Chapter 1: THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION
Chapter 2: THE HISTORY OF SOCIAL WORK
Chapter 3: GENERALIST SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE
Chapter 4: ADVOCACY IN SOCIAL WORK
Chapter 1: THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Describe the work, goals, and values of social workers.
2. Explain the importance of diversity and advocacy in social work.
3. Appreciate the dynamic nature and roles of the social work profession.
4. Understand educational and practice options for social workers.
5. Compare a social work career to other human services occupations.

Mary Considers Social Work

While in high school, Mary volunteered at a vibrant day-care center and a state-of-the-art long-term care facility. She loved working with the diverse people in both facilities and realized that she was a good listener, doer, and advocate for them. Mary’s school counselor told her that she might make use of her newly discovered skills by becoming a social worker, a versatile “helping” career.

Mary has begun surfing the Internet and checking other resources, and has learned that with a bachelor’s degree in social work (BSW) she could work as a generalist practitioner or apply to an advanced-standing Master of Social Work (MSW) program and quickly become either an advanced generalist or a specialist. MSW-prepared social workers can work in a wide range of specialty fields of practice, such as hospice, veterans services, and behavioral health. They can work in community-based settings; various types of institutions; state, federal, or local agencies; international disaster relief organizations; or political action campaigns.

Mary feels confident that she would enjoy social work, a field where she could advocate for people and causes, help develop policies, and provide services and resources to people who really need them. As a student, you may be wondering which career might best suit your personal values and the life you envision for yourself. Social work is a versatile and worthy profession to consider. Integrity, decency, honesty, and justice are values held in high regard by social work professionals. If you decide to become a social worker, you will also join a field that provides considerable career mobility and opportunity.

Social work is a helping profession, similar to counseling, psychology, and other human services. Social work is different, though, and will likely interest you if you care especially about economic and social justice and wish to advocate for individuals, groups, families, organizations, and communities that face disadvantages. To help these groups,
social workers require an understanding of politics and power, and the ability to assess human needs and the environment.

This chapter introduces the goals, competencies, and responsibilities of the 21st century social worker. It describes social work’s core values, roles, fields of practice, career paths, and employment opportunities to help you decide if the profession of social work is right for you.

THE PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL WORKER

Social work is categorized as a profession because it requires specialized, formal training and certification. Some of the other professions include law, medicine, accounting, architecture, teaching, and counseling. But social work’s unique purpose is to infuse change into the lives of individuals and into the community to reduce or eradicate the ill effects of personal distress and social inequality (Soydan, 2008).

Professional social workers generally graduate from a department, program, or school of social work with either a bachelor’s or master’s degree (or perhaps a doctorate) in social work. Although some social work jobs do not require certification, a professional social worker is generally considered to be someone who has received a social work degree and become certified or licensed by the state in which he or she practices.

Many social workers have achieved historical prominence, such as social work pioneer Jane Addams (who won a Nobel Peace Prize in 1931), civil rights activist Dr. Dorothy I. Height, and Frances Perkins (the first woman to serve as a Cabinet member, as secretary of labor in 1933). Social work pioneer Del Anderson transformed veterans services, Bernice Harper led hospice social work, Joan O. Weiss helped establish the field of genetic counseling, and Dale Masi developed the employee-assistance field (Clark, 2012).

Social work professor and researcher Dr. Brené Brown has become quite successful as a “public” social worker, offering the profession’s perspective through books, television interviews, and online talks about shame, vulnerability, and courage. Others with social work degrees who have brought the profession’s perspective to diverse careers include actor Samuel L. Jackson, writer Alice Walker, and personal finance guru Suze Orman. Their liberal arts–based social work education was a liberating experience that has served as the foundation for their life’s work.

SOCIAL WORK’S UNIQUE PURPOSE AND GOALS

Throughout history, what human beings have seemed to need most are resources for survival as well as a sense that they matter. Beyond feeling secure and accepted for who they are, people also hope to live a meaningful, healthy, and successful life. These are the central concerns of social workers. Their professional role is to help people secure the basic human needs and values: food, water, shelter, and such intangible resources as emotional, economic, and social support.

The purpose of professional social work has been articulated formally by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), the voice for the profession (NASW, 1973, pp. 4–5; 2012):

Social work is the professional activity of helping individuals, groups, or communities enhance or restore their capacity for social functioning and creating societal conditions favorable to this goal. Social work practice consists of the professional application of social work values, principles, and techniques to one or more of the following ends:

- Helping people obtain tangible services (e.g. income, housing, food).
- Providing counseling and psychotherapy with individuals, families, and groups.
- Helping communities or groups provide or improve social and health services.
- Participating in relevant legislative processes.

The NASW considers social work an applied science and art that helps people who are struggling to function better in their world and that effects societal changes to enhance everyone’s well-being.

NASW describes four major goals for social work practitioners. The Council on Social Work Education
SOCIAL WORK IN ACTION

Dr. Brené Brown Speaks Out

DR. BRENÉ BROWN has a BSW, MSW, and doctorate in social work and serves as a professor and researcher at the University of Houston's Graduate College of Social Work. She is also a storyteller. Dr. Brown has authored a #1 New York Times best seller titled Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead (2012), another NYT best seller titled The Gifts of Imperfection (2010), and I Thought It Was Just Me (2007). For the past decade she has also delivered national presentations on the concepts of courage, vulnerability, worthiness, and shame. Her work has been featured on Oprah, PBS, CNN, and NPR. In 2012, Dr. Brown gave a TEDx talk in Houston, Texas, on the power of vulnerability; more than 12 million people have watched this talk. (TED stands for Technology, Entertainment, Design; TEDx talks are modeled on TED talks, which feature engaging presentations by experts on a wide variety of topics, but are organized independently.) She is also the founder of The Daring Way, a training program for helping professionals who wish to implement her findings on courage, shame, vulnerability, and worthiness in their own work.

In her YouTube clips on the “Power of Vulnerability” and “Listening to Shame,” Dr. Brown discusses how social workers are called to “lean into the discomfort” and establish meaningful connections with people.

Brown concludes from her qualitative research that “vulnerability is not weakness”; vulnerability requires “emotional risk, exposure, uncertainty, and fuels our lives.” Essentially, vulnerability is our most accurate measure of courage: “Innovation, creativity, and change is the birthplace of vulnerability.”

In her clip about shame, she concludes that, although shame is not guilt, it is highly correlated with such behaviors as addiction, depression, suicide, and eating disorders.

