social work values he has proposed under the progressive social work ideals. The neo-conservative and liberal paradigms, so entrenched in American and Canadian social work theory, tries to deal with the 'fall outs' of the neo-liberal economics of today and is reflected in the social welfare institutions of the U.S. and Canada. The socialist paradigm, which includes social democracy and Marxism, had its effect in Britain, via the Fabian society and now the Labour government and other European countries in the 20th century, including their social welfare programs. Midgley (1981) discusses the development of European social work. Despite the differences in emphasis in education, most of these countries were receptive to and took hold of the American theories and ideas. Mullaly (2002) examines values in relation to the dominant European social group by describing this group as "bourgeois, Christian, heterosexual males of European origins...values reflect and reinforce the assumptions, views, needs, values, culture and social position of this group" (p. 19). Postmodernism "proposes that truth, beauty, morality and social life have no objective reality beyond how we think, talk and write about them...ultimately no one version of reality is better or truer than another" (p. 17). Bogo and Herington (1986) state that "societies resolve issues in a variety of ways, and social work practice, wherever developed, reflects the dominant culture's biases and values...social work practice developed in the West reflects the view of an industrialized urbanized society based on Judeo-Christian values" (p. 60).

Many social work values are subject to past and present political, social and economic situations of a culture (Biehal & Sainsbury, 1991; Nimmagadda & Cowger, 1999; Payne, 1993; Pincus & Minahan, 1973; Rokeach, 1973; Segal, 1993). Professional institutions reflect the values of their societies and social work is no exception (Tyler, 1999). Pike (1996) suggests that 'values are regarded as essential aspects of the professional socialization of social workers...they are viewed as important to the continued development of the profession' (p. 337). Table one, two and three give examples of the kinds of social work values stated by scholars and professional associations in western countries since 1958. The changing face of values can be seen throughout the years.

Table One

National Association of Social Workers (NASW) 1958

1. Individual is the primary concern of this society.
2. There is interdependence between individuals in this society
3. They have social responsibility from one another
4. There are human needs common to each person yet each person is essentially unique and different from others
5. An essential attribute of a democratic society is the realization of the full potential of each individual and the assumption of his social responsibility through active participation in society
6. Society has a responsibility to provide ways in which obstacles to self-realization (i.e. disequilibrium between the individual and his environment) can be overcome or prevented
(Pincus and Minahan, 1973, p. 38)

Butrym 1976

1. Respect for the person
2. A belief in the social nature of man as a unique creature depending on other men for fulfillment of his uniqueness
3. A belief in the human capacity for change, growth, and betterment
(Butrym, 1976, p. 43-46)

Biestek 1957

1. Acceptance
2. Non-judgmental
3. Individualization
4. Purposeful expression of feelings
5. Controlled emotional involvement
6. Confidentiality
7. Self-determination
(Biestek, 1957, p. 17)

Timms 1983

1. To respect the client
2. To accept 'him' for 'himself'
3. Not to condemn 'him'
4. To uphold 'his' right to self-determination
5. To respect 'his' confidence
(Timms, 1983, p. 43)

Table Two

Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) 1983

1. Regard the well-being of the persons I serve
2. Fulfill my obligations and responsibilities with
3. Integrity
4. Competency in the performance of duties
5. Act in a conscientious, diligent manner
6. Respect of the intrinsic worth of persons I serve
7. Confidentiality
8. Outside interests do not jeopardize my professional judgment, independence or competence
9. Create and maintain workplace conditions and policies consistent with the standard practice of groups, and the Code of Ethics
10. I will act to promote excellence in the social work profession (Alberta College, 1983)

British Association of Social Workers (BASW) 1985

1. Recognition of the values of dignity of every human being, irrespective of origins, race, status, sexual orientation, age, disability, belief or contribution to society
2. Responsibility to encourage and facilitate the self-realization of each individual person with the due regard to the interest of others
3. Relieve and prevent hardship and suffering (through services provided for individuals, families, groups, and communities)
4. Professional obligations to evaluate methods and policies in light of changing needs
5. Advocacy for the client with government, society, and agencies (BASW, Code of Ethics, 1985)

