

Social Justice along a Continuum: A Relational Illustrative Model

Colin R. Bonnycastle
University of Manitoba

Codes of ethics for national and international social work emphasize the importance of social justice. Both the brevity with which social justice is described in these codes and, in general, the contested and pluralistic conceptualization of social justice, have led to a mishmash of concepts, theories, and approaches. To counter this ambiguity, the current study proposes an illustrative framework built on a basic continuum that locates social justice between oppositional notions of social oppression and social equality. This framework may help academics, students, and practitioners to locate their own personal understanding of social justice. It also may foster open dialogue about a system of social justice that is more comprehensive and generous than the current one. To illustrate the model's use, an example of child-care policy in Canada is included.

Since the late 1990s, the concept of social justice has taken a prominent position in codes of ethics for national and international social work.¹ For example, the International Association of Schools of Social Work and the Federation of Social Workers agreed in 2001 that "principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work" (Sewpaul and Jones 2004, 2). Similar statements are found in the codes of ethics for the National Association of Social Workers (1999) in the United States and for the Canadian Association of Social Workers (2005).

One foreseen problem with the return of this emphasis is that these codes' descriptions of social justice are marked by brevity (Solas 2008). This brevity promotes problems in the classroom and in the community. Social justice is essentially a contested concept, and there is no comprehensive, indisputable definition of the term (Bell 1997). Because the concept is used in many contexts (e.g., sociopolitical, economic, legal, philosophical, practice, and academic contexts), a universally applicable definition is difficult to obtain. Further complications come from the use of the concept in the social work literature, whose authors often

make no attempt to define social justice or to explain how the concept is used in their particular context (Moyo 2010). In such cases, authors seem to take for granted that the reader should understand the intended meaning. Social justice advocates should be concerned that brevity, multiple meanings, and vagueness lead social workers, all under the name of social justice, to use a mishmash of concepts, theories, and approaches. Another concern is that this conceptual vagueness may actually support the prevailing realities of social injustice. For example, the New Right is actively appropriating, overlaying, and obscuring traditional understandings of social justice (Hancock 2007; Lister 2010). David Gil argues that, in response to such efforts, social justice advocates should “move beyond an emotional attachment to vague ideas toward an intellectual position, and should specify the meanings of this term when using it in the political arena” (2006, 41). A clear definition of the concept of social justice would improve collective opportunity to act on the associated ethical commitments.

The absence of a definition makes it hard for social workers to build on the hope that social justice encourages. In fact, this absence may weaken social work’s mandate (Mullaly 2007). At a minimum, social workers must understand social justice in order to articulate an alternative vision for society (Mullaly 2007).

To develop an understanding of social justice, this article uses an illustrative framework that builds on a basic continuum. The study argues that social justice falls on this continuum between social oppression and social equality. The framework then locates several contested forms of social justice on the continuum, relating those forms to a number of other contemporary social concepts. To capture each concept’s variations and interconnections across the continuum, each relational concept is illustrated with three versions. The result is a usable, though tentative and incomplete, framework that may help faculty members, students, and practitioners to locate a personal understanding of social justice. The framework may also foster an open dialogue that encourages imaginative idealism as well as the development of a comprehensive and generous system of social justice.

Social Justice: A Contested and Changeable Concept

Social justice is a normative concept often expressed in two forms: as an ideal and as a mobilizing idea. Discussions on the ideal of social justice usually focus in abstract or idyllic terms on how and to what extent “the good and bad things in life should be distributed among the members of a human society” (Miller 1999, 1). Discussions that emphasize claim making and obligation point to nineteenth-century, Western, utilitarian arguments about social justice, namely, that social

justice entails the fair distribution of pleasure and pain in pursuit of the greater good. Such a structured reasoning approach leads to interpretations that cast social justice in societal types or images of a utopian, absolute, exaggerated, idealized, ultimate, or transcendental nature (Sen 2009). Utopian expressions of the structured reasoning approach are generally based on the assumption that social justice represents some end “to come” rather than something realizable in any immediate form (Derrida 1992, 27).

Social justice also commonly takes the second form: it is understood as an idea that can mobilize people, making injustice visible, contestable, and changeable (Newman and Yeates 2008). Understanding social justice as a process of striving toward a goal is much different than understanding it as an idealized or perfectly just society (Sen 2009). Among those who understand social justice as a means of mobilization and a process of striving, contemporary issues of disparity require a definition of social justice that accommodates multiple forms of identity, discrimination, and exclusion. Those strongly influenced by feminism and post-modern theory see social justice as both a process and an outcome (Leonard 1997; Reisch 2002; Mullaly 2007). For example, Richard Pozzuto argues: “Collectively, we move toward social justice through critique, dialogue and creation. Each of these processes requires thought, effort, and practice” (2006, 95). Karen Swift and Marilyn Callahan add to this line of argument in stating, “We consider social justice to be an ‘emancipatory idea’ that allows us to move from acceptance to resistance and then to social change” (2009, 227).

From this short introduction, one can see that the concept of social justice is shaped through claims making, societal obligations, social relationships, context, and cultural practices. The concept is rich in both meaning and ambiguity. This richness could lead to open and diverse dialogue on what helps to define new strategies and mobilize struggles against social injustices, but it can also lead to oppositional meanings, contradictions, and covert and apposing actions. Michael Reisch (2002) observes that current ideological struggles between and within nations give rise to diametrically opposed visions of social justice. And there is a tendency to link social justice to personal ideological beliefs about the solutions to problems (Ball et al. 2010).

Another danger is that social justice language will become so common in everyday speech and thought as to mean both everything and nothing. If social workers come to understand social justice in this way, contradictions and conflict will inevitably occur, increasing feelings of disempowerment and confusion about social work’s mandate (Lundy 2004; Mullaly 2007). These feelings can also lead to confusion and disempowerment within agencies and among social work’s clients.