Shame also reveals itself differently in women and men. For example, women experience shame due to unobtainable or conflicting expectations. By contrast, men experience shame when they believe that they are perceived as weak.

Dr. Brown exemplifies how a social work education can propel you into a many-faceted future. She is teaching social work students and the wider world about social work theory and methods. Dr. Brown’s stories about courage, shame, worthiness, forgiveness, and vulnerability resonate with many. Now they are also adding richness to a social worker’s tool kit.

1. How do Dr. Brown’s ideas and stories help professional social workers eradicate personal distress and social inequality?
2. Consider how vulnerability makes you feel. What role might empathy play for social workers who counsel people who feel vulnerable?

(CSWE), the arbiter of social work education, adds another goal that relates to social work education. These goals are presented in Exhibit 1.1.

The general public often confuses social workers with other human service providers, among them school counselors, mental health counselors, psychiatrists, psychologists, public health workers, social workers, nurses, chaplains, and police or others involved in criminal justice and corrections. While the roles and settings for some of these occupations overlap, each has distinctive features.
EXHIBIT 1.1  Professional Social Workers’ Goals

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<tr>
<th>PROFESSIONAL GOAL</th>
<th>SOCIAL WORKERS’ ROLES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal 1 (Practice)</td>
<td>To enhance people’s coping, problem-solving, and developmental capacities&lt;br&gt;Facilitators who &quot;meet people where they are&quot; and assess clients’ environments&lt;br&gt;Coaches, counselors, educators, trainers, and culturally competent solution-focused guides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal 2 (Practice)</td>
<td>To link people with systems that provide opportunities, resources, and services&lt;br&gt;Brokers who help build relationships between clients and service systems&lt;br&gt;Social media collaborators who help clients connect with their environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal 3 (Practice)</td>
<td>To promote the effectiveness and humane operation of systems that provide people with resources and services&lt;br&gt;Advocates of cases and causes who consider socioeconomic, political, and other contexts, and focus on the available resources for serving people&lt;br&gt;Administrative supervisors who oversee staff and ensure that services are delivered efficiently and effectively&lt;br&gt;Consultants who guide community organizations and agencies by identifying strategies to expand and enhance services&lt;br&gt;Coordinators and liaisons who enhance communication and coordination among social and human service resources to improve service delivery, and who link an agency or program to other agencies and organizations&lt;br&gt;Program developers and evaluators who design and evaluate programs or technologies to meet social needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal 4 (Practice)</td>
<td>To develop and improve social policy&lt;br&gt;Activists or advocates who concentrate on the statutes, laws, and broader social policies that underlie the funding and provision of resources&lt;br&gt;Policy practice analysts, developers, and planners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal 5 (Education)</td>
<td>To promote human and community well-being&lt;br&gt;Activists who use education, research, and service delivery to alleviate oppression, poverty, and other social and economic injustices</td>
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Source: Adapted from Zastrow (2014, pp. 50–51) from primary sites. Goals 1–4 from NASW (1982, p. 17); Goal 5 from CSWE (2008).

perspectives, methods, and areas of expertise. (See Exhibit 1.2 for more detail on the similarities and differences between social work and some of these other occupations.) But social workers incorporate the knowledge and skills of these other occupations as needed to serve clients and communities. They are not limited to a single perspective or set of methodologies. Thus, social workers are called generalist practitioners.

SOCIAL WORK AND HUMAN DIVERSITY

In helping and advocating for people in need, social workers inevitably learn about and interact with people from a variety of backgrounds. Many social workers would argue that one of the most interesting and rewarding aspects of their career is the ability to expand their knowledge and appreciation of human diversity. They have an opportunity to learn about the strengths, needs, uniqueness, values, causes, and traditions associated with various forms of human difference. Consider how much you like hearing people’s life stories. When you hear people’s life stories, you get clues as to what they need, value, and dream about.

Clients and collaborators are often quite different from social workers in some significant ways. A person’s life experiences and circumstances can influence how other people and situations are perceived. What social workers believe is true depends on their personal values and belief systems. Like everyone else, they are influenced by family, spiritual beliefs, culture, norms, race and ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation, as well as life stage, socioeconomic status, ability, and disability.
### EXHIBIT 1.2 Comparison of Social Work and Similar Occupations

<table>
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<tr>
<th>DISCIPLINE AND SIMILAR OCCUPATIONS</th>
<th>SIMILARITIES TO SOCIAL WORK</th>
<th>DIFFERENCES FROM SOCIAL WORK</th>
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</table>
| Psychology: Study of behavior and mental processes; application of that knowledge to the evaluation and treatment of mental disorder  
  Psychotherapists  
  Psychologists (PsyD or PhD doctoral preparation)  
  Psychiatrists (MD; physicians with an advanced specialty) | Is a practice profession  
  Requires accreditation and postdegree supervision  
  Requires graduate-level training for counseling clients (as psychotherapists)  
  Can conduct psychotherapy  
  Works in some of the same settings, with many of the same clients | Requires PhD or PsyD degree for practice  
  Requires 2 years of supervised work experience before independent practice  
  Focuses on client’s psychological issues  
  Administers psychological tests  
  In some states, is allowed to prescribe medications  
  MD training/degree is required for psychiatrists |
| Counseling: Practice of meeting with, listening to, and guiding individuals and groups with mental health, social adjustment, and relationship problems  
  Therapists  
  Marriage counselors  
  Family therapists | Is a practice profession  
  Requires a graduate degree  
  Requires licenses and certifications  
  Engages in psychotherapy  
  Is not allowed to prescribe medications  
  Works in some of the same settings, with many of the same clients | Focuses mostly on the individual as a problem requiring assessment and intervention  
  Is not typically trained in community practice (advocacy, organizing)  
  Requires a graduate degree for practice |
| Sociology: Study of characteristics and interactions of populations  
  Sociologists | Studies patterns of human behavior, especially origins of that behavior and societal development  
  Shares interests in human diversity and oppression | Is a social science, not a profession or practice  
  Examines people’s patterns and community’s contexts |
| Nursing: Practice of caring for the physical and mental health of individuals, families, and communities to optimize quality of life  
  Nurses (BSN, MSN, DNP) | Is a practice profession  
  Has a caring/helping focus  
  Is practiced in hospitals, clinics, and so forth | Offers RN and LPN designations denoting responsibilities and authority  
  Focuses on health and well-being |
| Criminal justice: Practice of facilitating law enforcement, operating the court system, and investigating and preventing criminal behavior  
  Police social workers  
  Forensic social workers | Has a practice orientation  
  Works in some of the same settings, with many of the same clients  
  Shares concerns about individuals and families | Requires a BS in criminal justice or human services  
  Focuses on the law and social order  
  Supports authority structures  
  Limited focus on the individual’s environment |
| Public health: Practice of researching epidemiological and environmental health trends and protecting the health of populations  
  Public health clinicians  
  Human service workers | Has a practice orientation  
  Focuses on groups and communities  
  Practices in health clinics and community-based settings | Requires a BS in public health  
  Requires training in epidemiology, biostatistics, and health policy and administration  
  Focuses on health and the physical environment |
However, social workers go to considerable lengths to broaden their perspectives. They increase their self-understanding by reading and taking classes (in the arts and humanities as well as on subjects such as psychology, sociology, sexuality, biology, neuroscience, and gerontology), learning foreign languages, engaging in personal therapy, participating in self-reflection, and receiving professional supervision and feedback (Green, Kiernan-Stern, & Baskind, 2005). Through seeking this type of self-knowledge, trained social workers are likely to become sensitized to the differences among people. They become better at appreciating other viewpoints and at developing and evaluating more creative policies and intervention strategies (Stoesz & Karger, 2009).