Table Three

National Association of Social Workers (NASW) 1999

1. Service
2. Social Justice
3. Dignity and worth of person
4. Importance of human relationships
5. Integrity
6. Competence (NASW, 1999)

International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) 2004

1. Respecting the right to self-determination
2. Promoting the right to participate
3. Treating each Person as a whole
4. Identifying and developing strengths
5. Challenging negative discrimination
6. Recognizing diversity
7. Distributing resources equitably
8. Challenging unjust policies and practices
9. Working in solidarity (IFSW/IASSW, 2004)

Analysis of values

The values expressed in the 1958 NASW Code of Ethics reflect the individualistic and moral or 'good citizen' tendencies of the early social work movement. It also reflects the 'neighbourhood system' of looking after your neighbours and promotes the idea of individual responsibility and democracy. Biestek (1961) and Timms (1983) reflect more of the medical model of casework with no values concerned with the more societal and international issues. The "controlled emotional involvement" emphasizes the objectivity seen in a positivist tradition. The above sets of values focus on individuals, with some reference to the community, and as Reamer (1998) points out "instead of the earlier preoccupation with clients' morality, social workers began to focus much more on the morality, values and ethics of the profession and its practitioners" (p. 489). The values outlined in the Codes of Ethics developed in Britain and Canada in the 1980's reflects changes in their societies and within the world. British values reflect a society emerging into a multi-cultural society with active anti-discrimination training incorporated into social work training during the 1980's. The emphasis on advocacy emerged with a more critical look at institutions and agencies that oppress clients. The obligation of social workers to their workplace and to the profession is more pronounced in the recent Canadian Code of Ethics. Finally, as we have entered into the 21st century, social work values reflect more global issues of social responsibility, social justice and environmental issues. The NASW values listed in the 1996 Code of Ethics was obtained through a "systematic and comprehensive review of literature on the subject" (Reamer, 1998, p. 495) and revised in 1999 (NASW, 1999). Bogo and Herington (1986) notices this trend in the more recent updates of values described in the codes of ethics as "espousing a broad philosophy of social work and social welfare which strives for social justice, the meeting of common human needs, equitable distribution of resources, mutuality and participation" (pp. 57-58).

Summary

The above brief analysis of social work values reflected through scholars and western Codes of Ethics over the years shows the changes in values that reflect society. Reamer (1987) suggests that "though there have been both challenges to and constructive changes in the value base of the profession, the key elements of this foundation have endured. A commitment to human welfare, social justice and individual dignity is characteristic of contemporary social work" (p. 801). Mel Gray (1995) suggests that the minimal values that all social workers should agree upon are "1) that the priority of human interests should be respected and 2) social workers should pursue an egalitarian conception of social justice" (p. 58). However, this analysis has been centred on western social work values and although these values seem universal, cross-cultural research shows that not everyone agrees with the same social work values, particularly at the instrumental level. Even similar values stated in the charts may look the same but could be interpreted differently due to the changing economic, social and political situations in society. Pike (1996) in her U.S. research on creating a social work values inventory did a 25-year content analysis on social work literature. She states, "the literature review failed to reveal a consensus within the profession about those values considered essential to effective social work practice" (p. 340).

Studies concerning cross-cultural research on social work values

Comparative studies

In 1996 there was an intercultural exploration of differences in social work values, functions and practice in Hawaii. Although western biased in participants, the seminar gives good insight into the question of social work values and their transferability. The seminar did not assume there were or were not universal social work values. At the risk of recognizing the complexity of language and concepts, they identified two sets of social work values that may be universal: 1) a) the worth of dignity of the individual and b) the well-being and integrity of the group and 2) a) progress and development of the individual and the society and b) security of the individual and society" (Aptekar, p. 10). The seminar states "each pair may be dominant in a given society at a given time, but it seems likely that any society will ever be found in which both members of either pair are completely lacking in the psychology of individuals, as values of the total society, or of segments of it" (p. 17)

Bye (1968) attempted to follow-up on surveys completed in 12 different countries (U.S., Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Norway, U.K., Canada, Switzerland, France, Netherland, Brazil and Chile) concerning universal social work values and came to the conclusion that belief in personal worth and self-determination were the common elements "although the practice of such values may vary somewhat depending upon cultural context" (Feldman, 1971, p. 87). Only two of the countries were non-western in origin.