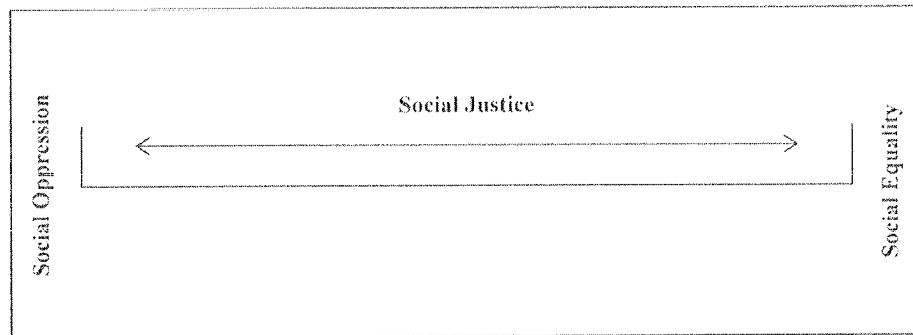


FIG. 1.—The social justice continuum

The Conceptual Model

Social justice can be located on a continuum between social oppression and social equality. Although this study characterizes social justice as a process of striving toward the goal of social equality, overcoming oppression must also be included as a central concern in any conceptualization of social justice (Gil 1998; Mullaly 2010). For that reason, this study proposes a conceptual model to illustrate the interface between social oppression and social equality as a continuum (see fig. 1). The framework of the model used here is influenced by the many ideal ways that social justice is often constructed. That said, the use of the continuum also points to a process of building on, expanding, and incorporating ideas as one mobilizes and moves toward social equality.

In the figure, each effort to define social justice can be assigned a location on the continuum between the opposing poles. The assigned location represents the outcome or goal desired by those constructing the definition of social justice. As no model is pure in its attempt to mimic a particular concept in reality, the use of a continuum here helps to point out that ideas, values, and adjacent positions often overlap on any continuum (Mullaly 2007). As will be shown below, contemporary notions of social justice can be found anywhere in the space between the continuum's poles, and a given version's location depends upon the definition employed and the people who create that definition. As with the powers of a magnet, the poles' underlying structures can each be more strongly felt in some definitions of social justice than in others.

Social Oppression

Social oppression exists when one social group, whether knowingly or unconsciously, exploits another for its own benefit. It is understood "as a type of second-class citizenship that is assigned to people, not on the basis of lack of merit or failure, but because of their membership in a

particular group or category of people” (Mullaly 2007, 285). In addition, “social oppression is distinct from a situation of simple brute force in that it is an interlocking system that involves ideological control as well as domination and control of the social institutions and resources of the society, resulting in a condition of privilege for the agent group relative to the disenfranchisement and exploitation of the target group” (Hardiman and Jackson 1997, 17).

So too, social oppression involves the fulfillment of an elite, dominant social group’s aspirations even as that fulfillment is denied to subordinate groups (Dorling 2010). Although intensity of oppression and the extent of inequality can vary, social oppression is a result of privilege, and privilege depends on oppression for its existence (Hancock 2007). This dependent relationship can exclude subordinate groups from democratic participation and create a passive citizenship rather than an active one (Powell 2007). Feeling that they have no power and lack a voice, oppressed populations often withdraw from politics and civil society activities. In this way, oppression becomes directed inward. The oppressed direct it toward themselves, family members, and others in the subordinate community (Prilleltensky 2008). Franz Fanon (1968) would categorize this inward oppressive process under the theories of internal domination.

With oppression comes elite demands for significant changes to the concept of justice. Such changes move the concept away from compassion and mutuality. Reconfigured as retribution, blaming, and simple revenge, this redefined form of justice is directed against classes and elements that are perceived as dangerous or perverse (Hancock 2007). Jim Ife (2008) argues that insecurity and fear fuel and legitimate the elite’s politics of revenge. One major result is that, rather than focusing on people’s needs through collective responsibility and public intervention, society increasingly focuses its attention on punishing behaviors that are perceived to result from a perverse breakdown of individual morals and civility. John Rodger labels this process of individualizing responsibility the “criminalisation of social policy” (2008, 3).

Social Equality

At the other end of the continuum lies social equality. Like social justice, it is a normative concept and one of the core principles in most statements about what might make a socially just society (Newman and Yeates 2008). In progressive social work circles, the concept of social equality is used to convey the principle that all individuals are possessed of equal intrinsic worth and to emphasize the importance of that principle in policy decisions. Bob Mullaly makes the same point: “The central value premise of social equality is that every person is of equal intrinsic worth and should therefore be entitled to equal civil, political, social, and economic rights, responsibilities, and treatment. . . . Social equality is a correlate

of humanism, as the dignity of the person cannot be achieved if some people have control over others, have preferred access to life chances, or have more power concerning public affairs" (Mullaly 2007, 58).

Social equality, understood in this broad manner, is associated with the construction of solidarity among oppressed populations, and their allies, in order to create social change at institutional and structural levels of society (Mullaly 2010). Social equality is seen as multidimensional, and this understanding is not readily reducible to equality in one space only (Sen 2009). Rather, the process of building solidarity promotes interdependence. It aims at giving "all stakeholders an equal place and voice at decision-making tables and promotes an equitable share of the social resources" (Dominelli 2009, 161). In these terms, building solidarity requires "the reassertion of the ideas of collective responsibility, a community of need, and public virtue" (Reisch 2002, 347). Peter Leonard states that such an effort, "while recognizing individual difference and cultural diversity, engages in a discourse on the similarities between subjects confronting problems of health, personal identity or material survival, similarities which may be embedded in common experiences of class, gender and race. Such a practice, in other words, emphasizes a *potential solidarity* between the individual subjects of welfare" (Leonard 1997, 165–66). Although notions of social equality have been tarnished by a neoliberal climate in recent years, research shows that, at certain levels, increases in equality among citizens, not the dominant emphasis on economic growth or freedom, create well-being and strengthen societies (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009). These findings suggest that "true social justice will both create and require much greater equality than is as yet widely accepted" (Dorling 2010, 11).

The Five Relational Aspects of Social Justice

Five aspects of the model play a relational role in the proposed concept of social justice. These five relational aspects are shown in the stub (left) column of table 1. I contend that it is nearly impossible to understand the concept of social justice within the social work profession unless one analyzes where one stands in relation to these interconnected and mutually supportive categories. Each of these five aspects acts as a separate lens through which the concept of social justice can be perceived. None alone is sufficient for the task of understanding the concept. Together, these categories begin to provide a more synthesized and richer understanding of the concept than each suggests alone.

The list is not exhaustive and can easily be expanded. For example, it could be expanded to include social workers' growing interest in the environment (Coates 2003; Jones 2010) and the capability approach (Sen 2009; Otto and Ziegler 2010). To illustrate the arrangement, the

Table 1

THE RELATIONAL ILLUSTRATIVE MODEL

SOCIAL JUSTICE CONTINUUM			
	Thin Version	Middle Version	Thick Version
Relation to distributive justice	Basic equality	Equal opportunity	Equality of conditions
Relation to identity	Citizenship rights and obligations	Redistribution and cultural recognition	Redistribution, recognition, and representation
Relation to human rights	Negative rights (civil and political)	Positive rights (economic and social)	Solidarity rights (global rights and indigenism)
Relation to social welfare	Residual welfare and charity regime	Social minimum welfare state regime	Structural transformation regime
Relation to political ideology	Neoliberalism, neoconservatism	Social liberalism	Reconstructed socialism

NOTE.—The table's elements identify points along a social justice continuum between social oppression and social equality.

model divides each relational aspect into three subcategories: a thin version, a middle version, and a thick version.