If you are contemplating social work as a career, you must look within and evaluate your readiness to advocate for the typical social work client, who is vulnerable and possibly affected by social injustice. You will also be required to respond to human needs very creatively, because resource availability and funding usually fall short of the need, although they vary across communities, regions, and states.

**TIME TO THINK**

How well do you think you know yourself? Do you believe you have empathy for others who do not have your privileges? What elements of your background might give you empathy for those whose human needs are not being met? Are you aware of how others perceive you and how you come across to others?

**Diversity and Social Justice**

As rewarding as the experience of human diversity can be, it can be troubling as well. Those who are different from the types of people with whom we are most familiar are often stereotyped as being inferior in some way. That prejudiced attitude may lead to actual discrimination in the way those who are “different” are treated. They may have a deprived and constrained childhood, struggle to meet their needs as they age, and feel a reduced sense of self-worth. Professional social workers are aware of this discrepancy and work toward economic and social justice, the fair distribution of rights and resources among all members of society.

The bases for prejudice and discrimination, which are discussed throughout the book, include the following categories of difference:

- **Race:** Race is still an issue in the United States, despite decades of social action and legislative and judicial remedies. Thus, opportunities to promote diversity and social justice for Americans with African, Latino, Asian, Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, or Native American heritage are an important part of social work practice. Social workers who have gained cultural competence effectively help Bosnian refugees find employment and enroll in ESL (English as a second language) classes, and advocate for Latino clients who have a mental illness such as schizophrenia to help them avoid repeated hospitalizations because of language barriers and cultural misunderstandings. By 2050, the U.S. population is projected to increase by 50%, and minority groups will make up nearly half that population. One quarter of Americans will be Latino, and 1 in 10 Americans will be of Asian or Pacific Islander descent. The African American population is projected to increase from 41.1 million to 65.7 million by 2050, going from 14% of the U.S. population to 15% (“Minorities Expected to Be Majority in 2050,” 2008).

- **Gender:** Although women have made important strides in our society, they still face lingering and highly ingrained gender stereotypes, which are overgeneralizations about behaviors and characteristics based on whether a person is masculine/male or feminine/female. Social workers partner with women’s rights groups, educators, and other helping professionals to advocate for and develop positive and meaningful services and programs for females, especially in education, employment, reproductive services, child care, and civil rights.

- **Class:** An appreciable number of social work clients are marginally employable because of low educational attainment and spotty work records. As a result, they are often stuck in poverty. The jobs that are available to them generally pay poorly, and so these clients may still struggle with transportation issues, affordable day care, mental health issues, physical challenges, and affordable health insurance. Since the beginning of the profession, social workers have advocated for services and programs for members of the lower classes who need support for a rewarding family life, stable housing, adequate nutrition, educational opportunity, and employability. Social workers recognize that use of public assistance is not simply a matter of personal shortcomings. Large-scale issues within the community or society as a whole (e.g., a shortage of good jobs, inadequate transportation systems, substandard schools, minimal child-support enforcement, or lack of quality, affordable day care) also undermine a person’s efforts to advance in life (Seccombe, 2011, p. 74).

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• *Ethnicity:* Many people adhere to at least some of the traditions and beliefs of their ancestors. In a “nation of immigrants,” many ethnic subcultures can be found. However, *ethnocentrism,* believing that one’s own ethnic group and way of life are superior to others, can create intolerance and prejudice. In contrast, social workers promote respect for and understanding of all ethnic groups and cultures. For example, social workers frequently support ethnic centers, immigrant enterprises, language diversity, and cultural events that showcase ethnic pride and provide a forum for the public to learn about specific ethnic values and traditions. And well they should: By 2050, immigration will account for almost two thirds of the nation’s population growth.

• *Sexual orientation:* In recent years, members of the LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, and transgender) community have become far more visible in the process of winning some degree of social justice for themselves. They have won the right in most parts of the United States to marry members of the same sex. It is becoming more acceptable in most quarters for LGBTQ persons to be themselves, although discriminatory behavior and interpersonal slights have not disappeared. Social workers counsel LGBTQ individuals facing prejudice and convene groups with them to discuss ways to cope with both subtle and aggressive discrimination. Social workers may also advocate for the LGBTQ population on a community, state, or national level.

• *Age:* Older adults, who are ostensibly covered for many of their basic needs through Medicare and Social Security, often struggle with fixed incomes, health problems, and loneliness. Services such as home-delivered meals, transportation, and medical coverage for problems of aging may be underfunded or unavailable for practical reasons. Being acquainted with older adults and attentive to their specific needs enables professional social workers to improve older adults’ situation. As the population of older adults grows in the 21st century—by 2050, the population of older Americans is expected to more than double—social workers will find themselves more and more challenged to help ensure “good aging” (Cire, 2014; Lieberman, 2011, p. 137).

Historically, social workers have advocated for justice and human rights for all people, despite their age, ability, class, race or ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation. Social workers must challenge “isms”—such as ageism, ableism, classism, ethnocentrism, heterosexism, and sexism—as they advocate for vulnerable individuals and groups. However, because social workers are mere humans, mainstream culture influences their views of people and issues. Social workers are not immune to discriminatory language or “isms,” so if you choose social work as your career, you must catch yourself and others when you hear language or see behavior that is ageist, classist, racist, sexist, or prejudicial or discriminatory in any way.

