empowerment series

INTRODUCTION TO Social Work & Social Welfare

CRITICAL THINKING PERSPECTIVES

Karen K. Kirst-Ashman

5e

Council on Social Work Education Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards by Chapter

The Council on Social Work Education's Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards requires all social work students to develop 9 competencies and recommends teaching and assessing 31 related component behaviors, listed as Educational Policy (EP) Competencies 1–9 below. The multicolor icons (see figure at right) and end of chapter "Competency Notes" connect these important standards to content in the chapters identified below with bold blue type.

The 9 Competencies and 31 Component Behaviors (EPAS, 2015)	Chapter(s) Where Referenced
Competency 1—Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior:	**All chapters**
a. Make ethical decisions by applying the standards of the NASW Code of Ethics, relevant laws and regulations, models for ethical decision-making, ethical conduct of research, and additional codes of ethics as appropriate to context	**1, 2, 5, 7, 11, 12, 16**
b. Use reflection and self-regulation to manage personal values and maintain professionalism in practice situations	**1–4, 6, 8–11, 13, 15, 16**
c. Demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior; appearance; and oral, written, and electronic communication	**1–7, 10–12, 14**
d. Use technology ethically and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes	**1, 2, 15**
e. Use supervision and consultation to guide professional judgment and behavior	**1, 2, 4**
Competency 2—Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice:	**1–6, 8–13, 15, 16**
a. Apply and communicate understanding of the importance of diversity and difference in shaping life experiences in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels	**1–3, 5, 6, 8–13, 15, 16**
b. Present themselves as learners and engage clients and constituencies as experts of their own experiences	**1–3, 5, 9–11, 13, 15**
c. Apply self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituencies	**1–3, 8–11, 13, 15, 16**
Competency 3—Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice:	**1, 8–10, 12**
a. Apply their understanding of social, economic, and environmental justice to advocate for human rights at the individual and system levels	**1–13, 15, 16**
b. Engage in practices that advance social, economic, and environmental justice	**1–5, 7, 8, 11–13, 16**
Competency 4—Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice:	**1**
a. Use practice experience and theory to inform scientific inquiry and research	**1, 2, 6, 13**
b. Apply critical thinking to engage in analysis of quantitative and qualitative research methods and research findings	**1, 2, 4**
c. Use and translate research evidence to inform and improve practice, policy, and service delivery	**1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 13, 15**
Competency 5—Engage in Policy Practice:	**1, 2, 7**
a. Identify social policy at the local, state, and federal level that impacts well-being, service delivery, and access to social services	**1, 4, 6–11**
b. Assess how social welfare and economic policies impact the delivery of and access to social services	**1, 2, 4, 6–11**
c. Apply critical thinking to analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice	**1, 2, 4–16**

The 9 Competencies and 31 Component Behaviors (EPAS, 2015)	Chapter(s) Where Referenced
Competency 6—Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities:	**1, 2, 4**
a. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks to engage with clients and constituencies	**1, 5, 14**
b. Use empathy, reflection, and interpersonal skills to effectively engage diverse clients and constituencies	**1, 4, 5, 8, 12–14**
Competency 7—Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities:	**1, 2, 4, 13, 14**
a. Collect and organize data, and apply critical thinking to interpret information from clients and constituencies	**1–6, 8–16**
b. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the analysis of assessment data from clients and constituencies	**1, 3–9, 13–16**
c. Develop mutually agreed-on intervention goals and objectives based on the critical assessment of strengths, needs, and challenges within clients and constituencies	**1, 3–5, 9–16**
d. Select appropriate intervention strategies based on the assessment, research knowledge, and values and preferences of clients and constituencies	**1, 3–5, 9–16**
Competency 8—Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities:	**1, 2, 4, 13–15**
a. Critically choose and implement interventions to achieve practice goals and enhance capacities of clients and constituencies	**1–6, 8–16**
b. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in interventions with clients and constituencies	**1, 3–5, 7–9, 13, 14, 16**
c. Use inter-professional collaboration as appropriate to achieve beneficial practice outcomes	**1, 2, 4, 5, 7–13, 15**
d. Negotiate, mediate, and advocate with and on behalf of diverse clients and constituencies	**1–13, 15, 16**
e. Facilitate effective transitions and endings that advance mutually agreed-on goals	**1, 4, 10, 12, 15, 16**
Competency 9—Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities:	**1, 2, 4**
a. Select and use appropriate methods for evaluation of outcomes	**1, 4**
b. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the evaluation of outcomes	**1, 4, 5, 13**
c. Critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate intervention and program processes and outcomes	**1, 4, 13, 14, 16**
d. Apply evaluation findings to improve practice effectiveness at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels	**1, 4**

