

and cognitive functions that are intimately related to the self. Social Workers help people make use of and develop community and social resources to build connections with others and reduce alienation and isolation; psychotherapists help people to alter, reconstruct, and improve the self. (Specht & Courtney, 1994, p. 26)

Specht and Courtney held that "the popular psychotherapies have diverted social work from its original mission and vision of the perfectibility of society" (p. 27). They claimed that there is no place for psychotherapy in social work, that "it is not possible to integrate the practice of individual psychotherapy with the practice of communally based systems of social care" (p. 170). Their conclusion was that psychotherapy "is an unsuitable mode of intervention for social work" (p. 172).

The argument continued. In a national study of career intentions of graduate social work students, it was found that a majority of the students planned to enter private practice but that the educational programs do not teach skills needed for private practice careers (Green, Baskind, Mustian, Reed, & Taylor, 2007). The authors call for a remediation of the disconnect between graduate education's commitment to teach about agency-based practice with a broader social mission and students' desires to pursue individual work through private practice.

The historical struggle to identify the uniqueness and importance of the social work profession is not new. Ehrenreich (1985) argued that the historic tension between individual and societal change is based in values and assumptions.

On the one hand, there are those theories that emphasize the problems of the individual and see casework as the solution. On the other hand, there are the theories that emphasize the problems of society and see social reform as the solution. These theories are more readily understood as the ideologies and battle cries of particular groups within and outside the profession, struggling for power in the profession, than as exclusively true, well-validated (or even capable of being validated) theories of human behavior. (Ehrenreich, 1985, p. 227)

The development of professional social work has been marked by debate about the purpose and values of the field. Ehrenreich's view is that human behavior is governed by both individual and social contributions, and he suggests that the profession should look at both. This combined emphasis on micro and macro interventions is the foundation of this book.



EP 2c

Values, Social Welfare, and Social Work LO6

As mentioned earlier, many values and beliefs helped shape organized responses to social need. Some of society's values conflict with professional social work values and beliefs, making the development of new policies, programs, and practice by social workers a complicated challenge. Each of us has our own set of values and beliefs that may or may not fit with those of the



EP 1

Are Recipients Worthy or Unworthy?

social work profession. It is important to recognize and manage those values and beliefs and use professional values to guide our practice. The following sections highlight key values that often conflict and require ethical decision making to ensure the use of best social work practices.

Deciding whether people are worthy or unworthy of assistance dates back to the Elizabethan Poor Laws. The Poor Laws outlined the specific groups worthy of support: widows, orphans, the elderly, and people with physical disabilities. The criterion that determined this designation was whether a needy person's circumstances were the result of controllable events or of circumstances beyond that person's control. Becoming a widow, an orphan, or an elderly person was not a consequence of a personal decision. People who were perceived to have made bad choices that resulted in their need for assistance were considered unworthy. Therefore, an able-bodied adult without a job was perceived to have done or not done something that resulted in lack of employment. For example, Jane's unemployment could be viewed as a consequence of her lack of preparation for the job market or her single parenthood, making her, according to this point of view, unworthy of assistance.

The debate is still raging today. The issue of providing public assistance to poor single mothers is a perennial topic. Determining an individual's worthiness ignores social conditions, such as lack of employment opportunities for young women or high divorce rates, which contribute to people's circumstances. This view also ignores the fact that, regardless of the reason for a young mother's poverty, her children are not responsible for their mother's decisions, but they are nonetheless growing up poor and disadvantaged. Many scholars have demonstrated that our narrow definition of what constitutes personal choice ignores many social and economic conditions that affect people's lives and penalize children (Abramowitz, 1996; Edin & Lem, 1997; Miller, 1992; Sidel, 1986).

Religious Values or Separation of Church and State

Social welfare and the social work profession itself are laced with values that stem from religious beliefs and organizations. Charity Organization Societies drew many of their early principles and workers from the organized Christian religions of the 1800s. Today, some programs, such as the Salvation Army's valuable work with people who are homeless, directly involve religious denominations in the services provided.

Shortly after he became president in 2001, George W. Bush called for the allocation of public money to fund faith-based organizations to deliver social services. Under law, these organizations were not eligible to receive public funds because their mission and purpose were entirely based in religion. Faith-based organizations differ from private organizations affiliated with religions that are nondenominational in service delivery, such as Catholic Charities.

