FROM SOCIAL CASEWORK TO SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: REFLECTIONS ON AN INTERNATIONAL INTELLECTUAL JOURNEY

This narrative traces the evolution of my ideas during the time that I worked and lived on three continents. Reflecting on my international intellectual journey, I am struck by the way my work evolved over time to adapt and synthesize the influence of many friends and colleagues in diverse international environments. The narrative seeks to demonstrate how international experiences can enhance knowledge and generate new perspectives that have global relevance to human needs.

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Twenty five years ago, I embarked on an intellectual journey which has taken me from South Africa to Britain and to the United States. Influenced by many friends and colleagues and diverse intellectual traditions, each geographic move has been accompanied by a major conceptual re-orientation. My formative training in social casework in South Africa was augmented by a social policy perspective which I acquired by studying and working with Richard Titmuss at the London School of Economics (LSE). After I was assigned by Titmuss to develop a new graduate program in social policy at the LSE for students from the so called 'Third World' nations, I was exposed to the literature of development studies, and particularly development economics. I was also strongly influenced by the overt internationalism which pervaded our interactions with the program's students. Most of them were administrators or policy makers who had come to London to enhance their knowledge of the social policy field. Their internationalism facilitated an ability to synthesize ideas and experiences from many different parts of the world. They also helped me to realize that in the Third World context, social policy could not be separated from economic considerations. This realization fostered my inter-est in the emerging field of social development which was, at that stage, poorly conceptualized but nevertheless capable of offering a synthesis of social policy and economic thinking. My own contribution to the conceptualization of social development has emphasized the linking of the social welfare and economic development approaches (Midgley, 1995; 1996), but originally, it focused exclusively on the so-called developing countries. After I moved to Louisiana, I realized that the social development approach had relevance not only to the developing countries but to the industrial nations where the problems of distorted development were only too evident.

The evolution of my writings over the years has reflected the influence of the diverse environments in which I have lived and those with whom I have interacted and

collaborated. I owe my intellectual development to these international experiences. My contention that a developmental or productivist approach to social welfare is urgently needed to respond to global social needs (as well as current political and economic realities) has not emerged spontaneously but is the result of my exposure to diverse international environments, intellectual traditions, and the influences of many friends and colleagues, and is clearly revealed in my book *Social Development: The Developmental Perspective in Social Welfare* (Midgley, 1995) which seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of the field.

PRACTICING CASEWORK IN CAPE TOWN

I was educated as a social worker at the University of Cape Town in South Africa at a time when rapid social and political changes were taking place on the African continent. My parents traced their descent from Dutch and English settlers who had come to the country in the 18th and 19th centuries respectively. Like many young South Africans, I was not fully cognizant of the evils of the apartheid system until I went to University and realized that the country's system of racial oppression was not, as the government's propaganda campaigns told us, a 'normal' situation which satisfactorily accommodated the nation's ethnic diversity. Those of us who entered social work and were exposed in our field placements to the awful conditions of poverty and deprivation in which most people of color lived quickly realized that this was not a 'normal' situation at all. The influences of our teachers, as well as a knowledge of the changes taking place in the rest of Africa, made us realize that the South African government's policies were anything but normal. At the time, many colonized African societies were in the process of becoming independent from European imperial rule, and many were attempting to promote economic and social development. In this way, the newly independent African nations hoped not only to secure political sovereignty, but to achieve liberation from the bondage of poverty and social deprivation.

The achievements of the African independence movements kindled the hope that white minority rule in South Africa would also be ended and inspired South African liberation organizations such as the African National Congress (ANC). But efforts to bring about meaningful change were met with brutal reaction from the government and social conditions deteriorated. The government's apartheid policies exacerbated existing inequalities and aggravated the conditions of poverty and deprivation.

Despite South Africa's institutionalized social injustice, the social work profession was highly conventional in its approach to social issues. Remedial casework dominated the curriculum at the professional schools, and textbooks and other teaching materials came either from Britain or the United States. Most social workers found employment in conventional casework settings which provided few opportunities to address fundamental issues of poverty, injustice, and oppression. This situation persisted until only a few years ago (Mazibuko, McKendrick and Patel, 1993; Patel, 1992).

The dominant imported casework approach which focused on individual pathology was of limited relevance to the South African situation. The treatment of individual pathology not only neglected to address issues of social injustice and oppression but proved to be hopelessly impractical in a nation where the mass of the population was living below the poverty line. Attempts to treat individual pathology could not be expected to succeed while basic problems of social and economic deprivation were ignored.