In 1971 Ronald Feldman conducted a study between Turkish social workers and U.S. social workers to determine if there were any common social work values. His hypothesis was biased towards his feeling that western social work values are not transferable. His results indicated considerable cross-cultural variation in the value orientations of social workers. "For all but one value (Group responsibility) the proportionate differences far exceed accepted levels of statistical significance" (p. 91). The majority of Turkish social workers favored societal control and homogeneity whereas the U.S. social workers favored individual worth, personal liberty and diversity. His conclusion is that "no matter how wide their acceptance elsewhere, most of the 'core values' studied cannot be regarded as universals, nor likewise, as ubiquitous attributes of social work professionals" (p. 92).

According to Midgley (1981), although the spread of modernization and western education and technology has affected traditionalism, the "lives of hundreds of millions of people in developing countries today are still governed by traditional customs and beliefs" (p. 85). Although studies have sought to claim some universality of values, he concludes by stating "the myth of social work's cross-cultural universality can have credence no longer. Social workers who attempt to apply the profession's theories and principles to non-western societies will find, as Almazor showed, that they are unworkable" (p. 104). Midgley's curriculum study, using twenty-two schools from around the world, found that western values, theories and methodologies still dominated teaching and practice.

Nagpaul (1993) conducted a contextual study on Indian social work education with "twenty-one institutions, providing their prospectuses or some other related teaching material" (p.208) for analysis. He found that almost all of the textbooks, journals and teaching material were American and most of the

material, including values, were from the 1950's and 1960's U.S. material. Few indigenous writings were used in many of the educational systems. The difficulties of adapting western social work values to the Indian culture has been written about in recent years (Pawar, 1999; Spivastava, 1999).

Kam, Man, Ko and Lee (1997) conducted research at the City University of Hong Kong concerning the avenues by which social work values are learned through teaching and fieldwork placements. The City University of Hong Kong is steeped in the tradition of western social work theory, knowledge and skills. They did a literature review to develop 'core values'. The literature review was conducted on western based social work books, some Chinese research and the NASW, BASW and Hong Kong Social Workers Association (HKSWA) Code of Ethics. They conclude by saying:

Unlike the western culture, the Chinese seemed to have assigned less importance to the individual whose identity, worth and status is supposed to be subsumed under the family. Besides, it is a significant tenet of Confucian teaching that everybody in a society has his/her roles to play. Such roles are governed by a person's status, gender, age and family. Human relationship is perceived to be interdependent rather than independent; mutual help and reciprocity are valued (p. 193).

Although the study was conducted in a local setting, their findings are useful concerning transferability and are helpful in this discussion. Part of their results showed that "social work values systems of Chinese students showed less commitment to the value of freedom to make choices and more adherence to values on mutual care and social participation" (p. 198).

Abbott (1999) conducted research concerning the issue of the transferability of social work values to other cultures. Using a value scales she completed in 1988, she came up with four values: 1) basic rights, 2) social responsibility, 3) social justice and 4) self-determination. She gave out questionnaires at two international social work conferences of which her sample was 128 participants. Her hypothesis was that "social work values transcend culture and that in spite of cultural diversity, a common core of professional values exists among all social workers" (p. 455). Her results were that two of the four values were common. The two values that were not common among the sampling population were the sense of social responsibility and commitment to individual justice.