Many people believe that funding religious organizations is a direct violation of the constitutional separation of religion and the state. Critics worry that an organization that takes a strong religious position will not be able to

Box 2.6 Ethical Practice...Abortion

Consider your personal beliefs about abortion. Are your beliefs related to your religious beliefs? Have your experiences as part of an organized religion affected how you view the issue of abortion? Can you separate your personal

values and religious beliefs from the public, secular laws that currently make abortion a legal right for women? How does a social worker reconcile her or his religious beliefs that may conflict with public laws?

put that aside when helping people in need and that public funds should not be used to preach a religious position.

Some of the people who represent faith-based organizations are opposed to receiving government support. They argue that government funding would mean that the government could dictate rules and regulations attached to that funding. If religious organizations were controlled by governmental dictates, this would potentially violate the Constitution's protection of religion from government interference. Therefore, although religious organizations have historically played a role in the provision of social services, whether that role will expand in future years as part of the faith-based initiative remains to be seen.

Spirituality, the search for meaning beyond the individual self, is sometimes separate from organized religion. People who value spirituality consider responsibility for the well-being of others to be central to their beliefs. This perspective parallels social work's values of social justice and collective responsibility. Therefore, the values of the social work profession, although separate from organized religion, do have connections to the spiritual and religious belief systems of our society. Consider the dilemma presented in Box 2.6.

Should We Change the Person or the System?

The economic upheavals that have occurred throughout American history have fueled the debate about whether professional social service providers should focus efforts on changing people or changing their surroundings. Today the profession holds that both are necessary. However, doing both, particularly system change, can be overwhelming. For example, trying to bring more and better-paying jobs to Jane's neighborhood (as discussed in Chapter 1) is a major structural effort, whereas helping Jane finish her education may seem easier. Both approaches are important, and focusing on one effort without the other will leave the problem unsolved. Until social workers can effect change at both the micro and macro levels, Jane and others like her will continue to live with unmet needs.

Impartial Professional or Advocate

One of the professional roles of social work is to advocate for clients. For example, a social worker might need to advocate for counseling services for a child in a school. However, social work practitioners are required to be impartial, not to impose their own values on clients. Instead, they should help clients (or in the child's case, the family) become empowered to advocate for themselves. Social workers must strike a balance between knowing when to

step up and advocate on behalf of clients and when it is best to let them step forward and find their own voices.

Helping People We Know or Helping Strangers

Almost every day, television and newspaper stories report on people in need. Often, numerous strangers respond to such stories by donating time, money, and other resources. Yet getting support for social programs can be difficult.

Typically, people are more likely to help those they know rather than those they do not know. Social programs seem to be bureaucratic and impersonal, and the general public does not know who receives what from which service. But when they read about a family with a seriously ill child, for example, they feel as though they know the people involved. The familiarity and personal connection make them more inclined to help. Websites like GoFundMe and YouCaring, popular examples of crowdfunding websites, are platforms for putting a personal story out for others to read about and contribute resources to help. Using these platforms is a modern way of tapping the sense of helping people we know by personalizing other people's needs.

Like so many approaches to social welfare, this tendency dates back to the Elizabethan Poor Laws. Colonial settlers refused to help those who were not from their community, whom they saw as strangers not deserving of support. This deeply rooted value, coupled with the American focus on individual responsibility, makes promoting public social welfare programs difficult.

Crisis or Ongoing Need

Americans have a strong history of responding to crisis, of taking a residual approach. US social welfare policy is less likely to take on problems that require long-term solutions. As a result, advocates often try to define a cause as a crisis rather than as an ongoing problem.

For example, not until 1987 did the federal government take an organized approach to fighting AIDS, even though the disease had been identified years before. Only after AIDS reached a critical point and could be called the AIDS crisis was there a government response. Today, although AIDS continues to be a social problem, people do not view it as a crisis in need of immediate attention, and the organized social movement response has diminished.

The conflict between crisis and ongoing need deeply affects social welfare policies and services (see Box 2.7). Although the crisis response is vital, it is important to serve those who have long-term needs and try to solve social problems to which there are no easy, quick answers.

Box 2.7 What Do You Think?

After the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, there was an outpouring of donations from all over the United States

Why was the response so quick and so strong? How did this response differ from the way people respond to a person who is homeless and asking for help on a street corner?