Accordingly, most of us who were motivated to become social workers because we wanted somehow to help bring about progressive social change were ineffective. We lacked an appropriate professional education as well as the practical experience to make a meaningful contribution. After graduation, I worked in a public child welfare agency in one of the worst slums of Cape Town. I quickly realized that conventional casework approaches were hopelessly inadequate for dealing with the

deeper problems underlying the symptomatic manifestations of child neglect, abuse, and deprivation. However, because of my narrow casework training, no alternative forms of intervention that might more effectively address these problems were available to me.

My frustrations were shared by several colleagues who felt equally powerless, exacerbated by our profession's unwillingness to campaign for change. We lacked professional leadership and were isolated from other progressive elements. As government oppression increased, it became apparent that opposition was politically dangerous and could result in arrest, torture, and imprisonment.

The social work profession failed to support African colleagues who were harassed or imprisoned by the government. For example, the arrest, detention, and banishment of social work colleague Winnie Mandela brought little response. As Leila Patel (1992) pointed out, social work in South Africa became increasingly marginal to the struggle for change. Feeling helpless and increasingly marginalized, I and many other younger social workers either kept our heads down or sought to escape from what was rapidly becoming an intolerable situation. My own response was to return to University and pursue graduate studies which would hopefully result in an academic job where I thought I could be of more value than in professional practice. In 1968, I was awarded a graduate fellowship by the University of Cape Town which enabled me to study overseas for a year. The fellowship was intended to assist South African graduate students enhancing their credentials by studying at prestigious British or American universities. On the advice of a close friend, I applied to the London School of Economics(LSE) to do an intensive one year master's degree in social work and social policy under the distinguished British academic, Richard Titmuss, who had pioneered the field of social policy in the 1950s and 1960s . Because of my limited casework training, I knew little about Titmuss or the LSE's Department of Social Administration. I went to complete further graduate work at one of the world's leading centers for social sciences research and because of the prompting of my friend. However, I went with a sense of awe and trepidation: awe because of the LSE's international reputation, and trepidation because of my total ignorance of the social policy perspective. Little did I realize that Titmuss would become my mentor and that my period of study in London would change my life.

TITMUSS and SOCIAL POLICY AT THE LSE

The London School of Economics was founded about a century ago by the Fabian Society, a group of intellectual socialists who rejected revolution and believed instead that socialism could be attained through electoral means. They believed that the labor movement could secure political office and introduce measures that would further the aims of socialism. The Fabians also argued that once the labor movement was elected to power, it would need a highly trained and committed cadre of administrators to plan the economy, undertake major social reforms and introduce extensive social programs. Scientific knowledge, gleaned from economics and the other newly evolving social sciences, would provide the basis for this technocratic revolution (MacKenzie and MacKenzie, 1977). The creation of the London School of Economics by the Fabians just a century ago (Dahrendorf, 1995) was, therefore, intended to provide an opportunity for training planners, administrators, and policy makers who would implement the labor movement's socialist agenda.

Richard Titmuss was appointed as the first Chair in Social Policy at the LSE in 1950. He was an active Fabian and had written several books on social policy issues. However, he had no university education and his appointment attracted a good deal of attention. But whatever misgivings his academic colleagues may have had, these were quickly dispelled. He was soon recognized to be a major intellectual figure at the School and by the time of his premature death in 1973, his contribution had been recognized by the award of no fewer than five honorary doctoral degrees from universities in different parts of the world (Gowing, 1975).

Together with colleagues such as David

Donnison, Peter Townsend, and Brian Abel-Smith, Titmuss shaped the emerging field of social policy. He wrote prolifically and formulated a systematic approach to social policy based on a clearly articulated set of normative prescriptions. Grounded in Fabian ideology, Titmuss's conception of social policy charges the state with the responsibility of promoting the well-being of its citizens, and it relies extensively on technocratic expertise to formulate and implement progressive social policies. Many of his students founded new departments of social policy at other British universities and his writings were influential in creating similar programs in other countries. His influence on leading social policy thinkers in the United States was profound. Titmuss made a cardinal contribution to the development of social policy as an academic subject (Donnison, 1979; Deacon, 1993).

My period of study with Richard totally changed my intellectual orientation. His social policy approach offered a radically different perspective to my narrow casework training. In keeping with the Fabian argument that it was more effective to drain the swamp of human need through massive social policy intervention than to pull people out of the swamp one by one through social casework, I realized that South Africa's social problems could not be solved through remedial casework but that a social policy approach of massive social planning and concerted national action offered the best prospect for change. This was, in turn, dependent on the election of a representative government which acted in the best interests of all its citizens.

At the time that I studied with Richard, he was engaged in discussions with the United Nations about the creation of a program at the London School of Economics in social policy and planning for developing countries. Shortly after I completed my graduate studies and returned to the University of Cape Town in South Africa, he wrote to offer me a faculty position. Together with Margaret Hardiman, another faculty member at the LSE, I would be responsible for establishing and administering the program.

