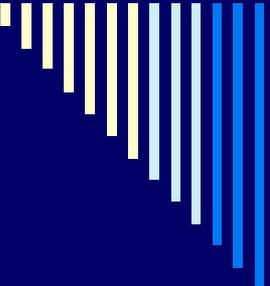


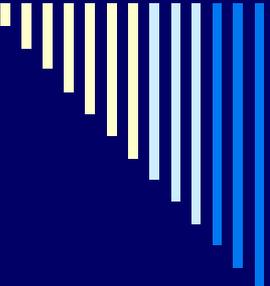
Constructing a Socially Just System of Social Welfare in a Multicultural Society: The U.S. Experience

Michael Reisch, Ph.D., U. of Michigan
Korean Academy of Social Welfare
50th Anniversary Conference
Seoul, Republic of Korea, April 20, 2007



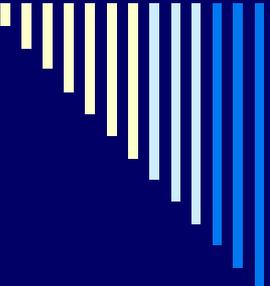
Social Justice & Multi-Culturalism in the U.S.

- Social justice is the central normative component of social work in the U.S.
 - Ongoing, and largely unacknowledged, conflicts between the goals of social justice and the goals of multiculturalism have persisted throughout U.S. history.
 - Resolving these conflicts is critical to respond effectively to 21st C. economic, social, and demographic realities.
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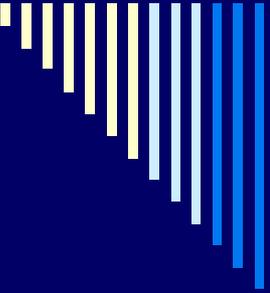
Basic Assumptions About Social Justice in the U.S.

- The pursuit of social justice requires the creation of a more egalitarian society.
 - The goal of social justice complements the goal of preserving individual rights and freedom.
 - Social justice requires the reduction of **both** economic and social differences.
 - Social justice and multiculturalism are compatible, even complementary goals.
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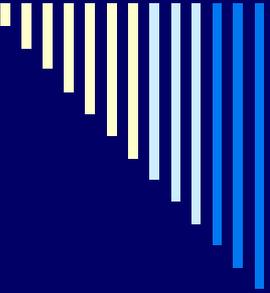
History of Social Justice in the United States

- Until the mid-20th C., different views of social justice & social welfare existed in different U.S. communities & regions.
 - Cultural distinctions shaped groups' concepts of justice, rights, need and helping– Reflected in language, goals, programs, and organizational forms.
 - The U.S. concept of social justice is an evolving hybrid of diverse cultural norms.
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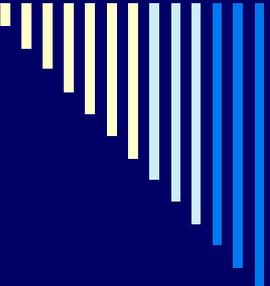
Different Conceptions of Social Justice in the U.S.

- **Conservative**: Preserve individual liberty, property rights, and economic and social order.
 - **Liberal**: Distribute individual benefits & burdens more equally & expand civil liberties and rights.
 - **Humanitarian**: Promote cooperation, trust, and mutuality in societal institutions.
 - **Social Democratic**: Achieve social & economic equality and promote greater civic participation.
 - **Post-Modern**: Include marginalized groups in socially just decision-making processes.
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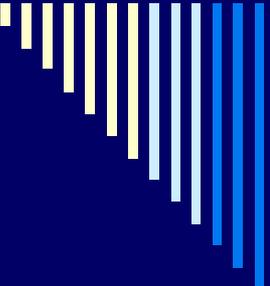
Persistent Issues in the U.S.