**Intersections of Diversity**

Social workers typically encounter multiple forms of diversity in a single individual. For instance, a woman experiencing a physical or mental challenge may also be old and poor. Holes in medical coverage (gaps among private insurance, Medicare, and Medicaid) may leave her without needed treatment and medications. The ever-changing complexity of medical protocols and health insurance coverage further complicate matters. In turn, the medical issues are an impediment to older, poorer people’s ability to make doctors’ appointments, keep themselves and their homes clean and in good repair, and buy medicine or even healthy food. On a regular basis, social workers find themselves creatively seeking to identify and fill gaps in services for clients with needs that span categories of difference.

**Intersectionality** refers to the entirety of a person’s dimensions of difference and social identities. Most diversity includes a complex range or intersection of issues, not simply one. A person may be a poor, old, white, gay, Jewish man who was born with polio and lives in an urban environment. Or a person may be a single, middle-aged, Christian woman who emigrated from India and works as a nurse in a rural setting.

Some of those areas of difference may create problems in meeting one’s human needs, but others may create advantages. For example, a man who is a retired middle manager has undoubtedly enjoyed some of the privileges of gender and class, but if he is also gay or lives with a disability, he may have faced difficulties in his life that require access to social services. His multiple social locations have sometimes placed him in the role of being the oppressed and sometimes the oppressor (Jani, Pierce, Ortiz, & Sowbel, 2011).

As a social worker you must understand the complex interrelationships that exist across all social identities so you can devise strategies that will make a difference and create social change (Adams & Joshi, 2010; Collins, 2010). Keep in mind that people are more than “labels” or any of their categories of difference.
THEORY AND PRACTICE
You may be starting to realize how complex the practice of social work can be. It requires knowledge of human development and behavior; of social, economic, and cultural institutions; and of the interaction of all these factors. The social work profession not only provides this knowledge but also educates its members to be proactive advocates for client systems. The essential lessons for aspiring social workers involve both theory and practice skills.

Social workers draw on ideas and theories to guide their assessments and intervention decisions. These perspectives emphasize the importance of resilience, strengths, solutions, social justice, and safe, sustainable communities. Professional social workers tend to adopt a primary practice theory that fits their views about human nature, particularly for the purpose of assessing a client, a situation, and the results of efforts to make changes. Chapter 3 describes these theoretical foundations in more detail.

In addition, many social workers are committed to evidence-based practice, which is, simply stated, using a particular intervention for an issue, problem, or disorder based on the results of research. They base their methods on the results of previous studies because they need to be accountable to clients and third-party payers (such as insurance companies). In addition, they want to use best practices as documented in their profession’s knowledge base. Social workers are obligated to ask themselves, “What evidence do I have that my proposed idea or intervention will help my client?” Your reasoning skills will be enhanced by taking classes in research methods, policy, and statistics.

The knowledge base for social work is constantly evolving to match developments in other disciplines. Contemporary social workers embrace technology and neuroscience (Farmer, 2009), Environmental social work (Gray, Coates, & Hetherington, 2012) and models for social work in a sustainable world (Mary, 2008) now provide additional ideas and paradigms for social work professionals.

SOCIAL WORK VALUES
The mission of the social work profession is rooted in a set of core values that undergird social work’s unique purpose and perspective (Barker, 2014, p. 190; Reisch, 2002):

- Competence: Having the needed abilities and skills to effectively help and work with clients
- Dignity and worth of the person: Esteeming and appreciating each individual’s uniqueness and value
- Importance of human relationships: Interacting and communicating with clients and collaborators with a dynamic and reciprocal appreciation of one another’s behaviors, thoughts, and feelings
- Integrity: Maintaining trustworthiness and adhering to moral ideals
- Service: Providing help, benefits, and resources to people so they can maximize their potential and thrive
- Social justice: Granting all citizens the same “rights, protections, opportunities, obligations, and social benefits,” no matter their backgrounds or memberships in diverse groups (Barker, 2014, pp. 398–399)

The NASW Code of Ethics
Social work values are reflected in the NASW Code of Ethics, which serves as a social and moral compass for social work professionals. This code has four sections—Preamble, Purpose, Ethical Principles, and Ethical Standards—which are summarized in Appendix A of this book. The Code of Ethics serves six purposes (NASW, 2008):

- Identifies core social work values
- Summarizes broad ethical standards
- Identifies professional obligations when conflicts arise
- Holds the social work profession accountable
- Socializes new practitioners to social work’s mission, values, ethical standards, and principles
- Defines unethical conduct

Ethical decision making is a process. Oftentimes, social workers struggle with complex scenarios, and the guidelines help direct their actions. In addition, although the Code of Ethics cannot guarantee ethical behaviors and a violation of standards in this code does not automatically imply violation of the law, these principles stipulate ideals to which all social workers should aspire.

TIME TO THINK
Are you ethical? How do your ethics stand up against social workers’ professional ethics? In the workplace, what might make it difficult to adhere to a professional code of ethics?
Professionalism

In addition to valuing these ethics, social workers identify as professionals. With that status comes a set of characteristics that help ensure the highest standards of practice: a culture of professionalism, a professional authority setting standards, recognition of that authority by the community, a systematic body of theory, and a code of ethics.

Professional identity is currently a hot topic in the counseling profession. A strong predictor of professional identity is membership in a professional organization, such as the NASW, and pursuing leadership opportunities in professional organizations. It takes time for professional identity to develop, and it requires strong mentors who care about investing their time and energy in teaching, leadership, and advocacy. Professional identity results from a developmental process that facilitates a growing understanding of self in one’s selected career. When a social worker is able to articulate her or his role to others, within and outside of the discipline, the process has begun. Next, developing social workers must learn how to merge the personal and professional by knowing themselves well. Social workers must be in tune with their own personal beliefs and understand how their life experiences and gender role expectations have shaped them. As a social worker’s professional identity develops, every area of her or his life will be reflected on.

Likewise, self-awareness—the ability to clearly understand one’s own strengths, weaknesses, thoughts, and beliefs—is a process that is worthwhile yet not always easy to achieve. Much of the journey to becoming an effective social worker involves developing your own self-awareness—with classmates, professors, and clients who continuously challenge your thinking. Getting in touch with your feelings is extremely important. As you deepen self-understanding, both professionally and personally, you can develop a greater capacity to attend objectively to your clients’ needs. Being aware and secure in thoughts and feelings leads to good health, moments of joy, and contentment, which is something every social worker should be mindful of.