The idea for the program came from Richard's old friend, Gunnar Myrdal, the Swedish economist and sociologist. Myrdal served as an advisor to the United Nations during the late 1960s. He was concerned with the need to balance the emphasis then given to economic planning in Third World development with a new emphasis on social development. Myrdal had for some time been critical of the way development was defined in narrow economic terms and he called for a broader conception that integrated economic and social elements in the development process (Myrdal, 1970).

Myrdal believed that trained social planners were needed to work closely with economists in government planning agencies to insure that development plans paid adequate attention to social issues. Economic development, he argued, should produce real improvements in standards of living for all citizens. He believed that the social services should be accorded major importance and in government's intervention in fostering social progress.

Richard had been approached, at Myrdal's suggestion, by the United Nations about the possibility of establishing the first program in social policy and planning for developing countries at the London School of Economics. The British delegation at the United Nations played an active role in supporting the creation of the program, and the British government's aid program provided financial support to assist in its development. Richard was excited about offering a new program in social policy for developing countries and agreed to the United Nation's proposals. I was thrilled to be a part of this new program and accepted without any hesitation at all.

THE THIRD WORLD PROGRAM IN SOCIAL POLICY AND PLANNING

When Richard assigned Margaret Hardiman and me to create the new program in social policy and planning for developing countries, there was practically no literature on the subject and no other program had, to our knowledge, been established elsewhere. We were accordingly compelled to conceptualize the

courses from scratch. Margaret, born in India, had previously worked in Ghana and so her experience was vital. We made extensive use of the documents produced by Myrdal and the United Nations on the subject of social development (United (Nations, 1971). Conceptually, we were grounded in the statist tradition of social policy which Richard had formulated. Although Richard's welfare state approach was vigorously attacked from both the Marxist left and the political right, it informed our teaching and featured prominently in the literature we subsequently published on the subject of Third World social policy.

Margaret and I were compelled to produce our own teaching materials. Initially, these took the form of class handouts, but later we were able to publish journal articles and eventually books on the subject. Fortunately, the program was expanding and international interest in social development was increasing with the result that more teaching resources became available. Apart from the United Nations, the World Bank and other international agencies were placing much more emphasis on social development and official reports and studies reflected these concerns. Publications produced by the World Bank in the mid-1970s were particularly important. Under the leadership of Robert McNamara, the World Bank published a series of policy papers on key social sectors such as health care, housing, education, employment, and rural development (World Bank, 1975). The approach used in these policy papers was similar to our own. We used this approach when writing our textbook, *The Social Dimensions of Development,* which has since been widely adopted in developing countries (Hardiman and Midgley, 1982 1989). Some of the other books we produced were not designed as textbooks but rather as issue-oriented analyses of key issues in Third World social policy. These included my discussion of social work in the third world (Midgley, 1981) and my analysis of the way inappropriate social security programs in developing countries heightened inequalities (Midgley, 1984). Our book on the state and community participation was intended to debate the merits of a statist versus communitarian approach to social policy in the Third World (Midgley, Hall, Hardiman and Narine, 1986).

After the program had been in existence for eight years, Margaret and I surveyed the program's graduates to determine what careers they pursued after graduating and to obtain further insights into their work (Hardiman and Midgley, 1980). We found that most of the students had indeed returned to their countries to work in the public social services. Most were middle-level managers in government social service departments dealing with health care, education, housing, and social welfare. However, a good proportion of the students were economists who had returned to work in central planning agencies. We had been particularly interested in recruiting economists to the program since they were influential players in national development and were gratified that they were making a difference at the national planning level. We also found that some of our students had returned to work in international development agencies such as UNICEF, the World Bank, and the World Health Organization, and that some had been recruited to work in international non-profit organizations engaged in development. Both Margaret and I felt that one of the great strengths of the program was the diverse backgrounds of the students and their ability to bring their experiences to bear on the course content.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN AMERICA'S THIRD WORLD

In 1985, I emigrated to the United States to join the faculty of the School of Social Work at Louisiana State University. I was recruited by Brij Mohan who had been appointed Dean of the School of Social Work in 1982. Brij himself had emigrated from India to the United States in the 1970s and was familiar with my work and my interest in development. I had also met other American social work educators who were interested in development. They included leaders of the Inter-University Consortium for International Social Development such as Dick Estes, Dan Sanders, Roland Meinert, David Hollister, and Ezra Kohn. All were actively

promoting the social development perspective in the United States and were eager to collaborate with me.