- ❑ Conflict between universal and group-specific conceptions of social justice.
 - ❑ Conflict over respective roles of religious and secular views of social justice.
 - ❑ Relationship between social justice & the maintenance of social/political stability.
 - ❑ Balance between egalitarianism and preserving individual rights and freedom.
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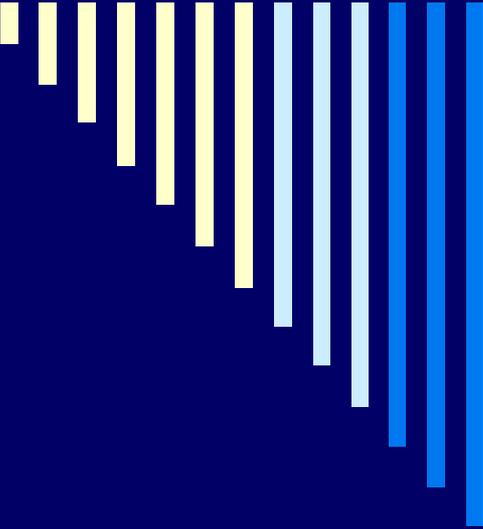
Recent Approaches to Social Justice in the U.S.

- “Fair Play”: Equality of Opportunity
 - “Fair Shares”: Equality of Outcomes
 - Compensation for Past Injustices
 - Distributive Justice: Balance equality of rights with more equitable outcomes
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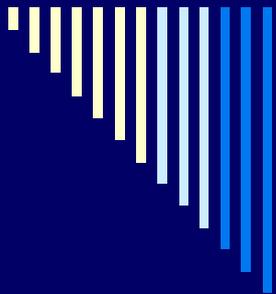
Forms of Distributive Justice in the United States

- ❑ Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities
 - ❑ Equal Distribution Based on Similar Personal Merit (Credentials) or Individual Productivity
 - ❑ Unequal Distribution Based on Individual Needs or Individual Requirements (e.g., Disability)
 - ❑ Unequal Distribution Based on Individual Status, Political Position, or Religious Beliefs
 - ❑ Unequal Distribution Based on Different “Contracts” for Individuals or Groups
 - ❑ Unequal Distribution Based on Compensation
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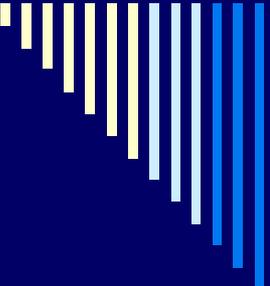
A Difficult Issue:

How can we apply a concept of
social justice based on
individual rights to address
group needs?



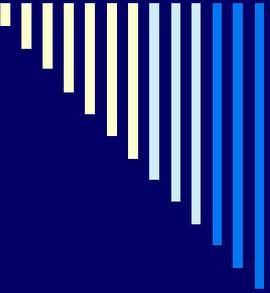
Major Approaches to Diversity in the U.S.

- Assimilation: Myth of the “Melting Pot”
 - Segregation: Separate and Unequal
 - Cultural Pluralism: A “Mosaic”
 - A “Color-Blind” Society: A Meritocracy
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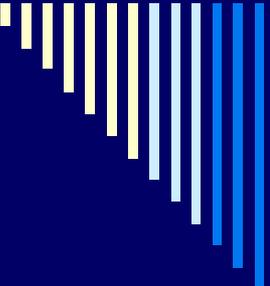
Impact of Multiculturalism on U.S. Social Welfare

- Parallel discourses on social justice led to ongoing tensions in the development of U.S. social policies and programs.
 - Meaning of social justice was not static.
 - Alternative social services emerged to reflect evolving views of social justice.
 - Efforts to reconcile differences – in theory or practice – have largely failed.
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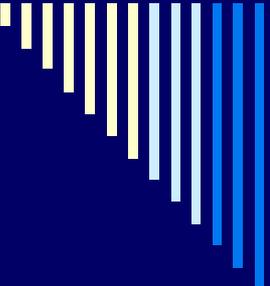
Persistent Conflicts Over Diversity in the U.S.