Advocacy

A key element of social work values that is stressed in this introduction to the profession is advocacy, simply defined as activities that secure services for and promote the rights of individuals, groups, and communities. Advocacy covers everything from ensuring special educational services for a child with learning disabilities to presenting facts about poverty and needy Americans before the U.S. Congress. Social workers intercede in not only cases but causes.

One of the key differences between social workers and other service professionals is that social workers are expected to know and care about clients’ environments. That is what undergirds and gives force to their advocacy.

On a broad level, clients’ environments include issues of economic and social justice. As a professional matter, then, social workers embrace a political vision based on democratic values. They are also guided by the NASW Code of Ethics, which is influenced by the beliefs and tenets of the three great monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). Social workers envision solutions and engage in problem solving designed to protect legal and personal rights and to ensure a dignified existence for everyone. Social work professionals must also understand social and economic conditions. They must understand how economic
Understanding Social Work
downturns, the changing balance between conservatism and liberalism, capitalism, and globalization affect their clients and their practice.

To become a more effective professional advocate, you should seek to expand your worldview. Social workers who have studied sociology, economics, political science, public health, and other social sciences can better help clients navigate social service systems and approach decision makers about changes in social policies.

SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION
Nearly every state in the United States requires a social work degree from an accredited school. The CSWE is the professional entity that accredits social work programs, by monitoring social work educators and ensuring high educational standards. CSWE is the authority that officially articulates the goals, values, and training objectives within the profession and oversees curricula development. Its mission is to

Suze Orman and National Social Work Month

March is National Social Work Month, first recognized by the U.S. Congress in 1984. It came about because the NASW had launched a public image campaign several years earlier to advertise what social workers do. President Ronald Reagan signed the resolution recognizing the many thousands of social workers who dedicate their lives to helping those in need. The resolution acknowledged that professional social workers are in the vanguard of the forces working to protect children and the aged, reduce racism and sexism, and prevent the social and emotional disintegration of individuals and families. Every March the NASW continues to celebrate the profession and raise awareness about what social workers do.

During the March 2012 celebration, NASW invited financial whiz, best-selling author, and television celebrity Suze Orman to help celebrate social workers. Ms. Orman had earned a bachelor’s degree in social work from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign but never formally worked in a social work agency. Although she took flak from a handful of social workers for lacking actual social work experience, Ms. Orman enthusiastically promoted the profession: “Social workers are vital to the fabric of the United States of America. . . . Those who enter the social work profession know about the low pay, so they need to ‘stand in their power.’” In addition, Ms. Orman related how her social work studies helped her understand how people think and feel about money, and enabled her to talk about money on a personal level: “You have to understand people to understand money.” Decent salaries can be earned in the social work profession, and so she also offered social workers some financial advice. While not all people who complete social work education will become “Suze Ormans,” graduates who possess degrees in social work will locate meaningful work and be able to move from setting to setting quite easily. In some respects social work is a business and your degree is your ticket to success.

1. What role can social workers play in helping clients be financially literate and good stewards of their money?
2. What do you think about Ms. Orman’s crediting her social work training for her success?
3. What might agencies do to celebrate National Social Work Month?
ensure that social workers are trained to work at a professional level in many different dimensions of practice. In 2008, CSWE delineated 10 social work competencies that students in the discipline must acquire and demonstrate before they graduate. These competencies reflect common practice behaviors and social work ethics and are measurable. They are intended to ensure that every social work graduate has "sufficient knowledge, skills, and values" to practice effectively. These competencies, known as the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS), are summarized in Exhibit 1.3.

**SOCIAL WORK DEGREES**

Social work education is provided at both undergraduate and graduate levels. The CSWE has accredited undergraduate departments, programs, and schools in colleges and universities that offer social work training. If you complete an undergraduate degree in social work, you may proceed to graduate social work programs or immediately take social work positions in agencies.

Since 1971 the CSWE has authorized "advanced standing" for students who have finished approved undergraduate social work programs, and some schools of social work have made it possible for such students to obtain their master's degrees in less than 2 years, some requiring only 1 year of graduate work. Graduate training programs for the master's degree in social work in the United States usually take 2 years and combine instructional classes with fieldwork practice in agencies.

The social work profession, like the psychology and nursing professions, is legally regulated by state licensing boards and offers specialized credentials and practice certifications. Unfortunately, in some states, no license certification exists for social workers who hold undergraduate degrees in social work. This means that people who possess other academic degrees can occupy social work positions and sometimes incorrectly call themselves "social workers," thereby confusing the general public. Too often the media blame social work for an act carried out by someone who never received a social work degree but still works in a human service agency.

**Bachelor of Social Work**

The Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree readies graduates for generalist social work practice, which will be described in more detail in Chapter 3. The BSW, or BS in social work, is the entry level for the profession. The academic credential is precisely defined: a bachelor's degree from a college or university social work program or department that is accredited by the CSWE.

An important goal of social work education is not only to cover social welfare content and practice skills but also to provide a liberal arts education so students can become good citizens. The liberal arts–oriented BSW curriculum

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**EXHIBIT 1.3 Ten Major Social Work Competencies From the EPAS**

1. Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly.
2. Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice.
3. Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments.
4. Engage diversity and difference in practice.
5. Advance human rights and economic and social justice.
7. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment.
8. Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services.
9. Respond to contexts that shape practice.
10. Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

introduces student learners to social welfare history, communication skills, human behavior theories, and critical thinking about diversity and the human condition. Courses with an emphasis on human biology, economics, statistics, and political science enhance knowledge about human behavior and social policy development. Increasingly, BSW students also choose to learn American Sign Language or a foreign language.

Master of Social Work

A Master of Social Work (MSW) degree readies graduates for advanced, specialized professional practice. It must be obtained from a program or department accredited by the CSWE. The MSW degree is viewed as a terminal degree, meaning that select social work programs may hire MSW social workers as faculty to teach clinical courses or as non-tenure-track faculty—especially in fieldwork instructor roles.

The curriculum of master’s degree programs builds on generalist, BSW content. MSW students develop a concentration in a practice method or social problem area; alternatively, some master’s degrees focus on advanced generalist practice. Thus, the MSW social worker should be able to engage in generalist social work practice and also function as a specialist in more complex tasks.

The basic program for the MSW degree includes four core areas:

- Human behavior and the social environment
- Social work practice
- Social policy
- Research methods

Decades ago, social work education at the master’s level placed considerable emphasis on specialization in fields such as psychiatric (mental health) social work, medical (health) social work, and school social work. Since the 1960s the training has centered on a generalist curriculum. Students complete a 2-year training program that qualifies them to work in some agencies. Additionally, at some schools, the research methods course requires students to complete an individual or group thesis, a research project, or multiple research classes. MSW programs also offer elective courses to provide a well-rounded program for graduate social work students. Dual-degree programs and certificates are offered at the master’s level.

Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work or Doctor of Social Work

For most social workers, an MSW degree is sufficient for a rewarding career. Although the number of doctoral programs has been growing, only a small percentage of NASW members hold one of the two doctorate degrees:

- Doctorate of Philosophy in Social Work (PhD): Readies graduates to teach or conduct research or to specialize in clinical practice.
- Doctorate of Social Work (DSW): Prepares graduates for advanced practice and administrative positions or other leadership in social work.

Some MSW degree holders who are satisfied with this terminal degree or are working on their doctorates get jobs teaching at community colleges or in universities as part-time instructors or sometimes in nontenure-track “clinical faculty” positions. Other doctorate-level social workers assume administrative positions at agencies or enter private practice in psychotherapy.

These degrees involve advanced and specialized study, a focus on research, completion of a dissertation, and continuing education credits—especially in the areas of clinical work, cultural competence, and ethics.

FIELD EDUCATION

Whichever level of social work education you pursue, you can anticipate spending time in the “real-world classroom.” Referred to as social work’s signature pedagogy, field education is the part of the social work curriculum that students most eagerly anticipate. In the field you finally get a chance to apply what you have learned, under the supervision of a credentialed social worker who is approved by the college or university’s social work program.

The placement settings for field education range widely. Students might be placed in hospitals, courts, domestic violence shelters, prisons, schools, mental health facilities, nursing homes, and community planning sites, or with political candidates or NASW chapter offices. In these placements, students engage in practice, conscientiously applying theoretical concepts and intervention skills learned in the classroom. When students have completed field education, they are expected to be able to demonstrate all the competencies required of the generalist social work accredited curriculum.
TIME TO THINK

How many hybrid or fully online (distance learning) classes are you currently taking? How many of these are social work courses? What are the advantages and disadvantages of learning about the profession of social work through an internship experience that is online rather than in person?

CERTIFICATES AND CERTIFICATIONS

In pursuit of their social work degrees, BSW students may complete minors or certificates that verify specialized knowledge and skills; for example, certificates in child welfare and gerontology are very popular. After graduation, social work professionals may also wish to obtain special certificates or certifications. Social work programs, departments, and schools collaborate with continuing-education partners to offer the following:

- Credentials such as Licensed Social Worker (LSW), Certified Social Worker (CSW), Academy of Certified Social Workers (ACSW), Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW), and Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW).

Beyond the social work degree and professional license, credentials (professional certifications) are often voluntarily sought by social workers to demonstrate professional commitment, achievement, and excellence in social work at the national level. The NASW Credentialing Center supplies information about credentials as they vary by state. NASW Specialty Credentials are open to all qualified LSWs. For example, certified social work case managers may receive this credential with only a BSW degree. The majority of other professional credentials (e.g., CSW, ACSW, LMSW, LCSW) require an MSW degree. The ACSW credential, established in 1960, is available to members and social work leaders in all practice areas and is a widely recognized and respected social work credential. CSWs and LSWs require an MSW degree. If a social worker is beyond 2 or 3 years of receiving her or his MSW degree and has accumulated a significant number of supervision hours and taken a standardized examination, she or he may qualify for the LCSW credential. LCSWs must have either an MSW, DSW, or PhD degree. Many LCSWs pursue a clinical or mental health counseling path because they can bill insurance companies for services—whether in private practice or with an agency (NASW, 2014).

- Special certifications such as a Graduate Certificate in Aging Studies or in Addictions and Substance Abuse.
- Certifications such as in case management.

In all 50 states, social workers have options for becoming certified or licensed at various levels of social work practice. In fact, it may be illegal to practice social work without a license, depending on the state and practice setting. Social workers must be cognizant of four distinct sets of requirements and guidelines: constitutional law, common law, executive orders, and statutory law. And social workers’ decisions should be morally defensible and aligned with the ethical standards of the social work profession (Reamer, 2005). For example, in New Jersey, hospital-based and MSW-degreed social worker Jessica may assist in-patient clients with discharge planning, information, and referral; however, without her LCSW credential, Jessica is not legally able to bill patients additionally for the time she spends assessing and counseling. In Florida, mental health social worker Ameda finds that the LMSW credential she received in New York will not suffice; by virtue of Florida law, practicing social workers must possess an LCSW credential and complete and document a specific number of continuing education credits in HIV and domestic violence before they can practice and bill insurance companies in the state.

SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

The social work profession’s dual purpose and responsibility is to influence social and individual change. Knowledge from a variety of disciplines, absorbed from formal classes and personal learning, helps social workers assess complex situations and determine effective interventions. Many people benefit from and appreciate these interventions, and our society is better for them. However, social work professionals often work with individuals and organizations that are not ready for or capable of change. So social workers also have to use such practice skills as assessing, strategizing, brokering, collaborating, intervening, linking, listening, motivating, and responding in their professional lives. In addition, they
must be ready to pose alternative solutions, seek consensus, negotiate, and mediate (Theriot, 2013). It is no wonder that social work is considered a “doing” profession and that it is taught through experiential approaches such as service learning, internships, and fieldwork.

The multidimensional approach to social work education gives graduates at all levels the knowledge and skills they need to work in a variety of settings at various levels of practice. It also helps them prepare for a professional career that offers much personal satisfaction and a promising future, with many opportunities to grow and blaze new paths.

SOCIAL WORK
ROLES AND SETTINGS

Traditionally, social workers have provided charity, created agencies and resources, developed or advocated for policy changes, and delivered services to people and communities in need. Historically, as Chapter 2 describes, they have been key to the development of social welfare policies, such as child labor laws, fair pay for minorities and other oppressed people, and relief for the aging and infirm.

Today, the main purpose of social work remains much the same: to empower people to grow and live healthy, productive, and meaningful lives. Social workers accomplish this purpose by working directly with people, organizations, and communities, and by acting to change society. Most people who consider social work as their career choice do so because they want to help people and make a difference.

