**Lecture Notes for Chapter 17: Global and International Social Work**

The globe has become smaller and more manageable. As a result of advanced communication technology (e.g., computers, phones, social media) and modes of rapid transportation (e.g., planes and bullet trains), it is commonplace for people to communicate, travel, and engage in social interaction and commerce across national boundaries. People around the world continue to come to the U.S. in pursuit of opportunities, freedom, and prosperity. High rates of racial and ethnic intermarriage have contributed to emerging American identities and a growing number of persons with mixed descent in the U.S.

Notable organizations dedicated to promoting human rights and justice and aligned with profession of social work include:

* International Federation of Social Workers - a federation of social work organizations producing a voice for the profession of social work around the world. A non-government entity, the IFSW is organized into five regions across the world with its global Secretariat located in Basel, Switzerland. The IFSW has more than 100 members and promotes world-wide social justice, human rights, and social development through the use of effective social work practices and international cooperation.
* International Association of Schools of Social Work - dedicated to supporting social work education and educators. The IASSW promotes international exchange of information, expertise, and research. It is an organization dedicated to promoting global standards for social work education and training.
* International Council on Social Welfare - gathers and distributes information (e.g., via reports, newsletters, and electronic means) about issues related to economic development and human rights across the globe. It supports research and consultation to assess problems, develop policies, and advocate for change. The ICSW facilitates meetings, forums, workshops, and conferences examining a variety of global topics.

Central Concepts in Global and International Social Work

* Differences in Focus of Global and International Social Work
  + Global practice: In global practice, social workers act to improve the circumstances and conditions of global citizens. Social work activities are based on a special appreciation and understanding that globalization has made it possible for people around the world to experience multiple cultures and become involved in and be affected by various social problems and causes. For example, through social media, social workers in the United States collaborate on a research project with social workers in Nigeria to design culturally appropriate strategies to decrease mother-to-child transfer of HIV/AIDS in their respective countries.
  + International social work: Working with social workers from other countries and participating in international advocacy and policy development. Activities include advocating for rights and justice for international populations and participating in social action and policy development to address global problems.
  + Level of National Development - Much of global practice and international social work involves countries and population groups struggling with economic and social development. The causes of delayed development are generally limited resources and oppressive political factors.
    - Industrialized countries have a developed economy, exhibit advanced technology, and are modernized.
    - Developing countries (previously called Third World Countries) have a less developed economy, lack sophisticated technology, and possess a lower standard of living than industrialized countries.
* Social Work Principles for Global and International Practice
  + Transnational Identities – Many individuals maintain family relationships, develop friends, work, and/or keep social roots in more than one country. Social workers often serve people with allegiance to and a sense of home in more than one country.
  + Cultural Competence – In addition to acquiring knowledge about the values, traditions, customs, ways of thinking, and behaviors of client groups from a multitude of countries, social workers are intentional in examining their own values, acquiring a cross-cultural understanding of clients, and developing culturally appropriate and relevant skills and approaches. Cultural knowledge can be attained in a number of ways including reading, attending continuing education opportunities, attending events highlighting other cultures, and seeking out interaction with knowledgeable persons or groups.
  + Multilingualism – Many clients communicate in more than one language. It is important for social workers to be aware of nuances related to communication patterns of certain groups. For example, some cultures discourage direct eye contact. With some clients, social workers will communicate with the assistance of interpreters. Social workers also take care to use culturally appropriate and language specific written information (e.g., posters, signs, electronic messaging, printed materials).
  + Comparative Social Policy – The analysis of policies and service delivery in other countries provides insight into the thought process of citizens of those countries. It can be interesting to analyze a social policy (e.g., healthcare, public assistance, family leave, disability) from another country in comparison to policy implementation in the U.S., and think how values and culture might influence the practicality of such a policy being approved and successfully implemented in the U. S.
  + Principles of Ethics - The International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) have approved a “Statement of Ethical Principles” that emphasizes professionalism, social justice, human rights and dignity, professional conduct, and evaluation of national codes of ethics.
  + Charity and Empowerment - International efforts in social work often focus on charity, providing foreign aid to those in need through goods and services. Social workers have been involved in world-wide relief organizations such as the United Nations, the World health Organization, Catholic Relief Services, the International Committee of the Red Cross, Lutheran World Relief, and Save the Children. However, charity alone does little to challenge power differentials among people and forms of oppression. The recipients of charity are in no better position in the long run and often require charity to fill their needs into the indefinite future. A focus on empowerment, the encouragement, knowledge, and resources needed to influence decisions and decision-making processes, leads to more significant and lasting change.
  + Social Development - Activities that combat exploitation and oppression by equitably distributing social and economic gains, and by stimulating personal and social fulfillment for all of a society’s members. social workers advocate for policies and practices that afford people meaningful employment, needed resources, opportunities for advancement, and an active voice in decision making.