Each subcategory of an aspect is located at a point along the continuum to illustrate how that expression of the aspect relates to the poles. The matrix describes subcategories closest to social oppression as thin versions of social justice and those closest to social equality as thick versions. This differentiation is not always as clean-cut as the illustration suggests. In reality, there is overlap, hybridization, and mutual influence among these subcategorical representations of complex relational aspects. An example of hybridization among subcategories is found in the writings of Third Way theorists, such as Anthony Giddens (1998), who attempt to blend promarket (neoliberal) and social democratic attitudes in order to respond to the challenges brought forth by globalization (Lister 2010). The descriptions that follow only touch the periphery of each complex relational aspect in the model.

Relation to Distributive Justice

Theories about distributive justice are about “how a society or group should allocate its scarce resources or product among individuals with competing needs or claims” (Roemer 1996, 1). Although such theories go back at least two millennia, they have reemerged over the past 40 years. The most famous expression is John Rawls’s influential work, *A Theory of Justice* (1971). These theories offer solutions to social injustice, proposing guidelines on the fair and equitable distributions of burdens and benefits. They also articulate tenets of social justice, helping to define and weigh such ideas as deservedness. Theories of distributive justice enable discussions about what constitutes a socially just manner of distribution and about what kinds of social welfare arrangements should be defended. Such discussions, in turn, help social workers to evaluate the worth of particular policies and programs. However, a key impediment prevents the application of distributive justice theories in the task of understanding social justice. Theories of distributive justice generally favor economic interpretations of problems, representing the problems as classlike inequalities rooted in the economic structure of society (Fraser 2009). Three versions of distributive justice are examined here.

One of the earliest and thinnest versions of distributive justice (i.e., least representative of full social equality) is the notion of basic equality. It speaks to “the idea that at some very basic level all human beings have equal worth and importance, and are therefore equally worthy of concern and respect” (Baker et al. 2004, 23). This idea is manifest in early civil rights, which include the “liberty of person, freedom of speech, thought and faith, the right to own property, the rights to conclude valid contracts and the right to justice” (Oommen 2008, 49). Theories

of basic equality see property ownership as an important aspect of this cluster of rights; ownership legitimates the rights of owners to exclude others, to use what is owned, and to dispose of property as one sees fit, including through inheritance. With the exception of basic state responsibilities, the working out of wants, needs, and responsibilities tends to be left to the will (or choice) of the self-disciplined individual; the individual's lot is seen to be determined for the most part through status, production, personal ability, character, proper choice, and luck. Under the basic equality model, notions of fairness, equality, and justice are institutionally interpreted in relatively neutral terms: the same rules are formally applicable to all (Lecce 2008).

In unpacking this notion of neutrality, one finds that it is ideologically rooted in classic liberal, patriarchal, nationalistic, and legal self-images. It is therefore conspicuously silent on issues of power, interest, and privilege. It is inattentive to historical legacies and backgrounds (Behrendt 2003). The result of this structural inattention is that basic equality "calls on us to prevent inhumanity, but it does not necessarily couch its message in terms of justice as distinct from charity" (Baker et al. 2004, 23). In this version of equality, the importance of benevolence, charity, and altruism as appropriate personal responses to misfortune speaks to the notion that economic redistribution should be primarily voluntary and based on one's personal generosity to others (Lister 2010). In her study of the proliferation of food banks in the United States, Janet Poppendieck (1998, 5) speaks of the development of a "culture of charity that normalizes destitution and legitimates personal generosity as a response to major social and economic dislocation." The notion of basic equality will be discussed further below.

As illustrated in table 1, the middle version of distributive justice relates to the concept of equality of fair opportunity. This left-liberal (or liberal-egalitarian) approach emphasizes equal competition and specifically the premise that people should have an equal chance to compete for social advantage (Baker et al. 2004; Cohen 2009). It goes beyond basic rights and begins to speak about an equitable distribution of goods and resources in a society. Proponents of equal opportunity use language that emphasizes rights and duties. In this way, the notion of equal opportunity "usually refers to the idea that social divisions such as those of 'race' or ethnicity, gender, disability and sexual orientation should not affect an individual's opportunity to succeed" (Lister 2010, 236). The notion of equal opportunity draws upon the application of social rights and the general acknowledgment that, in any society, variations in advantages, privileges, and social circumstance cause social disadvantage. Proponents of equal opportunity hold that such disadvantages should be countered by state interventions. These interventions occur in the distribution of resources, the tax system, and the social welfare system. They are designed, as the metaphors go, to level out the playing

field and to provide an equal start in the race; their goal is to enable individuals to compete on equal terms. Implicit is the premise that opportunity matters, not outcome: "When left-liberal equality of opportunity is fully achieved, people's fates are determined by their native talent and their choices, and, therefore, not at all by their social backgrounds" (Cohen 2009, 17).

Equal opportunity is championed in such policy measures as free primary and secondary education, Head Start programs, publicly funded child-care policies, and subsidized housing projects. This version has limits, however. For example, an opportunity in such contexts is limited to "the right to compete, not the right to choose among alternatives of similar worth" (Baker et al. 2004, 33). An equal opportunity model places solely on the individual the responsibility for accessing and utilizing these opportunities to the best of his or her ability; the individual must take personal responsibility for his or her own success (and for lack of success). This version of equality does not address the "absent citizens" (Prince 2009)—those people who, through no fault of their own, may never access that level playing field but still have needs and desires that must be met in order to create a socially just society. This version also tends to be silent on how good choices are made. In her 2000 work, *Women and Human Development*, Martha Nussbaum argues that, for oppressed and poor people, "habit, fear, low expectations, and unjust background conditions deform people's choices and even their wishes for their own lives" (quoted in Carpenter 2009, 357). Choice can therefore be a biased evaluative tool in this model of social justice.