But social workers’ activities within their practice are more diverse than ever. They help people increase their capacities for problem solving and coping. They help people obtain needed resources, facilitate interactions between people and their environments, and make organizations responsive to people. Social workers are also professional social activists, working to influence social policies affecting their clients and their communities (Swank, 2012). Here are some examples of the broad array of practice activities they might undertake:

- Teaching people how to bring up and nurture children through training and small-group meetings
- Caring for older adults through case management and visits to senior centers and hospice facilities
- Privately counseling couples with marriage troubles
- Modeling how to preserve constructive, safe, and caring households through in-home visits and courses for family members
- Fighting for policy changes within institutions and local and state governments, and for the rights of persons who cannot fight for themselves, by organizing and leading meetings or writing letters and articles
- Advocating with the national government for veterans who have put their lives on the line for the sake of others, by writing position papers, speaking in public forums, and testifying before committees

Social workers undertake these activities in a wide variety of settings: medical facilities, government and nonprofit agencies, Corrections facilities, home health and long-term care settings, state and federal government, schools, community-based mental health agencies, faith-based organizations, the military, veterans programs, corporations, and private practice. Social workers may also find employment in banks, theater groups, elder law firms, community gardens, police stations, and international agencies (Gambrill, 1997; Gibelman, 1995; Singer, 2009).

Exhibit 1.4 presents an overview of the primary fields of practice, industries, and employers for social workers.

LEVELS OF PRACTICE

No matter the precise setting, social workers also categorize their work on the basis of the level of practice, or the size of the client system with which they intervene: micro, mezzo/meso, or macro. Exhibit 1.5 delineates these three levels, with examples of each. The particular issues that enter into practice at each level are discussed in Chapter 3.

Professional social workers often operate on multiple intervention levels. Certainly, across a career, a professional social worker is likely to experience all three levels of practice. In addition, rarely does a case involve only one level at a time. For instance, a woman who has been raped on campus and feels traumatized may need individual counseling, and the social worker may also set up a meeting with her and her parents to ensure that they are sensitive to the woman’s concerns; the social worker may also intervene with campus authorities to alert them to a problem that may affect other female students.
Chapter 1

The Social Work Profession

EXHIBIT 1.4

Overview of Social Work Employment

In Which Fields Do Bachelors of Social Work Practice?

(a) Private, Nonsectarian Agencies 43%
(b) State Governments 24%
(c) County/Municipal/Town Governments 15%
(d) Faith-Based Organizations 12%
(e) Federal Government 5%
(f) Mental Health and Substance Abuse 4.6%
(g) Corrections 4.0%
(h) Public Welfare 6.3%
(i) Family-Focused Practice 6.9%
(j) Health Social Work 8.0%
(k) Disabilities (Intellectual, Learning, Physical) 11.3%

CHILD WELFARE 20.8%
MENTAL HEALTH 14.2%
GERONTOLOGY 13.8%
SOCIAL WORK AS A CAREER OPPORTUNITY

According to the U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS, 2014, “Pay”), the median salary for social workers was $44,200 in 2012. However, in social work the pay varies depending on where you work. For example, salaries for BSW-degreed social workers may start lower at nonprofit agencies than at government-funded child welfare agencies. Below, in order of annual median wages from high to low, are the industries that employ the most social workers:

1. Federal executive branch
2. General, medical, and surgical hospitals
3. Local government

EXHIBIT 1.5

Levels of Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL</th>
<th>SUBJECT OF INTERVENTION</th>
<th>EXAMPLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Micro</td>
<td>Individual or couple</td>
<td>Counseling a traumatized woman who has been raped or a couple who are debating divorce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mezzo/meso</td>
<td>Family, group, or organization</td>
<td>Facilitating a cancer support group or delivering a presentation on the needs of military families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macro</td>
<td>Community or society</td>
<td>Working for a political campaign or advocating for legislative changes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


LEVEL
SUBJECT OF INTERVENTION
EXAMPLES
Micro
Individual or couple
Counseling a traumatized woman who has been raped or a couple who are debating divorce
Mezzo/meso
Family, group, or organization
Facilitating a cancer support group or delivering a presentation on the needs of military families
Macro
Community or society
Working for a political campaign or advocating for legislative changes

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vary by industry. The BLS (2014, “Job Outlook”) predicts a 27% employment increase for health care social workers, 23% for mental health and substance abuse social workers, and 15% for child, family, and school social workers.

MSW-degreed social workers will find good opportunities in coming years in the following specialties: aging, public welfare, child welfare, justice corrections, school social work, health care, employment/occupational social work, developmental disabilities, community organization, mental health/clinical social work, management/administration, international social work, research, politics, policy and planning, adoption and foster care agencies, private practice, employee assistance programs, advocacy and coalition groups, domestic violence agencies, drug and alcohol rehabilitation centers, nursing homes/skilled nursing homes, homelessness and hunger advocacy networks, women’s shelters, long-term care facilities, military counseling offices, assisted-living facilities, senior centers, and social and human services centers (BLS, 2014, “Work Environment”).

The social work profession will also offer ample opportunity for creativity and innovative solutions in the future. Developments in scientific knowledge, technologies, and the political economy will continually shape our world, as will globalization, the changing natural environment, and the aging population. Social workers’ broad education and versatile skills will help ensure that all of us can keep up.

One appealing aspect of professional social work is that it reflects social and technological trends. Among the areas that promise to provide interesting challenges and opportunities for social workers in the next few years are the following:

- **Teaching and learning:** Outstanding communications skills are more essential than ever. Access to, and instruction in the use of, digital technologies is essential for social work clients. Streaming videos can teach client viewers about anger management, substance use interventions, or assistive devices to use at home. Online webinars can help social work professionals acquire new knowledge about mental health or health care reform.

- **Research:** Genetic counseling and neuroscience are burgeoning sciences that social workers are embracing. Cultural neuroscience elucidates how early childhood experiences affect our physical and mental health across the life span. Research that studies the meaning and nature of work is also vitally needed to inform social work practice. For example, one social
Chapter 1

The Social Work Profession

Lifestyle and Technological Change

OVER the past three decades, some significant technological changes have occurred. For example, the following (Lindsell-Roberts, 2011, p. ix):

- Electric typewriters → High-speed computers
- Radio → MP3
- Encyclopedias → Wikipedia
- Wired → Wireless
- Letters → E-mail, instant messaging, and texting
- Rotary phones → Smartphones
- Kilobytes → Terabytes
- Local data storage → Cloud storage

These changes have been occurring simultaneously with a number of significant lifestyle changes:

- 9 to 5 → 24/7
- Jet-setters → Cybersurfers
- Single skill set → Lifelong learning
- Shopping malls → Amazon.com, Craigslist, and eBay
- Brick and mortar → Virtual workplaces
- Security → Risk taking
- Status quo → Constant change
- National → Global
- Homogeneous → Heterogeneous
- Lifers → Job-hoppers

1. How will ever-changing technology likely influence the development of the social work profession?
2. What social work–related apps or e-therapy resources do you or your professors know about? How helpful are these resources to social workers or people in need?