Another study, looking at social work values and practice was conducted in India by Nimmagadda and Cowger (1999). It was a qualitative study conducted at an alcohol treatment center, patterned after an American treatment model, in two cities in India. The study has four assumptions:

- 1) the knowledge base being utilized by social workers in this setting was essentially reflective of western social work practice, 2) social work practice models are laden with cultural values, norms, assumptions, attitudes and linguistic habits and beliefs, implicit and explicit, rational and irrational, formalized and intuitive, 3) practice cannot be acultural and ahistorical and 4) when utilized practice models developed in another culture, cultural incongruities and issues will routinely appear in the activity of the everyday life of the practitioner (pp. 262-263).

They describe three factors that emerged as Indian social workers tried to merge their training and culture together. In some cases they used a clear alternative to the American way, other times they made minor adjustments and other times the social workers opted for the American way even if it conflicted with their Indian culture. There were differences in values concerning advice-giving, family intervention, confrontation and reassurance.

The ambivalence was that they felt a need to do things that were not entirely congruent with what they had been taught...however, had they been working from an indigenous model that reflected their culture to begin with, they no doubt would have had more self-confidence in their knowledge base and been less ambivalent about not following what they had been taught (pp. 274-275).

Other studies

Canda, Shin, and Canda (1993) discuss differences in their study concerning cultural values and social work values in the context of Korea. Steeped in Confucianism, Buddhism, and Shamanism, they describe the three perspectives in Korean culture as “communalistic rather than an individualistic understanding of the human situation. Therefore themes of complementarity, balance and harmony are prominent. Another shared feature is the emphasis on direct experiential encounters with the sacred” (p. 97). They go on to say that all three perspectives promote human service as central to their philosophies. They conclude with the following remarks.

This study demonstrates that Buddhism, Confucianism, and Shamanism each have been developing philosophical and practical service systems for many centuries. Concern with human services and social welfare is obviously not distinct to the West, despite the nearly total neglect of education on this subject (spirituality) in American social work education. The great range and profundity of the Korean perspectives reinforce the importance of a broad, inclusive understanding of spirituality as a basic aspect of human experience that crosses cultural and historical boundaries (p.99).

Yoshiko Ito's (1995) article on social work development in Japan describes how social work started as an indigenous occupation using the Homen-iin system. During the occupation, the Americans introduced new western laws concerning welfare and discarded the Homen-iin system. Japan is only now beginning to relook at their social work curriculum in order to bring back some of the Japanese value systems and traditional methods of interventions.

In New Zealand, qualitative research concerning Tongan (Island near New Zealand in the South Pacific) social workers in New Zealand revealed two concepts, that of fakafekau'aki (connecting) and fakatokilalo (humility) that are important values in Tongan culture. Fakafekau'aki is a verb that means to “cause to be related to each other, to bring into relationship with each other, to correlate” (Mafile'o, 2004, p. 246). It concerns the connection with and belonging to each other. “First and foremost, relationship and connections are most important. So if you wanted a strategy for helping this family, first and foremost it is about alliances, it's about friendships...Step one: Build some rapport, build

some friendship, build some alliance” (p. 246). The author states that this value may mean “the social worker shares and self-discloses at a high level in terms of who their family are, their religion, or whether they are New Zealand born or Island-born” (p. 247). This confuses the boundaries of western social work values as that of keeping the personal and professional apart. To be an inside social worker often means bringing in the personal in order to build a trusting relationship. Clients see social workers as not just individuals or a professional but “representing their own family” (p. 248). This value is extremely important in that as “identity is defined in relation to ‘others’ it is important how one connects to others” (p. 249). The second value is one of fakatokilalo or humility. “This is a verb meaning to be humble, self-abasing and infers being self-derogatory (p. 250). It is the “humility, lowering of oneself and showing deference in relationships with those with whom you work” (p. 250). Examples of this kind of value can be seen when visiting a client by taking shoes off at the door, physical levels and choices of seat, understatement about what one has to offer and being of service in roles such as doing the dishes. In short, it is a value and a practice that “requires the social worker to take a step down from their positions of status, in order to be lifted up by those with whom they work” (p. 251). This goes against the idea of western assertiveness in getting things accomplished through aggression. The author concludes, “positive social change for indigenous and migrant groups in western countries requires the utilization of relevant cultural concepts as foundations for practice” (Mafile’o, 2004, p. 253). The author states that her study showed a disdain by Tongan social workers to ‘professionalism’, which seems to go against their values of fakafekau’ak and fakatokilalo.