Current Issues Facing Global and International Social Workers

* HIV/AIDS - HIV is an abbreviation for human immunodeficiency virus, which is a virus that adversely affects the body’s ability to combat disease and causes AIDS. AIDS is an abbreviation for acquired immune deficiency syndrome, which occurs after the immune system becomes so compromised that it is unable to defend itself against bacteria or other viruses and often permits the development of certain forms of cancer. In many cultures, people resist discussion of HIV/AIDS and its prevention because topics related to the transmission of the virus are taboo. Estimates for the 2012 worldwide number of children having been orphaned as a result of AIDS ranges between 16.1 million and 21.6 million. In sub-Saharan Africa alone, an estimated 13.4 to 16.9 million children have been orphaned as a result of AIDS
* Child Welfare – Multiple threats to child welfare include diseases, loss of parents, hunger, housing, human trafficking and exploitation (e.g., as labor, prostitutes, and soldiers), neglect, abuse, and unsafe living conditions. The availability and accessibility of child protective services, adoption, foster care, nutritional programs, child care, and medical services varies considerably from country to country.
* Poverty - Worldwide, the poverty line for absolute poverty**,** which is the line established to define how much a person needs to survive at the most basic level, is $1.25 per day. More than 1.4 billion people subsist at that level. Absolute poverty often results in severe malnutrition, preventable and treatable diseases, and poor overall health. The United Nations has developed the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)to measure deprivation. It takes into account health (e.g., nutrition and infant mortality), education (e.g., amount of schooling), and living standards (e.g., water, toilets, electricity, and flooring in residence).
* Refugees - Refugees are immigrants to a country who are given special consideration because they have been forced to leave their country because of human rights violations (e.g. suffering or persecution as a result race, religion, political belief, etc.). An asylum seeker is a person seeking or claiming the status of refugee, but has not yet been formally evaluated and judged to be a refugee. Social workers partner with international organizations, human service agencies, and faith-based organizations to assist immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees to address their needs, acclimate to new ways of thinking and behavioral expectations, and, from a policy perspective, identify ways to protect and advance their rights in a new country.
* Safety and Self-Care - in order to be an effective professional, social workers need to address their own needs and safety concerns. Self-care refers to behaviors and actions that contribute to maintaining one’s own sense of wellness and health. In international social work, in developing countries in particular, safety can be the foremost concern.

Diversity and Global and International Practice

* Age - Age discrimination and oppression are relative, contingent on country and culture. For example, Mexico has a relatively young age structure with a median age of 24, as compared to median age of 35 in the United States, and illegal job discrimination may begin as early as age 35.
* Class - It may be that technology is the new determinant of global class structures . Instead of categorizing people on the basis of income, wealth, family status, social connections, and education, a world-wide class system has been developing on the basis of people being technologically connected, semi-connected, and disconnected. Client access to technology is an important issue in social work practice. Applying for or monitoring benefits from public assistance programs often involves computer knowledge and access.
* Ethnicity - Discrimination in some other parts of the world has far more impact on oppressed ethnic groups. When a specific ethnic group is targeted, people can be imprisoned and face discrimination and persecution, such as fines and harassment, for no other reason than their ethnicity.
* Race - High rates of racial and ethnic intermarriage in the United States are leading to a growing number of persons with mixed descent. Racial classification is becoming more complex. Race can be important in regard to self-perception, self-identification, and any inherent meaning for a client. For many people from multiracial populations, a salient and practical question becomes “What do I consider as my primary racial identification?”
* Gender - Globally, women continue to be dominated, oppressed, and exploited sexually, interpersonally, economically, and socially by men.
* Sexual Orientation - In 2013, the United Nations called upon all governments across the globe to protect the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals.
* Intersections of Diversity - With people experiencing multiple forms of diversity, it is especially important to view the uniqueness, dignity, and worth of each person and their perspective.

Advocacy and International Social Work

* Effective advocacy by social workers for global change often involves:
* Interest
* Conducive employment
* Collaboration
* Strategic involvement in causes
* Social and Economic Justice
  + Taking a global perspective to issues of economic and social justice often means looking at the societal structures and forces that impinge on the situation.
  + Example – Amnesty International seeks a world where people live free from violence and is particularly concerned with ending the worldwide cycle of violence against women. Violence against women and girls takes many forms (e.g., physical abuse, rape, female genital cutting, and human trafficking).
* Supportive Environment
  + For people living in challenging environments, seeking residency in a more hospitable place is a way to improve one’s quality of life and life expectancy. Social work practice involves both helping people to advocate for improvements to their native environment and assisting people with adapting to new places.
* Human Needs and Rights
  + Human needs and rights are relative to time, place, and the values of people involved. Cultural values defining the appropriateness of behaviors and actions vary tremendously by country. What is deemed sexist, oppressive, or abusive in one country can be seen by people in another, sometimes neighboring nation as acceptable or noble.
  + In 1948, following the atrocities of World War II, the United Nations adopted a Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) applicable to people from all nations. The UDHR consists of a preamble and 30 articles delineating and describing various rights, freedoms, fair treatment, and entitlements for all humans.
* Political Access
  + In democratic countries, the notion of a fair and free election is valued; people have a right to vote for politicians and leaders and votes are legitimately counted. But assuring fair elections in countries whose politics are characterized by the use of force or plagued by corruption is a challenge.

Your Career and International Social Work

* The occupational classification of international social worker is not prevalent and data is not routinely available. Social workers in international practice often remain undifferentiated from other social workers and subsumed under employment classifications specifying populations groups and problem areas.
* Laws regulating the practice of social work are determined by the country or state in which one is employed and practices. Developing countries may not regulate the title or role of social worker at all or may have very limited educational and training requirements. More sophisticated systems for regulating social work practice are generally in place in developed countries, where professionalism and advanced degrees are more common.
* International job opportunities - Social workers possess valuable knowledge and skills for international commerce that are applicable to many occupations in the travel industry, diplomatic units, international government service (e.g., embassy work), higher education (e.g., advising, admissions, and exchange programs), and religious organizations. With social work’s heavy commitment to human rights and social justice, employment with companies and organizations emphasizing international human rights (for example, Avon’s Global Believe Fund) is a special consideration. Many international businesses seek ways to improve the human condition and spread corporate goodwill globally. These companies may hire social workers for jobs in public relations, product management, and human relations.