CURRENT TRENDS

work study comparing younger (19–34-year-olds) and older workers found that each group attached diverse meanings to the concept of “work” (Singh, 2013). In direct practice, social workers should ask which activities qualify as work and which socio-cultural and situational factors influence the general public’s interpretations of work.

• Services: Social work hails from a tradition of charity and service. In the future, social workers will need to become expert navigators and literate interpreters of services that are becoming digitized and being offered as part of a virtual marketplace so they can help clients receive what they need. Just as previous generations of social workers needed to adopt cultural competency, social workers now and in the future will need to embrace technical literacy (Belluomini, 2013). In addition, some social work practitioners are offering e-therapy interventions.

• Social work education: Social media and technology are radically changing social work pedagogy. Some graduate programs are now offered completely online. Social work education has also become part of the global marketplace (Askeland & Payne, 2006; Garrett, 2009). Those who have the resources to produce and distribute social work literature digitally and through social media are able to disseminate their theoretical views and skills throughout the world. Social workers may have to adapt by researching and communicating about more universal topics, or on the learning end of the educational enterprise, taking into account the different local contexts in which information is produced and the different perspectives from which it should be read.

TIME TO THINK

If your friends or parents said to you, “Social work doesn’t pay well. Why don’t you major in nursing, psychology, or criminal justice?” how would you respond? How will social work prepare you to work with people and social problems differently than other professions would?
SUMMARY

Social workers are professionals who help individuals, families, groups, agencies and organizations, and communities. They work with people across the life span and across socioeconomic levels. They usually work with oppressed, vulnerable, and disenfranchised people. People who are suffering because they are ill, addicted, disabled, homeless, poor, immigrants, or discriminated against might very well be clients of social workers. On the other hand, social workers may also work with social and political elites, as when they serve as policy planners and program evaluators—although the plight of those at the fringes of society is always at the core of social work. Unique among other types of professionals, social workers are champions of economic and social justice.

Social workers can obtain employment in multiple settings, including traditional social service agencies, as well as courts and correctional settings, schools, the military, offices and factories, hospitals, mental health agencies, child and family welfare agencies, long-term care settings, addiction treatment centers, homeless shelters, nonprofit advocacy programs, local/state/federal government agencies, and legislative bodies. Social workers are found wherever people need help to alleviate personal or social problems.

No matter where social workers are employed, common skills and responsibilities exist across the profession:

- Providing services to support change not only in the individual but also in his or her environment
- Having a knowledge and understanding of human relationships
- Improving the problem-solving, coping, and development capacities of all people
- Serving as a broker by connecting individuals with resources
- Engaging and communicating with diverse populations and groups of all sizes
- Creating and maintaining professional helping relationships
- Advocating for individual clients or the community to solve identified problems

Job prospects for graduates with BSW or MSW degrees, who learn these skills through classroom learning and field practice, are very good for the future.

TOP 10 KEY CONCEPTS

Bachelor of Social Work (BSW)
Council on Social Work Education (CSWE)
field education
intersectionality
level of practice

Master of Social Work (MSW)
National Association of Social Workers (NASW)
profession
social work
social workers

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do social workers believe and do?
2. Why is self-understanding so important to becoming a social worker?
3. Imagine that you meet a man who felt neglected as a child because his parents divorced and his father was an abusive alcoholic. As this man ages, he has choices. At one end of the spectrum, he may continue the cycle of addiction, drink heavily, and also become abusive. At the other end, he may choose never, ever to drink alcohol and become the most responsible person in all his relationships, always trying to please others. If you grew up in a family where alcohol was never around or was drunk only in moderation, how would you relate to and help this man?
4. What characteristics do you possess that make you behave ethically? Think of a time when perhaps you or someone you know did not act in an ethical manner. What was the rationale for the unethical behavior? Looking back, was that a good rationale? Why or why not?
5. What are the differences in where a BSW social worker and MSW social worker might work and in how they might practice?
EXERCISES

1. What is important to you in a career? Interview a social worker, and then interview a sociologist, a psychologist, or another human service professional. Compare and contrast their roles and responsibilities. Ask about their level of education and how quickly they got a job working with people upon graduation.

2. How would you respond to people (clients) who are poor, ill, or addicted—and oppressed? Find out more about these population groups: Read articles or stories; watch a movie, Fox News, or C-SPAN; listen to NPR; or interview social workers who work with addicted, mentally ill, impoverished, and oppressed people. Then record your thoughts and feelings about working with people who are vulnerable and in need of services. For example, here are some of the questions you might explore in a few relevant movies:

   a. *The Help*: What was your reaction to the oppression of lower-class African American women?
   b. *Losing Isaiah*: What was your reaction to this transracial adoption?
   c. *Maria Full of Grace*: What do you think about how drug/sex trafficking was portrayed?

3. What workplace features or career goals are most important to you? With which clients might you most like to work?

4. On the BLS website (www.bls.gov/home.htm), find the range of salaries for social workers in your local area or state. Compare salaries across practice settings, such as aging, child welfare, corrections, health, mental health, and school social work. Then compare the salaries for entry-level BSWs and advanced-practice MSWs.

ONLINE RESOURCES

- Bureau of Labor Statistics (www.bls.gov/ooh/Community-and-Social-Service/Social-workers.htm#tab-2): Categorizes jobs in social work by sponsorship (where the salary comes from to operate the agency and pay employees), by the kinds of clients or populations the social worker deals with, and by the kinds of services rendered
- Council on Social Work Education (cswe.org): The sole accrediting agency for social work education in the United States that advocates for social work research and education
- International Federation of Social Workers (www.ifsw.org): Contributes to achieving a socially just world through professional social work; comprises 90 professional social work organizations that care about setting and reviewing international standards for social work
- NASW chapters (www.naswdc.org/chapters/default.asp): All chapters, listed state by state
- NASW Occupational Profile Series (workforce.socialworkers.org/whatsnew.asp#profiles)
- National Association of Black Social Workers (nabsw.org): Composed of people from African ancestry and guided by the Principles of the Nguzo Saba to empower and advocate for people of African ancestry and work to create a world without racial discrimination and oppression
- National Association of Social Workers (www.socialworkers.org): The largest membership organization of professional social workers in the world
- The New Social Worker (www.socialworker.com/career.htm)

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