- Cultural homogeneity v. heterogeneity
 - Coerced cultural assimilation v. coerced social and economic segregation
 - Individual v. group identity and rights
 - Americanization v. the equal application of justice: i.e., Who is an “American”?
 - Equality of rights v. equality of resources
 - What is the meaning of “social justice”?
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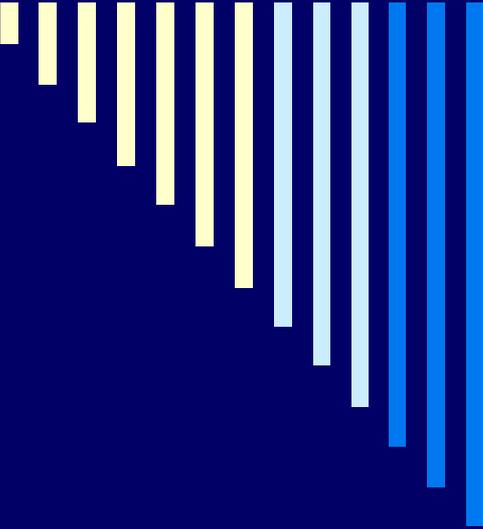
Past Strategies To Promote Multiculturalism in the U.S.

- ❑ Critique concept of cultural assimilation and promote cultural separatism.
 - ❑ Create alternate social welfare systems.
 - ❑ Emphasize different social goals.
 - ❑ Use specific issues to forge coalitions across racial, ethnic and religious lines.
 - ❑ Combine universal social justice goals & selective approaches to social policy.
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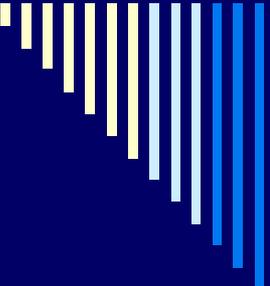
Moving Beyond Outdated Assumptions in the 21st C.

- Divisions in U.S. society are no longer only along a clear “majority-minority” axis. The definition of a “minority” group in the United States has not been and is not currently static.
 - Social justice goals are no longer compatible with prevailing social welfare paradigms.
 - Economic, social, political, and cultural issues can no longer be addressed separately in policy making or program development.
 - **Key Issue: The goals of social justice and multiculturalism are not and have not been compatible as they have been formulated and applied in the United States.**
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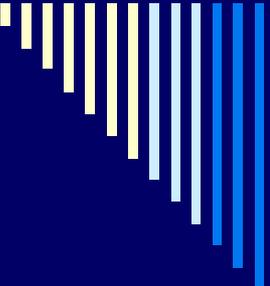
A Central Dilemma:

How can we apply social justice principles universally when the concept has different meanings?



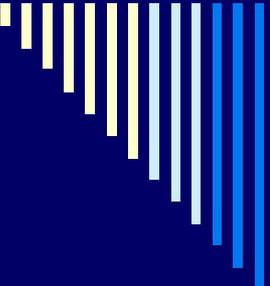
Assumptions About Social Welfare in the United States

- ❑ Ongoing expansion of state responsibility for social welfare is necessary to maintain the legitimacy of social & political institutions.
 - ❑ The social justice goals of social work require a benevolent state with which to cooperate.
 - ❑ NGO's play a distinct social welfare role.
 - ❑ Worker-client relationships are voluntary.
 - ❑ Practice theories apply to all cultures equally or need only minor adjustments to be effective.
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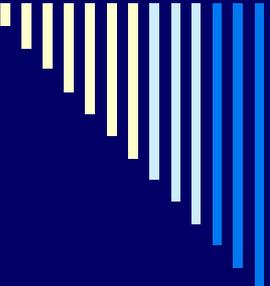
The New Realities of Economic Globalization

- As a consequence of economic globalization, a nation's social welfare problems can no longer be solved solely within existing political boundaries.
 - Ideological and political attacks have undermined confidence in government's ability as a problem-solving institution.
 - Boundaries between public, private, and NGO sectors have been transformed.
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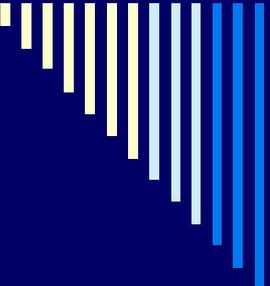
Impact of Globalization on Social Welfare