Briskman & Noble (1999) found in their study on Codes of Ethics that values underlying these Codes “place high value on, individualism, independence and homogeneity of the client characterized by a liberal democratic philosophy” (p. 59-60). Mel Gray (1995) believes that the profession has gone the wrong way by accepting only the positivist view of knowledge and not accepting the critical, reflective approach. For example, the concepts represented in social work values may still be appropriate but they need to be redefined in a critical reflective way with different societies actively involved in this critique for their own cultures.

Finally, Biehal & Sainsbury (1991), in their research concerning clients’ rights, states the necessity to continually examine social work values, particularly as they do have a humanist traditional value base.

It is important for social work to examine the humanist value base on which practice has traditionally been founded. These values should not be seen as a range of discrete elements (such as individuality, self-determination, respect) but as a network of interrelated elements organized in specific ways in specific historical contexts (p. 250).

The challenge, if universal values are indeed important, is to “reach beyond tokenism in the areas of diversity, identity, social justice and celebration of difference...and to fundamentally challenge the norms and values and to the whole process of thinking in moral reasoning which has held sway for centuries” (Briskman & Noble, 1999, p. 67).

Summary

Through these cross-cultural studies it is clear that a few values have been identified as universal but many are under question as to their universality at the deepest philosophical level. Issues of individual/communal; objective, impersonal/subjective, personal; security/development of the individual and society; independence/interdependence; reciprocity/individual liberties and freedoms; social responsibility/individual social justice; and balance, harmony/power, control and disharmony/aggression are important differences between cultures that affect social work values. The western assumption that man has power over the world, that time is linear, that rationalism prevails, spirituality is non-existent and that the written word is the only important knowledge are some of the values that indigenous and non-western cultures might find difficult to accept as values important to their cultures. Social work values stem from predominantly western social work values and have excluded the knowledge and practices of non-western cultures. "The challenge for social work is to embrace diverse cultural paradigms. If social work is to achieve social justices outcomes then the starting place of the knowledge and practice must be more reflexive and capable of facilitating other cultural views" (Mafile'o, 2004, p. 254).

Code of Ethics

According to DuBois and Miley (2005) ethics generate standards that direct one's conduct. In other words, "ethics represents values in action" (p. 110). They identify three levels of ethics as 1) microethics; those standards and principles that direct practice; 2) macroethics; those concerned with organizational arrangements and values as well as those that underlie and guide social policies and 3) ethical behaviour; actions that uphold moral obligations and comply with standards for practice as prescribed by ethical codes (p. 110). If social work values are the principles by which the profession writes its professional Codes of Ethics and instrumental social work values worldwide differ according to culture then acceptance and use of western codes of ethics by non-western countries needs to be urgently addressed.

Through my travels and reading, it is clear that many social work associations in non-western countries copied and still use western Codes of Ethic without critically analyzing their relevance to their own country's culture, language and traditions. The idea that certain values or conduct may not be appropriate in some countries or that the interpretation of these values are different will inevitably cause some confusion in regards to professional conduct and is something that all social work professional organizations need to address. In my own work in Ghana at the Department of Social Work at the University of Ghana, Legon, the idea of western social work values was examined in a group research project looking at the indigenization of social work curriculum and practice in Ghana (Kreitzer, 2004). First, it was established that the Ghana Association of Social Workers (GASOW) Code of Ethics was taken straight from the NASW Code of Ethics. This presupposed that the NASW Code of Ethics is universal and the 'mother' of all codes. Through our work looking at cultural values in Ghana several participants in the group gave their understanding of values as they relate to social work. One Ghanaian professor explains similarities in values between Ghana and the western world.