Under the middle version of distributive justice, charity has traditionally been used to enhance and complement state redistribution efforts. This relationship has begun to collapse. Gary Teeple examines efforts mounted since the 1980s to make social rights more consistent with the rights of private property. He observes: "Many social rights have been transformed into forms of charity—a form of income redistribution in which rights become the privileges of donors" (Teeple 2005, 15). One side effect of this overt form of caring (dependent on altruism, empathy, and compassion, rather than on collective entitlement) is that it depoliticizes responsibility for problems and forces solutions to be shifted inwardly: "There is nobody but oneself to blame for difficulties and lack of progress" (Prilleltensky 2008, 120).

The third and thickest version of distributive justice (i.e., the version farthest from social oppression and closest to social equality) relates to equality of condition. The previous two versions are based on the assumption that many major inequalities are inevitable. In these versions, the task of the social worker is to minimize the damage done by inequalities and to help make the process of accessing services fair for individuals. Equality of condition, by contrast, moves beyond these ameliorative assumptions to enable people to exercise choices among real

options. This transformative and structural version does not accept the inevitability of inequality: "The idea of equality of condition sets out a much more ambitious aim: to eliminate major inequalities altogether or at least massively to reduce the current scale of inequality. The key to this much more ambitious agenda is to recognize that inequality is rooted in changing and changeable social structures and particularly in structures of domination and oppression" (Baker et al. 2004, 33).

Equality of condition can be associated with an expansion of the metaphor of the level playing field; the notion is that each person should have more than just a right to equality in the competition for access to resources. Under the concept there also needs to be in place structures that build community responsibility, cooperation, and mutual benefit for and by all members of a society. Reflecting on this, Gil (1990, 14) speaks of the need for structural transformation, a paradigmatic shift toward "egalitarian, cooperative, communal, and liberating alternatives." Obstacles to such a transformation are institutional structures that systematically produce worse life prospects for members of some groups than for members of others.

The concept of equality of condition relies heavily on the Marxian notion that social justice occurs only when all people are safe and secure throughout their life span. To Karl Marx, this would only occur in a "society *without* commodities, in which need would replace value as the measure of things, in which work would be an expression of our species being and not an exchange of labour power" (Dean 2010, 165). Under this concept, social justice seeks to "correct for all unchosen disadvantages, disadvantages, that is, for which the agent cannot herself reasonably be held responsible, whether they be disadvantages that reflect social misfortune or disadvantages that reflect natural misfortune" (Cohen 2009, 17–18). Such an understanding of social justice requires not only working to alleviate unmet needs but developing "critical consciousness concerning social realities, and to organize and act against destructive societal conditions that obstruct fulfillment of [those] needs" (Gil 1998, 82). This understanding is not about prescribing an ideal way of life for all people but about opening to everyone the prospect of a good life by enabling them to make real choices among alternatives of similar worth (Cohen 2008).

In articulating attempts to increase fairness and equity in social conditions, theories of distributive justice often end up homogenizing differences by adopting an understanding of human need that is universalistic and materialistic (Dean 2010). This result, and the limits associated with the underlying goals, are vigorously criticized (Young 1990). Specifically, critics contend that distributive justice approaches fail to capture the particularistic claims against injustice and, therefore, cannot provide a sufficiently comprehensive vision of a just society. To examine this contention, one must consider other relational associations.

Relation to Identity

At various points in the twentieth century, new social movements emerged to recognize nonmaterialist injustices. Such movements included women; blacks and other racial minorities; indigenous peoples; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, two-spirited, and queer and questioning peoples; immigrants and refugees; and people with disabilities. These efforts are not fully captured under the various versions of distribution discussed above. Although these movements had different focuses and engaged in different fights for collective identity, they were similar in that all functioned as sources of self-discovery and liberation for their members. All of the movements spawned "groups forming around common identities of oppression and shared strategies for achieving recognition and redress" (Niezen 2009, 7). To reinforce the work of these movements, theorists began to use terms like the "politics of difference" (Young 1990, 2008), "ideologies of identity" (Ball et al. 2010, 234), and the "politics of recognition" (Fraser 1995, 69).

The thinnest version of identity used here is generally represented in the rights and obligations of citizenship. These features limit how far redistribution extends into society. Richard Bellamy (2008, 3) observes: "Citizenship has traditionally referred to a particular set of political practices involving specific public rights and duties with respect to a given political community." These practices usually revolve around the individual's special relationship with society, a relationship that is traditionally defined by a specific national boundary (Mulvale 2001; Dwyer 2010). Citizenship is generally framed in terms of the autonomous person. This framing extends to both the expression of individual rights and to the individual commitment to the norms of society. Rights and norms are perceived to represent the needs, goals, and perspectives of a universalized person, who is seen as solid, permanent, fixed, and essential (Plummer 2003). A major limit of this version of social justice is that new narratives of identity are often challenged as significant impediments to advancement and the prosperity of the privileged. These conflicts between past and future group-identity narratives become the new locations of injustice and inequality. For example, in their study of what it has meant to be an American during the last century, Michael Katz and Mark Stern (2006) point to the conflicts associated with the shifting narratives of gender, race, and immigration and to the relation between such conflict and persistent inequality. They conclude: "The way inequality worked underwent important change. But throughout the twentieth century America was, and it remains, one nation divisible, with liberty and justice for some" (Katz and Stern 2006, 224).

The middle version of identity focuses on redistribution and cultural recognition. Beginning in the 1980s, theorists and groups spoke of creating a new sense of social justice, one that emphasizes the importance

of recognition of other voices (Fraser and Honneth 2003; Lister 2008). These movements began to raise a host of potential new identities that demanded recognition and laid claim to differentiated concepts of the rights and obligations attending national citizenship (Plummer 2003). Feminist demands for gender equity represent a good example of such demands (Fraser 1994). In part, these movements claimed that the dominant liberal paradigm's promise of equality and inclusion ignored disadvantaged members of historically excluded groups (Young 2008). Many of their actions sought to increase citizenship rights for such excluded groups within nation-states. By focusing on social exclusion, the movements shifted the debate on social justice from a conversation on redistribution to one that also emphasizes recognition.

Most of these debates are framed within what Iris Marion Young (2008, 77) calls a "politics of cultural difference"; she states that this tends to narrow discussions to a focus on the role of the state within a liberal framework. Under this two-dimensional framework, issues of identity become depoliticized and constructed as cultural additions to the law. They become emotional objects of civil and individual tolerance rather than of state practice (Brown 2006). Emotions can garner sympathy from those less affected by the circumstances of the excluded, and, at such times, this sympathy can be cultivated into action and campaigns of justice (Niezen 2009). However, sympathy can be just another manifestation of tolerance. Wendy Brown argues that the confluence of sympathy and tolerance is problematic because narrow discussions around tolerance both soften and deflect tensions brought forward when the excluded raise social justice issues: "Tolerance discourse masks the role of the state in reproducing the dominance of certain groups and norms, and it does so at a historical moment when popular sensitivity to this role and this dominance is high, when those who have been historically excluded by the norms of sex, race, ethnicity, and religion are vocal about such exclusion" (Brown 2006, 84).