At LSU, I thought that my previous work in Third World social policy would not be relevant to my new role as a faculty member in a large, regional school of social work in the United States. However, I was soon struck by the way people in Louisiana talked about their state as 'America's Third World,' and also by the highly visible manifestations of poverty and deprivation in the area. These realities were confirmed when the Congress of the United States approved the creation of the Lower Mississippi Delta Commission in 1988. The Commission was charged with formulating a comprehensive development plan for the region (Lower Mississippi Delta Development Commission, 1990). The Commission's report revealed higher rates of infant mortality, poverty, and illiteracy than high income, developing countries such as Costa Rica, Cuba and Malaysia. However, the region is not economically backward. It contains one of the world's great concentrations of petrochemical industries, a well developed agricultural sector, extensive tourist facilities, and other resources.

The Delta report called for the implementation of a comprehensive development plan which would not only stimulate economic growth and create jobs, but address the problems of poverty, racism, and inequality that characterize the region. The report's proposals were in many ways similar to the type of development planning which Myrdal and his colleagues had advocated in the 1960s. I recognized that the work I had been doing was not only relevant to the so-called 'Third World' but to all development situations (Midgley, 1994a).

However, living in the United States made me realize that the state welfarism we had promoted in the social policy program at the London School of Economics was unworkable in the American context. I recognized that Titmuss's emphasis on government intervention was ideologically unpalatable to many Americans. The strong individualist traditions of the culture and a deep suspicion of government favored an attitude which tended to denigrate state welfarism and particularly those social programs that focused on the poor.

The social policy approach suffered from the welfarist inadequacy of failing to integrate social interventions within a dynamic development process. The LSE program had intended to link social policy with development, but in reality it placed more emphasis on the provision of social services than on economic growth. It stressed the need for appropriate social service policies but failed to harmonize social investments with economic development activities.

The need for an integrated development strategy which fosters economic development but insures that social policies are intimately linked and harmonized with economic policies became apparent. This approach, which may be called the social development approach, transcends the institutionalist welfare statism of Titmuss, and requires that social policies and programs that contribute positively to development be given priority over those that serve a purely remedial or maintenance function. This requires a new engagement with issues of human capital mobilization, social capital formation and direct income generation through creating productive employment, and self-employment. However, the emphasis on integrated development which pays adequate attention to balancing economic and social goals does not abandon Titmuss's concern with egalitarianism. By addressing social needs within a dynamic development context, the social development approach seeks to foster growth and re-distribution.

These ideas are elaborated in several articles in *Social Development Issues* (Midgley, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994a, 1994b, 1996a, 1996b) and in my book *Social Development: The Developmental Perspective in Social Welfare* (Midgley, 1995). They have also formed the basis for LSU's community outreach project (Community University Partnership) which Michelle Livermore and I implemented at the University's Office of Research and Economic Development (Midgley and Livermore, 1998). With the support of Ken Millar, Martin Tracy, and

faculty at other social work programs in the Lower Mississippi Delta region, efforts are currently underway to foster the adoption of a social development perspective among social workers in the Mississippi Delta in the hope that the social development perspective will form a viable intervention modality within the profession.

I moved to the University of California at Berkeley in January of 1997 to succeed the late Harry Specht as Dean of the University's prestigious school of social work. I am greatly honored to be occupying the Chair named for Harry and his late wife Riva. Although the demands of being a dean are limiting the time I have available to write, I intend to further develop and articulate my social development approach in terms relevant to mainstream social policy debates in the United States. In this way, I hope to demonstrate further that ideas originating in other nations can not only be relevant to social policy thinking in the United States but enrich our own perspectives and, enhance the effectiveness of social policy.

CONCLUSION: PROMOTING A SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE

Each geographic move has been accompanied by major changes in my intellectual orientation as I have been exposed to new environments and ideas. Each change has been significantly influenced by the views of many friends and colleagues whose international experiences have assisted mein gaining useful insights into the potential effectiveness of different social interventions. My experience demonstrates the powerful contribution international experiences can make to the evolution of new ideas and social policy interventions.

My formulation of a social development perspective applicable, not only to Third World countries but to the United States as well, has attracted attention and support from a relatively small group of social work colleagues in the United States who believe that remedial— and --maintenance oriented social welfare interventions need to be transcended by a dynamic developmental approach. However, there is evidence of a growing interest in this approach. Together with colleagues working in the field, I have presented at several recent conferences and lectured on social development at several universities. Despite this interest, a great deal of work lies ahead if the developmental perspective is to gain widespread acceptance. Its central ideas need to be communicated in ways that have direct relevance to the situation in the United States and can be readily understood. I hope that more colleagues in this country and abroad will respond to the ideas contained in the developmental approach. In view of the worsening global situation, this will require more collaboration at the international level. The resurgence of poverty and heightened inequality in many countries, the overt expression of ethnic hatred by neo-Nazi and other racist movements in Europe and North America, and genocidal campaigns in the Balkans and parts of Africa require a renewed international commitment to the idea of social progress. I hope that my journey is not yet ended and that I can play a role in promoting greater international collaboration to address these challenges on a global scale.□

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