- In response to demands of globalization, welfare state provisions have been cut back with severe social consequences.
 - Demographic changes have transformed the focus of U.S. social welfare policies.
 - Increase in involuntary clients undercuts many basic assumptions of social work.
 - The social work profession has become de-politicized to protect its tenuous status in the U.S. occupational hierarchy.
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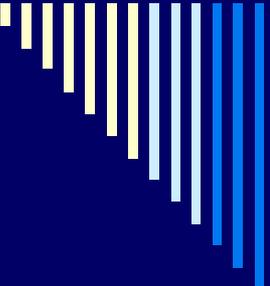
New Demographic Realities in the United States

- Aging population, especially the “old old”
 - Dramatic shifts in U.S. racial and ethnic composition due to immigration
 - Changing patterns in household size
 - Transformation of gender & family roles
 - Depopulation of many rural areas in U.S.
 - Economic decline of “inner ring” suburbs
 - New attitudes about sexual orientation
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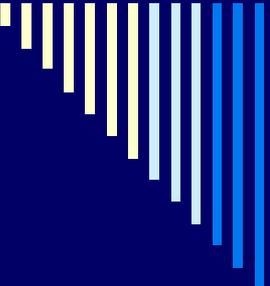
Increasing Socio-Economic Inequality & Its Impact

- Widening gaps in the distribution of income and wealth since 1980's
 - Persistence, intensification, and increasing likelihood of poverty
 - Increasing racial disparities in health, mental health, education, housing, and employment
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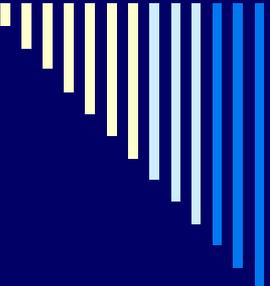
Why Does the Gap Between Social Justice Rhetoric & Reality Persist?

- ❑ Façade of national unity obscures the persistence of social inequality.
 - ❑ Prosperity hides long-standing social divisions by isolating the disadvantaged.
 - ❑ Proponents of social justice are often attacked as subversive & marginalized.
 - ❑ Social work's goal of professional status diminishes its emphasis on social justice.
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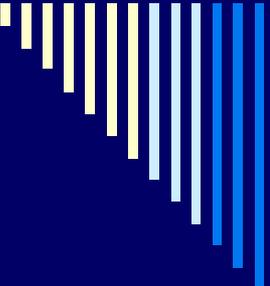
Questions Regarding the Future of Social Justice

- Which groups should bear the social costs of economic and environmental changes?
 - Which concepts of social justice will guide the creation of policies & practice?
 - What roles should the state, NGO's, and the private sector play in social welfare?
 - What is the social justice role of social work in a hostile political environment?
 - What values will unite a diverse society?
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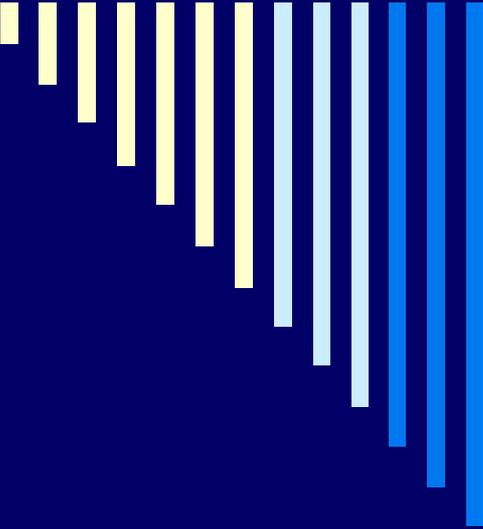
A First Step: Challenge Past Assumptions

- ❑ Social and cultural divisions are far more complex than traditionally conceived.
 - ❑ Expansion of social provision alone can not create a more egalitarian society.
 - ❑ National governments, as currently constructed, can not correct the problems created by a market economy.
 - ❑ Social diversity alone will not generate support for socially just policies.
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What Is To Be Done?: Some Specific Ideas

- Hold vulnerable populations harmless in the allocation of scarce resources.
- Emphasize mutual responsibility and common humanity in our policies.
- Prioritize prevention over remediation and balance people's rights and needs.
- Stress multiple forms of helping and multiple points of access to services.
- Promote genuinely fair decision-making.



Thank You For Your Kind Attention

**I would be pleased to hear
your comments and answer
any of your questions.**