We all value human life. We all want good to triumph over evil. There are certain commonalities that you find with all human beings, whether they are westerners, African and so forth...but in addition to that, at the lower levels, at the micro levels, we begin to see all of these differences (Awedoba, 2003).

Another Ghanaian professor explains some differences.

We have values. Our value regarding the family is not that the person should be married. If he or she is not married then they call her unmarried. And then the children are born of an unmarried mother. Ours is care for the wife and child. Our value is care and not marriage. But the European value happens to be marriage. But ours is care. (Blavo, 2003).

The group identified four fundamental values in Ghana as being 1) a communal society, 2) consensus-based society, 3) outward display of emotions in society and 4) the importance of saving face. These values are not highlighted in the (GASOW) Code of Ethics. A few western values like self-determination and confidentiality could work against social work practice in Ghana. The group had a discussion concerning confidentiality in the context of a communal society where extended family, consensus and property rights are seen as important parts of any decision-making process. Group members felt some western social work values were not appropriate to Ghanaian social work practice while others thought an adaptation process was necessary. One group member states.

You say that confidentiality and self-determination cannot work here. I don't understand you because if you take the principle of confidentiality, under what situation is it not workable in our culture? Confidentiality and self-determination, it is in our cultures, we deal with it we propagate it, but they have their limitations...social work demands a lot of discretion and adaptability and people should know how to make use of it in very constrained situations (Mensah, 2003).

Adaptation of values may be appropriate but this puts a lot of stress on social workers in non-western countries and seems unfair. With a little time and effort values and Codes of Ethics can be made more indigenous, reflecting that country's values. To use a western Code of Ethics is no longer acceptable and non-western social work professional associations need to be encouraged to indigenize their own Code of Ethics that reflect their society. This is a necessary part of making social work practice more indigenous to the society in which social workers are practicing. Below are two examples of countries that have embarked on this indigenous process.

India

Social work began in India through the American missionary, Clifford Manshardt in 1925 (Mandal, 1995). In 1936 the Tata Institute Graduate School of Social Work opened in Bombay. Mandal (1995) describes three stages of the development of social work training in India as 1) pre-independence, 1936-47, where social work education was relatively indigenous, 2) after independence, 1947 onwards, when social work education was influenced by American social work and 3) a reaction to the inadequacies of social work education with a view to indigenize. In 1991, India embarked on a rewrite of the Indian Social Work

Code of Ethics. After many drafts that looked very western, a more Indian value system and ethical practice became the new Code of Ethics (Ramsay, 2000). The preamble states the following. "The declaration is rooted in the contemporary social reality which has a historical background and in the framework of humanistic values, based on the intrinsic worth of all human and non-human life (TISS, 1997, p. 1). The use of ideologies of Sarvodaya, Swarajya and Lokniti are present as well as Gandhian principles.

New Zealand

In 1964 the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW) was formed and schools of social work were developed, influenced by western social work knowledge. However, due to the diversity of people in the Pacific Islands and a large population of Maori in New Zealand, social work in New Zealand has indigenized its curriculum in order to

promote an indigenous identity for social work in New Zealand and to assist people to obtain services adequate to their needs and to ensure that social work in New Zealand is conducted in accordance with the articles contained in the Treaty of Waitangi (Treaty signed between Europeans and Maori concerning land rights)" (NZASW, 1993, p. 16).

The New Zealand Association of Social Workers (NZASW) Code of Ethics was reformulated in 1993 and appears to be the first bicultural Code of Practice in the world. The code affirms the right of independence of the Maori people and "represents the active commitment to the promotion of an indigenous identity for social work in Aotearoa New Zealand. NZASW recognizes existing Maori models and initiatives as alternatives to conventional monocultural institutions" (p. 16). It also recognizes that at the moment, the European or Pakeha, has the power over resources and decision-making and social work needs to address this power regularly at an individual and institutional level. It "attempts to accommodate difference and diversity in an emancipatory and social justice sense which, in turn, offers some direction of change" (Briskman & Noble, 1999, p. 65). It shows a negotiated compromise between the Maori and Pakeha concerning issues including social justice. The 'other' voice has been heard through this reformulation process.