There is a second problem with the language of tolerance; the term "conveys that something is 'wrong with' or 'negative about' the particular difference" (Mullaly 2010, 322, n. 1). In both cases, tolerance is contingent on the assimilation of others' differences; tolerance leads to another form of social exclusion.

Redistribution, recognition, and representation characterize the third and thickest version of identity. Ruth Lister argues: "Increasingly, theories of social justice are 'multi-scalar,' a term borrowed from geography to denote different spatial scales. This means that injustices can be identified both below and above the nation-state. At one end of the spatial scale, feminists identify the private, domestic sphere as a site of struggles for social justice. . . . At the other end, we move into the arena of what is commonly called 'global justice'" (Lister 2010, 249). Within the global social justice movements, there is an increas-

ingly broad array of international bodies (government, nongovernment, civil, and private) and other transcultural and supranational forces at work. These elements are spearheaded primarily from the global South. As Jason Annetts and colleagues indicate in the 2009 book, *Understanding Social Welfare Movements*, these groups are “driven by a concern with social justice, citizenship and human rights, security, environmental concerns, gender, ‘race,’ ethnic and cultural equality, and opposition to war and oppression, inequality, poverty and social harms” (quoted in Lister 2010, 266).

In response, Nancy Fraser suggests that there is a need to add a third (or political) dimension to the understanding of the term “social justice.” Specifically, that dimension is representation (Fraser 2009). As Fraser observes in a 2005 article, representation acknowledges that “there can be distinctively political obstacles to parity, not reducible to maldistribution or misrecognition” (quoted in Lister 2008, 108). This interwoven, three-dimensional frame increases the ability to voice what Young (2008, 77) calls a “politics of positional difference” that can speak to new ways of looking at structural inequalities often missed by the other two versions of identity. She asserts: “These structural inequalities do not determine that every member of a less privileged group suffers deprivation or domination. They do, however, make most members of structurally disadvantaged groups more vulnerable to harm than others. They also put restraints on the ability of group members to achieve well-being. It is these vulnerabilities and limitations that define structural injustice more than the amount of goods or power individuals may have at a particular time” (Young 2008, 80–81). She argues that there is a need to respond by focusing “attention to group differences generated from structural power, the division of labour, and constructions of the normal and the deviant” (Young 2008, 102).

If attention is focused on the structural inequalities caused by maldistribution, misrecognition, and misrepresentation, it is possible to begin to create participatory opportunities for people to develop the capacities of well-being and social equality. This focus also replaces demands for tolerance with demands for respect; it allows the promulgation of multiple cultural groups that are equal but autonomous (Sennett 2003). Jürgen Habermas argues “The demand for respect is aimed not so much at equalizing living conditions as it is at protecting the integrity of the traditions and forms of life in which members of groups that have been discriminated against can recognize themselves” (2001, 205). In many cases, the language of human rights complements a hope for universal justice that is implicit in the demand for recognition of rights (Plummer 2003; see also Sennett 2003). Although not without their own set of pitfalls, human rights have become an important part of social justice dialogue.

Relation to Human Rights

Human rights articulate multiple visions of what is right and offer a discourse of hope. In doing so, they supply a rich and moral set of goals for development (Nussbaum 2003). Human rights refer generally to those rights defined by the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations General Assembly 1948). The declaration is primarily based on the institutionalization of the so-called three generations of human rights: civil and political, economic and social, and solidarity (United Nations, Centre for Human Rights 1994). However, one must be cautious in making the argument for building a complementary relationship between human rights and social justice. Feminists criticize these human rights constructions as male-centered, and others criticize them for privileging a Western perspective (Nussbaum 2003). For the most part, the international social work profession embraces this relationship as being complementary but imperfect (Reichert 2007; Ife 2008; Mapp 2008).

As table 1 indicates, the thinnest version of human rights focuses on political and civil liberties. This version represents the first generation of such rights and is comprised of some of what are called negative rights. Associated with individual rights, this version is designed to limit government interference with basic verbal and written expression, privacy, a fair public hearing, and the practice of one's religion (Wronka 2008). Nussbaum (2003, 38) states: "Often [such] fundamental entitlements have been understood as prohibitions against interfering state action, and if the state keeps its hands off, those rights are taken to have been secured; the state has no further affirmative task." Early liberal and libertarian views held that negative rights are the only legitimate rights; proponents asserted that "only freedoms whose existence requires mere restraint on the part of others can count as genuine rights" (Miller 2007, 3).

Social and economic rights represent the middle version of human rights. They are the second generation of human rights and are sometimes called positive rights in that they are associated with state obligation to provide basic necessities in order to ensure basic dignity among all of a nation's people. Their "most comprehensive and coherent development came in the postwar era in the shape of the Keynesian welfare state" (Teeple 2005, 14). Economic and social rights are associated with collective entitlement to food security, health care, education, meaningful and gainful employment, security in old age, special protection for mothers and children, rest, and leisure (Wronka 2008). Often considered claims-based rights to legal entitlement, these rights have their roots in the social struggle of marginalized groups and in social democracy. When these rights were originally introduced, the second gen-

eration's claims to collective entitlement stood in direct conflict with the individualistic nature of the first generation of rights.

The thickest version of human rights is represented by solidarity rights. Still in its infancy, this version emerged as a third generation of human rights. Solidarity rights are primarily associated with such global issues as pollution, war, social development, self-determination, the oppression of indigenous and other people, the global redistribution of power in international forums, and intergovernmental cooperation (Wronka 2008). Social rights and social development promised in this third generation are the two main arenas of struggle for the global South (Dean 2010). They have also been a new focal point of "indigenism," a term that describes "the international movement that aspires to promote and protect the rights of the world's 'first peoples'" (Niezen 2003, 3).

One of the movement's main roles is the affirmation of local claims of difference. It uses such concepts as treaty rights, regional autonomy, and self-determination to make these claims, and it embraces the vision of universal human rights as a way to protect and develop other sources of identity and power. The use of a human rights approach is also increasingly rooted in the dialogue on environment and sustainable development (Adebowale 2008). With the growth of international social work, indigenous worldviews, and antioppressive practice, the prominence of all three generations of rights is growing in theory and practice; this growth is evident in the proliferation of social work texts on the subject (see, e.g., Reichert 2007; Ife 2008; Mapp 2008; Wronka 2008).