Introduction to Social Work & Social Welfare

CRITICAL THINKING PERSPECTIVES

FIFTH EDITION

KAREN K. KIRST-ASHMAN
University of Wisconsin—Whitewater

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To Nick, for his continuous encouragement, support, and assistance

About the Author

Karen K. Kirst-Ashman, BSW, MSSW, Ph.D., has been a full professor and was former chairperson in the Social Work Department at the University of Wisconsin—Whitewater, where she taught for 28 years. She is certified as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in the state of Wisconsin. She earned her BSW degree in 1972 and MSSW in 1973 at the University of Wisconsin—Madison, and her Ph.D. in Social Work at the University of Illinois at Urbana—Champaign. She has worked as a practitioner and administrator in child welfare and mental health agencies. She received the University of Wisconsin—Whitewater's Excellence in Teaching Award in 1986 and the University Outstanding Teaching Award in 2007. She has been a member of the board of directors of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) in addition to being an accreditation site visitor. She is also a current member of CSWE, BPD, and NASW. She has served on the editorial board of *Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work*, and as a consulting editor for many social work journals including the *Journal of Social Work Education.* She is the author of numerous publications, articles, and reviews concerning social work and women's issues. Other books she has authored or coauthored include *Understanding Human Behavior and the Social Environment* (10th ed.); *Understanding Generalist Practice* (7th ed.); *Human Behavior in the Macro Social Environment: An Empowerment Approach to Understanding Communities, Organization, and Groups* (4th ed.); *The Macro Skills Workbook* (2nd ed.); and *Generalist Practice with Organizations and Communities* (5th ed.).

Brief Contents

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Preface

Given limited time and massive volumes of content, what vital information should be conveyed to students in an introductory course about social welfare and social work? What student learning outcomes should instructors strive to attain? This text focuses on the most significant elements of social work. Content complies with the new Council on Social Work Education's Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) (CSWE, 2015). The text's style is intended to be clear, readable, interesting, and engaging. The goal is to enhance students' ability to grasp the essence and spirit of generalist social work and the issues in social welfare that social workers address every day.

Themes integrated throughout the text include these:

- The advancement of human rights and social and economic justice.
- Client empowerment.
- Dimensions of human diversity ("age, class, color, culture, disability and ability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, marital status, political ideology, race, religion/spirituality, sex, sexual orientation, and tribal sovereign status").[1]
- The significance of professional values and ethics.
- A generalist approach interrelating social work practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
- Numerous case examples dramatizing various aspects of social work.
- Various global and international perspectives.
- Identification of the relationship between the text's content and EPAS competencies and their component behaviors.

[1]These are the categories reflecting diversity as stated by the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards passed by the Council on Social Work Education board of directors in 2015 (CSWE, 2015).

A key word describing this text is *integration:* These themes are infused throughout the book instead of being isolated in independent chapters. For example, values, ethics, aspects of diversity, and client empowerment are defined early on and then addressed throughout the text in various contexts including fields of practice. Boxed features appear regularly to emphasize important concepts and cases, to spark students' interest, and to stimulate critical thinking.

The Fundamental Need for Critical Thinking

Critical thinking perspectives provide an underlying foundation for the text. They are stressed throughout by encouraging identification of values and evaluation of serious issues. Critical thinking involves three facets. First, it focuses on the questioning of beliefs, statements, assumptions, lines of reasoning, actions, and experiences. Second, it involves the assessment of the established facts and issues involved by seeking relevant information. This complies with the Council on Social Work Education's (CSWE) current emphasis on "research-informed practice" and "practice-informed research" (CSWE, 2015, Educational Policy [EP] 4). Third, it concerns asserting an opinion about the validity of the fact or process being considered.

Critical thinking is essential in social work because social workers address a vast range of issues and problems. New accreditation standards require that social workers demonstrate competency in applying critical thinking (or critical evaluation) to make informed, ethical judgments in practice and behavior (CSWE, 2015, EP 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9). Each chapter stresses the use of critical thinking by integrating a basic "Triple A" formula that students can readily comprehend and apply: (1) *ask* questions, (2) *assess* the established facts and issues involved, and (3) *assert* a concluding opinion. Issues addressed range from client rights to social policy to social

work roles in a wide array of contexts. Case studies for critical thinking are presented at the end of each of the book's four main sections.