As a challenge to social work in Canada, I wonder how many Social Work Codes of Ethics have taken into account and enveloped the values and ethics of First Nations cultures? Is it appropriate to intertwine the different values as the New Zealanders have done or should separate Codes of Ethics govern social work practice and conduct with European social workers and Aboriginal social workers in Canada? Traditional Native Code of Ethics, deemed by the First Nations of Manitoba (Manitoba, 2005) as universal to all nations, reflects a somewhat different approach to values in life than western social work values. There are similarities and differences between this and the CASW Code of Ethics and if these kinds of values were included in the CASW Code of Ethics, possibly a different kind of ethics would emerge.

IFSW/IASSW

Taylor (1999) and Bogo and Herington (1998) speak to the idea of 'appropriate international social work knowledge'. "If we are not to repeat the mistake of exporting western social work ideas and practice methodologies which may or may not be relevant, it is of vital importance that we address the

question of which social work values, theories and methodologies are most appropriate internationally (Taylor, 1999, p. 309). Over the past few years IFSW/IASSW have taken it upon themselves to identify universal social work values and a Code of Ethics. It was achieved through the assumption that “ethics is a complex topic and informed by belief systems and values which vary across our globe...However there is much that is held in common, for example, the value of respect for the person (IFSW/IASSW, 2004, p. 1). Designing a set of “overarching principles upon which social work educators can base their training in ethics and national organizations can develop their codes of ethics” (p.1), these organizations produced a document on ethics that was passed at the recent IFSW/IASSW conference in Adelaide, Australia. Two principles were established that are meant as a guide to social workers and social work associations worldwide.

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 environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work (IFSW/IASSW, 2004, p. 3).

It reflects the growing need for social work to incorporate collaborative methods, empowerment, strengths, solidarity and diversity.

Summary

The debate concerning whether or not western social work values are cross-cultural has had some attention over the years. There seem to be a few universal values, like respect and dignity for human life and social justice (Cox, 1995; IFSW/IASSW, 2004; Reamer, 1987) but the instrumental social work values cannot be assumed to be universal or interpreted in the same way in the context in which they were written. Further research needs to be completed in this area looking at other ways of knowing and thinking other than the European scientific knowledge base. This will give new insights and understanding of social work values from people who have a history of and live a different philosophical lifestyle than western social workers. Bogo and Herington (1986) believe that “social work cannot achieve a universal coherence with respect to its value and knowledge base until current ‘universal’ knowledge is assessed for use, rejected or adapted and ‘context’ specific knowledge is also developed and examined for its universality (p. 64). The issue of ‘what social work values are universal’ may not be the most important knowledge gained from these research studies. In fact some would question the concept of universalism itself as a western concept (Ani, 1994) and see no value in this exercise. Postmodernism asks the question as to whether or not ‘the other’ voices are reflected in social work values and “must be credited with legitimizing the valuing of differences, the questioning of universal principles and single truths...and recognizing how forceful are prevalent interpretations of society” (Martinez-Brawley, 1999, p. 343).

With the question of social work values being universal, comes the question of Codes of Ethics for different countries. With social work values as the building block for ethical practice it is important that each country revise their Code of

Ethics in order to reflect the language, spirituality, philosophical and historical background of their country. To keep adapting from the western practices and values is not the most indigenous way of providing good social work ethical practice. The IFSW/IASSW have provided general guidelines for countries revising their Codes of Ethics and this will be helpful to many. The debate concerning the universality of social work values is useful in educating social workers as to different ways of knowing and thinking that will promote a more equal collaboration and partnership with different social work groups around the world. On a broader scale, Mullaly (1997) states "given social work's belief in the inherent dignity and worth of the person, it must ask itself what type of society best promotes this ideal...what type of society best promotes the values, ideals, principles and beliefs espoused by the social work profession?" (p. 26). This is the question all social workers should be asking in the work that they do worldwide.

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