Relation to Social Welfare

Social welfare policy responds to human need. The relationship between social justice and social welfare policy is focused here on the "means of redressing poverty, inequality, exclusion, harm and other dimensions of social injustice" (Newman and Yeates 2008, 4). Each of the three welfare versions (regimes) discussed below focuses on this means in a comparatively different way.

The thinnest version of social welfare is the residual welfare and charity regime. Its main focus is on meeting the minimal levels of human need in order to realize the human potential in those judged deserving. Under this version, redistribution is primarily seen as a private matter in which obligation is voluntary, localized, and limited in time and scope. However, this version does recognize a limited role for the state. Examples of this regime's interpretation of social justice can be found in the writings of the United Kingdom's Centre for Social Justice. This British Conservative Party affiliate believes that social justice policy should be rooted in building strong families. "That we have failed to stem the last four decades' rising tide of family breakdown is shameful.

We owe it to the next and future generations to act now; for their welfare and well-being and for that of the society they will live in" (Centre for Social Justice 2010, 60). As Lister (2010, 248) points out, "The fact that leading members of the [British] Conservative Party are talking the language of social justice represents a distinct break with the neo-liberal new right, which, following Hayek, disputed the validity of the very idea of social justice." The Conservative Party seems to believe that society (rather than simply the state), in order to encourage this version of social welfare policy, must tackle the conditions caused by certain types of citizens; namely, those seen as the underclasses. These groups are characterized by welfare dependency, deviance, addiction, debt, and family breakdown (Young 2007; Dwyer 2010).

Reflective of past "middle way" conservative regimes, this residual or charity regime places a strong emphasis on "particular social goals such as supporting 'the family' in its traditional form, as the cornerstone of society and social order, and it focuses on tackling specific social problems" (Lister 2010, 34). For example, the regime emphasizes the state's role in remoralizing the underclasses to take responsibility in making the right choices. It would allow compassionate citizens to take over some or most of the residual costs of social welfare. Those costs would be met by enlisting other citizens in altruism, volunteering, philanthropy, and charity work.

This approach to social justice has a key flaw. Social capital becomes the mantra for civic engagement and renewal of community, but the regime's emphasis on self-help, agency, and active citizenship tends to place most of the responsibility for a just society at the feet of those who are most targeted by injustice (Ledwith and Springett 2010). Voluntary contribution pushes social welfare management out of the public sphere and into the private sphere, a place where individuals' decisions are autonomous, voluntary, and often based on privilege or personal wealth. In this way, charity and enterprise become two sides of the same virtuous coin (Powell 2007). This push is also reflected in the faith-based initiatives within the United States. So-called charitable choice legislation there calls on faith-based organizations to take up the slack left in a diminishing public sphere and, in doing so, to reconcile compassion with individualism (Allahyari 2000; Bartkowski and Regis 2003; Wineburg 2007).

Located at the midpoint on the continuum, the second version of social welfare is based on a social-minimum or welfare-state regime. The key point in this version is that the dominant constructions of social justice require the state, rather than voluntary individuals or charitable organizations, to take "the responsibility for shaping and enforcing the chosen distribution of social resources" (Fleischacker 2004, 7). This point is reflected in Richard Titmuss's (1963) argument that the state has a duty to meet the varying welfare needs of its citizens. It is an idea

of universal resource allocation: through social policy, the needs of the whole of society can be met within society's existing structures (Dean 2008). In the past, distribution was often associated with work (full fruit of labor) and need. Under this version, charity continues to play a role, but that role is complementary and enhancing; charity supports but does not compete with the welfare state in meeting people's economic and social needs.

The third and thickest version of social welfare is based on a structural transformation regime. Underlying this version is the assumption that capitalist societies affect groups differently. Specifically, it assumes that divisions of social class, ethnicity, and gender are conditions through which subordinate groups are dominated by economically and socially dominant groups in society (Payne 1997). As such, the goal of this version is social transformation: "That is, it seeks to change the society in which it occurs, rather than simply dealing with the consequences of it. It will move from social relations based on inequality and supported by important social institutions towards social relations based on equality with a collective, participatory ideology" (Payne 1997, 223). Achieving these new relations involves working to eliminate cultural and structural violence that harms people by denying them their basic needs, human rights, identity, and capabilities. By stressing change (rather than tradition) and interdependence (rather than self-reliance), the model allows for innovative creativity and recognition of common humanity (Young 2007; Dwyer 2010).

Relation to Political Ideology

Political ideologies are the lenses that help one to make sense of what is going on in society. One definition is that "an ideology is a fairly coherent and comprehensive set of ideas that explain[s] and evaluates social conditions, helps people understand their place in society, and provide[s] a program for social and political action" (Ball et al. 2010, 4).

The thinnest version of political ideology is associated with neoliberalism and neoconservatism. One might question the connection of these regimes to social justice; making the connection may lead to a bastardization of the concept of social justice. At the least, it may force contradictory elements upon the concept. Sadly, as use of social justice terminology grows, that terminology gains favor across the entire political spectrum. For this version, "social justice is narrowly defined to mean individual freedom to participate in the market" (MacKinnon 2009, 519). Rights are defined individually and in a way that limits them to the force of negative rights discussed above. Ulrich Beck notes that this individualization process invites people "to constitute themselves as individual: to plan, understand, design themselves as individuals and,

should they fail, to blame themselves. Individualisation thus implies, paradoxically, a collective lifestyle" (1998, 28).

Under this ideological frame, the government's principal objectives in pursuit of social justice are establishment of meritocracy and creation of self-reliant citizens. Personal and social need are simply defined as individual market preferences or consumer demands (Blau and Abramovitz 2007). "The needs of society as a whole represent no more or less than the sum total of millions of individual preferences. Because people buy what they need, the gap between needs and resources—the liberal justification for the welfare state—does not exist" (Blau and Abramovitz 2007, 139). Rather, the exclusionary narratives of social policy here focus on the theme that the poor get ahead through personal transformation. This ideological frame also moves toward welfare retrenchment and the decivilization of society, a society that manages social exclusion and criminalizes social policy (Rodger 2008). Policy in this frame prefers punishment over welfare for those who are not able to reach self-reliance (Snider 2008). If redistribution occurs at all under this model, it is confined to humanitarian aid, philanthropy, and charity from what can be described as the "non-profit industrial complex," a set of relationships between the state and the owning class (Smith 2007, 9). In this complex, foundations increasingly become "the controllers of social justice struggles" (Smith 2007, 9).

