GRSW 500 History & Philosophy of Social Work

**Citizenship Social Work Framework**

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**Background**

*Citizenship Social Work* is a framework for entering into working relationships with an understanding that a person’s embodiment of citizenship - their expressed existence within a democracy - is the profession’s most fundamental goal. Social work is the only profession with an explicit goal of “social justice” in its Code of Ethics (Reamer, 2013). Social work has historically and continues to be the advocate and representative for those who do not have full embodiment of citizenship. Social workers, due to their singular historic and current work with the poor, disenfranchised, and those with otherwise limited agency, should act to help these persons manifest their humanity in a democracy as a citizen.

This guidance requires an understanding by the social worker that the individual citizen is an equal member of the whole polity, and should therefore be acknowledged as such by the state. In fact, the term “citizenship” connotes both the individual and the group; the group (the democratic polity) confers rights and obligations on individuals and groups. As Aristotle stated, citizens are at once the ruled and the rulers. However, Shafir (1998) contended that while the theory of citizenship calls for equality, system structures and discursive constructions (how people are represented through text, images and the spoken word) of people lead to differences in the lived experience of citizenship resulting in gradations of its embodiment. Because, as Shklar (1991) maintains, American citizenship has historically been defined by who is excluded, a primary role for social work is to resist this full and partial exclusion and actively work to fully include all members.

*Citizenship Social Work* is the state and practice of social work based upon the citizenship framework. It is therefore necessary to come to agreement on what constitutes “citizenship.” There are a number of conceptions of citizenship, but Janoski’s (1998) encompasses Marshall’s (1950) classic and widely accepted citizenship definition and includes more contemporary understanding:

Citizenship is membership of individuals in a nation-state with certain universalistic rights and obligations at a specified level of equality and includes both active and passive rights and obligations. There are three widely accepted rights and obligations of citizenship and a fourth which is often included. These are civil, political, social, and economic. (Janoski, 1999, p. 9)

**Definition**

*Citizenship Social Work* therefore, is the critical study and practice of social work based upon the citizenship framework of the civil, political, social, and economic rights and obligations of citizenship (Toft, 2012). Van Ewijk (2009) says, “It is a field of action, knowledge and research [that] aims at integration of all citizens and supports and encourages self-responsibility, social responsibility, and the implementation of social rights” (van Ewijk, 2009, p. 174) (See Figure 1).

**Critical Theory**

Citizenship Social Work is a *critical theory perspective*. Critical theory is emancipatory: its aim is to liberate people from the bounds that enslave them (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2005). It acknowledges the agency of the individual as well as larger political, social, economic, and discursive forces. With regard to larger forces, critical theory asserts that domination or exploitation is structural; larger institutions such as the economy, government, racism and sexism affect quality of life. Furthermore, ideologies (organized belief systems that benefit those in power and represent social change as impossible) and hegemony (the monopolization of cultural and economic discourse to dominate over others), are reproduced every day and result in a “false consciousness.” This false consciousness leads to the shared belief that the world has fixed and external social, economic, and cultural laws (e.g. inevitableness of capitalism, individual effort always leads to success). Critical theory submits that the world is changeable through social change efforts, including consciousness raising, advocating, and organizing. Individuals have agency and ability to effect change in their worlds and those of others (Agger, 2006; Fook; 2012). The idea of social justice, social work’s most distinguishing ethic, parallels the tenets of critical theory. Day (2006) states that social justice is:

… [W]ithin national, or (today) international limits and capabilities to ensure that each of every relevant group has unrestricted access by virtue of being a member of society, to certain basic amenities of life. Among these are food, shelter, clothing, education, and health care adequate to the resources of the relevant society, and the ability to attain such rights through, for example, employment, legislation, court decisions, and so on, equitable under the law; and back freedoms, including speech and self-expression

Therefore, a stance of critical theory, of persons’ liberation from unjust constraints, is inherent in the idea of social justice and social work.

**Democratic Citizenship Framework**

The presence of both rights and obligations is important. Rights-claiming without highlighting the fulfillment of citizenship obligations becomes problematic in public debate and policy. For example, in the US welfare reform of 1996, legislators placed heavy citizenship obligations upon low-income mothers with Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), an economic assistance program which required work in the labor force. In part, this was possible because the citizenship obligation of parenting – the support of which had been the policy goal of the preceding policy of Aid to Families and Dependent Children (AFDC) - was disregarded in the legislative debate (Toft, 2010). In fact, some historians assert that limiting access to citizenship obligations minimizes access to citizenship rights. Kerber (1998) argued that for women in the U.S., historic exclusion from citizenship obligations (e.g., military duty, juries, and certain paid work) limited their citizenship rights claims (such as receiving benefits from the GI Bill, representative juries, and economic equality).