At the midpoint on the continuum is the next version of political ideology: social liberalism. The concept of social justice in this version is much different than the concept found in the previous version: "Social liberalism redefined the relationship between the state and the market. Postwar welfare states operationalized the idea that the state was responsible for the just distribution of social resources and that the market could and should be regulated in order to maximize economic and political stability and the collective wellbeing of all citizens" (Brodie 2007, 97). In this way, social liberalism recognizes that the state has a legitimate role in addressing economic and social issues. To address those issues, social liberalism tends to seek out legislative and judicial remedies for structural barriers to citizenship equality. In order to complement these egalitarian remedies, it "provided language for the systemically disadvantaged to talk back to the state, to make claims as citizens who had been actively denied its promise of social justice, and to mandate the state to regulate and ameliorate structural assaults on individual and collective wellbeing" (Brodie 2007, 99). Such an approach is "'dependent upon the identification of an interest group with a shared identity' that could be shown to have been 'denied their full and proper legal and/or human rights'" (Brodie 2008, 151). This complements what Fraser and Axel Honneth identify as the second dimension of social justice: "recognition and voice" (2003, 29). Historically, social liberals have tended to confine their understanding of rights and

obligation to redistribution within their own domestic borders. In this way, duties to developing nations are seen almost exclusively as a matter of humanitarian assistance and therefore not based on global rights (Valentini 2009).

The third and thickest version of political ideology is reconstructed socialism. Reisch states, "A Marxist view of social justice recognizes that neither the human condition nor social reality is fixed, but are the consequences of socioeconomic relations and cultural patterns, including the ideological frameworks that rationalize them" (2002, 350). Capitalism, patriarchy, and racism play important roles in shaping human nature by keeping people divided. To counter these hierarchical systems of oppression, reconstructed socialism focuses on mutuality, social cooperation, solidarity, and trust. Mullaly notes, "This revitalized socialism must engage with post-modernism, as well as with feminist, anti-racist, and other struggles against domination, and demand the acknowledgement and celebration of diversity in cultures, sexualities, races, ages, abilities, and other human characteristics that were excluded, suppressed, or discriminated against within an unreconstructed modernist version of socialism" (Mullaly 2007, 206, 209).

As such, a heterodox social justice perspective, "involving and incorporating the strengths of a variety of critical approaches," provides the best solution by which to challenge orthodoxy and fundamentalism within current structures of society (Baines 2007, 22). Adding to this, G. A. Cohen (2009, 34–35) speaks about the "requirement of community," by which he means "that people care about, and, where necessary and possible, care for, one another, and, too, care that they care about one another." This principle of communal reciprocity is often associated with indigenous and feminist worldviews of the gift economy (Kuokkanen 2007; Vaughan 2007). Cohen (2009, 39) argues that "communal reciprocity is the antimarket principle according to which I serve you not because of what I can get in return by doing so but because you need or want my service, and you, for the same reason, serve me."

Discussion

The model proposed in this article is intended to help organize theory on the concept of social justice and to examine how that concept affects the work done by social workers, students, and educators. This final section focuses on two tasks. The first task is to illustrate how this model can work as a teaching tool. The second task is to further consider the thickening process discussed elsewhere in the article.

To illustrate the use of the proposed model in teaching, this section reviews child-care policy in Canada. Child care serves as the lens through which many analyze the shape and content of welfare state restructuring there (Prentice 2004).

Table 2

CANADIAN CHILD-CARE BELIEFS IN THE 1970S

Relational Aspect	Middle
Distributive justice	Reduce stratification by class, gender, and territory; countrywide institutions with national standards; access to care as a social right of citizenship
Identity	Social inclusion and integration
Human rights	Rights-based approach to care: Approach by women to education, workforce, and child rearing
Social welfare	Approach by child to well-being and development Universal child care as public service; focus on child development and education; accessible, high-quality, and affordable child care
Ideology	Social liberal

In the 1960s, Western nations began to focus on human rights, conceptualizing equality in this case in terms of access to child care and presenting that access as a social right of citizenship. In the Canadian context, this focus can be seen in attitudes toward each of the five relational aspects. Table 2 describes those attitudes. In this table, the thin and thick versions that were shown in table 1 are removed in order to show the exclusive focus on the middle version.

An understanding of a positive right to care slowly took hold in Canada. By the 1970s, the nation began to recognize and make commitments to gender equality in the workforce (McKeen 2004). In the growing field of child development policy, the Canadian government recognized that children, the state's new citizens, have a right to care (Friendly and Prentice 2009). "Thus, from the beginning of the second wave, feminists in many countries claimed a new social right: access to safe, reliable, and publicly financed childcare" (Jenson and Sineau 2001, 12). In Canada, child care was once seen as a private family matter, but these new convictions credibly repositioned child care as a public responsibility. The shift is reflected in pragmatic federal efforts to keep up with a growing need (Prentice 2001). Martha Friendly and Donna Lero (2005, 73) assert: "To be universally accessible, [child care] services must be available, affordable, and appropriate, requiring an adequate supply of services while costs to parents must be affordable (either free, very low costs, or geared to income)."

In terms of distributive justice, the hope by child-care advocates was that state-sponsored universal access to child care in Canada would broaden equal opportunity for women by increasing their participation in education, the workforce, and child rearing. In terms of identity, child-care advocates advanced the cultural claims of women (and through them, the claims of their children). Such claims sought to create real equality in a social policy often marked by inequality on issues of

Table 3

CANADIAN CHILD-CARE REALITIES IN THE 2010S

Relational Aspect	Thin
Distributive justice	Proliberty notion of freedom; high reliance on family and the market
Identity	Essentialist notions of femininity and the traditional family model highlighted and encouraged as foundation of care
Human rights	High emphasis placed on individual choice and responsibility over rights
Social welfare	Enabling state or active state; provides a "trampoline" not a "safety net" (Lister 2010, 49); focuses on child poverty and means testing; encouragement of private solutions
Ideology	Neoliberal or third way

gender, class, and regionalism (Jenson and Sineau 2001). Finally, in terms of social welfare regimes, feminists helped expand welfare state reforms through their critique of the state's gender blindness and through their demands for gender equity (Fraser 1994).