***Table 1. Rights and Obligations of Citizenship***

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| **Domains of Citizenship** | **Rights** | **Obligations** |
| Civil | Protecting legal state of being  Procedural  Expressive  Bodily control  Property and contracting labor | Interpersonal  Organizational  Enforcement and implementation |
| Political | Voting and participation in political process  Voting  Participation in creating new laws  Running for office  Demonstration and protest | Interpersonal  Organizational  Enforcement and implementation |
| Social | Supporting ~~claims to economic subsistence and social existence~~  Enabling  Opportunity  Distributive  Compensatory | Enabling and preventive  Opportunity  Sustenance/ economic  Enforcement and implementation |
| Economic | Involvement in market, organizational and capital  Labor market intervention  Organizational participation  Capital participation | Labor market  Firm/ Bureaucracy  Capital participation  Enforcement and implementation |

Table adapted from Janoski (1998)

**The Specific Rights and Obligations of Citizenship**

Citizenship is membership of individuals in a nation-state with certain universalistic rights and obligations at a specified level of equality and includes both active and passive rights and obligations (Janoski, 1998). The potential for the application of this citizenship model is evident: rights and obligations are universalistic and therefore, not differentiated based on class, gender, race, or any other characteristic or identifier. In addition, the idea that these rights are bounded within a nation state clearly defines the membership. As one born or naturalized in the country, one automatically should have access to citizenship and all that entails. The complementary nature of the building blocks of rights and obligations sets forth the idea that not only are there rights associated with citizenship (as in the Liberal Citizenship model), but there are also obligations (as in the Civic Republic model). Finally, this definition of citizenship also underscores the principle of equality among citizens.

T.H. Marshall (1950) was the first to conceptualize a trichotomy of citizenship including civil, political, and social rights. Janoski (1998) presented a fourth right of citizenship – economic rights. Each of these rights has an attendant obligation. According to Marshall (1950), *civil rights* are, “The rights necessary for individual freedom – liberty of the person, freedom of speech, thought, and faith, the right to own property and to conclude valid contracts, and the right to justice” (p. 78). Janoski (1998) further delineates these. He states that civil rights include procedural rights, expressive rights, bodily control rights, and property and contracting labor rights. These rights reflect the protection of the individual from the state.

*Political rights* include entitlement to the franchise (e.g., voting rights) and the right to be politically active, including the ability to influence the creating of new laws, running for office, and demonstrating and protesting (Marshall, 1950; Janoski, 1998).

*Social rights* include the rights to “The whole range from a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilised being according to the standards prevailing in the society” (Marshall, 1950, p. 78). These rights are fulfilled by the benefits of the welfare state. Janoski (1998) elaborates that social rights include enabling rights, opportunity rights, distributive rights and rights to compensatory payments. Enabling rights constitute those things individuals need to assure the basic functioning of citizens in society for well-being. Opportunity rights are those that allow citizens to get the necessary skills for work and cultural participation through elementary, secondary, and higher education. Distributive rights underscore the need for providing transfer payments so that retirees, people with a disability, single parents, and other persons who need assistance to retain a level of subsistence. Finally, compensatory payments address a debt of service or injury, such as payments to disabled veterans, injured workers, or other citizens whose rights have been compromised in some way (Janoski, 1998). *Economic rights* include: labor market intervention rights which allow for public participation in assuring employment for citizens, organizational participation rights which include workers’ rights to participation in decisions at work, and capital participation rights which involves workers’ participation in decisions about the capital of the organization. Here, capital refers to the goods or investment used to generate income and even the income itself (Janoski, 1998).

Accompanying these rights are their attendant obligations. *Civil obligations* include interpersonal obligations in which members respect one another’s civil rights, organizational obligations to promote the general welfare by respecting laws and individual rights, as well as enforcement and implementation obligations which assure resources for the legal system and cooperation with police in assuring legal rights (Janoski, 1998).

*Political obligations* include obligations of voting and informed participation in politics, organizational duties of cooperating with other groups in politics and following political laws and regulations. Finally, political obligations also include efforts to enforce and implement a democracy including resources needed to run such a system, military service to protect from outside threats, and the obligation to protest and even overthrow governments that violate rights (Janoski, 1998).

*Social obligations* involve enabling and preventive duties such as using health care prudently, raising a loving family, and maintaining a safe and clean environment. Also, within social obligations is the responsibility to take advantage of opportunities, such as pursuing education to the best of one’s ability, pursuing a career to the benefit of society, and tolerating social diversity. Also included are sustenance or economic duties: those who receive unemployment or public assistance should look for work if they are able and be willing to accept employment in or out of their home. Likewise, we should all respond to other persons’ social rights and the need for economic transfer payments. In terms of enforcement and implementation of this obligation, the state should provide resources for social rights and help the less fortunate through government intervention (Janoski, 1998). Finally, the *Economic or Participation Obligation* consists of labor market responsibilities and duties: those who receive services should actively pursue work (which can include raising children) and employers should cooperate with the government and unions to provide employment programs. Also, firms, businesses and agencies have obligations to ensure equity and productivity and respect all groups in the process. The capital participation in this obligation protects and promotes the economy while providing resources for programs and investing in national industries (enforcement and implementation of this obligation).

However, there is a problematic aspect of equality without recognition of position in society. Lister (2003) points out that citizenship has been pinned on an abstract, usually male prototype. She argues that because women have borne the obligation of social welfare, and yet been denied many of the rights of citizenship, the idea of universal citizenship (blind to gender inequalities), perpetuates the disparities between women and men. Thus, she urges a “differentiated universalism” (p. 197) which acknowledges both the ideal of equality embedded in citizenship, but also acknowledges women’s differentiated and politically unrecognized experience of providing social care. Hence, a differentiated universalism would strive for equality, but would also reward the different citizenship work of providing social care.

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