All these changes began to unravel with the advent of global restructuring and the emergence of New Right social policies in the 1980s. The task of child-care redesign fell into the hands of politicians. Although the rhetoric of universal access continued in Canada, the focus shifted away from discussion of state responsibility to the responsibilities of individuals and families. Politicians often couched the shift in the language of choice. In this way, "collective choice, which is the kind of choice made by democratic institutions, gives way to more individualized and flexible modes of choices made by individuals and families" (Jenson and Sineau 2001, 241). The Universal Child Care Plan (UCCP), a policy introduced by the Conservative government of Canada as a provision of their first budget in 2006 (Friendly and Prentice 2009), illustrates this regressive shift from a position near the middle of the continuum to one that more closely approximates that for the thinnest version of social justice. This plan and its applications to the five relational aspects are outlined in table 3.

The UCCP has two components: the Universal Child Care Benefit (UCCB) and Child Care Spaces. The UCCB provides "direct financial assistance to parents"; the Child Care Spaces component provides "funding to provinces and territories as well as investment tax credit which businesses use to create new child care spaces" (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada n.d.). The UCCB benefit is set at \$100 a month and is paid to parents for all children under 6 years of age. Parents can then choose the child care that is best for their children and their family's needs.

As table 3 suggests, the UCCP reflects a transition to thin versions of each relational aspect. In the domain of distributive justice, the policy emphasis shifted from the premise that child care is a social right. It

now reflects, though not fully, the notion of freedom from government intervention. This new position is typical of the traditional “liberal” world of social welfare, characterized by a narrow notion of state intervention and a high reliance on the family and the market” (Prentice 2004, 194). To borrow from British Third Way rhetoric, the demand is for an “enabling state” or “active welfare state” role (Lister 2010, 49). “The emphasis in social security policy is on providing a ‘trampoline’ not a ‘safety net.’ In other words, the state is there to help people to help themselves and to exercise responsibility” (Lister 2010, 49; see also Blair 1999).

Beyond basic state responsibilities to help nudge people along, the working out of wants, needs, and responsibilities under the UCCP tends to be left to the will (choice) of the self-disciplined individual. The UCCP reflects the Conservative government’s argument that women have now gained equality (negative equality) and that there is therefore no need to enact additional gender-equality provisions.² Throughout the debate that led up to the UCCP, a strong chorus from a social conservative front asserted that mothers need to be given the right to stay at home; they argued that this right is lost in the national focus on universal public provision of child care outside the home. For example, Real Women of Canada, a group of social conservatives, lobbied against universal child care but backed provisions in the UCCP to provide direct payments to parents and to emphasize a flexible or deregulated system of care: “We believe the ideal situation, even in a changing world, is that every family, who so chooses, would be able to look after their children in their own home. This means that women should have a genuine choice, financially and socially, to remain at home as full-time mothers, if they so choose, especially when their children are young” (Real Women of Canada n.d.).

The statement does not mention that such a funding mechanism, given the actual after-tax amount being offered, primarily benefits two-parent families but treats other family types unfairly (Battle, Torjman, and Mendelson 2010). In other words, the foundation of care in the UCCP includes measures that reflect essentialist notions of femininity and the traditional family (Fraser 1994). The plan leaves other family types to the vulgarities of a targeted and residual welfare regime. Even when these federal funds are supplemented by additional provincial subsidies, the level of support falls far short of the universality noted above. In fact, “the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development continues to rank Canada’s child care situation as one of the worst of its 30 member countries” (Dallaire and Rothman 2010). In the end, the UCCP and fiscal restraints imposed through budget and tax cuts shifted the costs of child care from government to households. A logical conclusion is that unpaid labor will increase among women to make up for lost services.

This historical comparison provides some insight into how the social justice model can be used both by individuals and within the classroom. The model is applied to a historical comparison here but can be put to other uses. For example, individuals could attempt to situate their own beliefs along the continuum in order to identify their own strengths, weaknesses, and consistency across issues. As an assignment, students could evaluate for-profit, not-for-profit, and government agency policy positions on social justice, using the model to examine rhetoric, programs, and actions. The model might also guide an instructor or human services program in developing an introductory course on social justice.

The second of this section's two tasks is to consider the thickening process discussed elsewhere in the article. Along the continuum (fig. 1 and table 1), proximity to the social equality pole indicates a rich and complex understanding of social justice. A thick understanding of social justice does not necessarily conflict with thinner understandings but often builds on, expands, or incorporates them. The differentiation among points along the continuum is not always clean-cut, and there are cautions. Distinguishing a thin interpretation from a thick one does not necessarily mean that one is better than the other (Dean 2010; see also Walzer 1994). With that said, several shifts are identified in the development of this model. The first of these shifts is from individualized (atomistic and privileged) to collective (organic and allied) images of society. With this comes a shift from reasons of self-interest through reasons of duty and on to reasons of care. So too, one could expect changes that move people from personal to social forms of commitment. A third identified shift is from relations of intolerance, through relations based on tolerance, and on to relations based on respect and the promotion of diversity. A fourth shift is from utilitarian understandings (e.g., zero-sum game) to more transformative understandings of social justice (e.g., liberation). Finally, the last shift is from managerial or elitist concerns through group oppositional formations and toward interactional models of engagement focused on institutional restructuring and emancipatory practice. Each of these shifts potentially leads to thicker meanings of what social justice is all about.

Conclusion

As stated in the introduction, social justice is an essentially contested concept. Although the concept is used vociferously, its definition is always hard to pin down. Because social justice is adaptable, there is room to add aspects and versions to the continuum as other knowledge, possibilities, and understandings emerge. This study identifies some of the similarities and contradictions apparent in any attempt to define social justice. Although tentative and subject to revision, the model may help

academics, students, and practitioners to reflect upon and locate their own personal understandings of social justice. In this way, the model may also help in interpreting other people's work. In the end, I hope that the model will foster critique and dialogue about a system of social justice that is more comprehensive and generous than the current one—a system that moves society closer to the possibility of social equality.

Notes

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1. This is not to say that an interest in social justice was absent from social work practice prior to this period. Social work's historical, though tenuous, commitment to fight injustice clearly reflects the notion of social justice, as do social work's efforts to promote social activism (Reisch 2007). Rather, the return of social work's emphasis on social justice can be seen as a response to the resurgence of conservatism in the late 1970s (Reeser and Leighninger 1990).

2. For example, the Conservative government eliminated the phrase "gender equality" from the mandate of Status of Women Canada, the country's primary institution responsible for gender equality. It also closed 12 of the organization's 16 offices and eliminated funding to a program that raises court challenges related to equality rights issues.

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