Organization

The book is organized into four major parts: (1) the profession, (2) social work practice, (3) social welfare policy, and (4) client populations and contexts. A fifth section, the epilogue, focuses on personal values and consideration of a social work career. The intent is to give students a broad look at what social work is all about. Social welfare policy is stressed as the foundation of social welfare programs and social work practice. New accreditation standards require that students demonstrate competency in "policy practice," including being able to "analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice" (CSWE, 2015, EP 5c). Students are encouraged to explore issues based on theoretical orientations to social welfare policy development and the resulting program implementation.

Students are provided with thought-provoking information about social welfare and social work within a broad range of circumstances and fields of practice. Settings range from those focusing on child maltreatment, to health care, to work with older adults, to corrections. Social issues are raised in a way that encourages new insights and examination of personal values. This book stresses *what* social workers do, not *how* they do it. Abundant case examples give insights into who clients are and what issues they face in the macro social environment.

Concepts incorporated in the Council on Social Work Education Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS), including the concepts of human rights; social, economic, and environmental justice; marginalization; alienation; research-informed practice; and policy practice, in addition to the newly articulated aspects of diversity—disability and ability, marital status, religion/spirituality, and tribal sovereign status—are discussed (CSWE, 2015). Macro aspects of generalist practice, in addition to micro and mezzo aspects, are frequently highlighted.

This book gives students contemplating a social work major a solid orientation to the profession. The text should help students determine whether social work is really the field for them. For nonmajors, the text is designed to provide a sound introduction to social welfare, social work, available services, social welfare policy development and implementation, and social workers' involvement in the helping process. The emphasis is on those issues and fields of practice in which social workers are most likely to be employed. For example, significant attention is given to child and family services, mental health, and health care.

Part 1, "The Profession of Social Work," includes three chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the new 2015 EPAS, defines social welfare and social work, discusses political values and views about social welfare, reviews content areas in the social work curriculum, introduces the various fields of practice, and reviews the social work career continuum. Critical thinking is defined, and its importance throughout the text is stressed. Chapter 2 focuses on the importance of social work values and ethics, thus providing a framework for remaining chapters. This chapter introduces the concept of ethical dilemmas, summarizes the NASW *Code of Ethics*, gives examples of practice applications, and helps students explore personal values. Chapter 3 defines and discusses various dimensions of human diversity, empowerment, resiliency, and cultural competence, paving the way for integration of this content throughout the book.

Part 2, "Social Work Practice," includes two chapters that focus on what social workers *do.* Chapter 4 defines generalist social work practice, introduces the wide range of social work roles, and describes the planned-change process. Emphases include the importance of client empowerment, appreciation of cultural differences, and intervention with macro systems. Chapter 5 focuses on the settings in which social workers practice, including rural and urban communities. It describes what micro, mezzo, and macro practice involve in terms of social workers' functions and practice settings. Finally, it explores social work licensure, employment, and salaries.

Part 3, "Social Welfare Policy," includes three chapters. Chapter 6 explains the historical development of social welfare and social work, thereby providing a context for the next chapter, which focuses on social welfare policy and policy practice. Chapter 7 defines policy, discusses its significance,

and describes how it is developed and structured. The significance of social welfare policy as the basis upon which social programs are developed is stressed. Chapter 8 discusses the infrastructure of policies and programs designed to combat poverty and provide financial assistance to those in need. It also describes social insurance (including the Medicare Prescription Drug Program), public assistance programs, and current health care policy, and explores students' values about various aspects of social welfare.

Part 4, "Client Populations and Contexts," includes eight chapters that focus on specific social work settings. Chapter 9 introduces service provision for children and families. It describes supportive services for children and families, including those involving child maltreatment, intensive family preservation, and child day care. It stresses the importance of addressing macro issues. This chapter also reviews substitute services for children and families, including kinship care, foster family care, residential settings, and adoption.

Chapter 10 discusses social work with older adults. Issues include common problems facing older adults, critical thinking about Social Security, the global context for aging, contexts of social work practice with older adults, and empowerment for diverse populations of older adults.

Chapter 11 explores social work with people who have disabilities. Ethical implications for social work practice are discussed. Empowerment through policy practice and advocacy, legislative advocacy, and community support are stressed.

Chapter 12 explains social work roles in health care, health-care problems in the macro environment, issues involving health-care policy, managed care, and international perspectives on the global crisis of AIDS. Sensitivity to populations at risk and macro issues in practice are emphasized.

Chapter 13 addresses social work and mental health. Employment settings in mental health for social workers are identified, social work functions are explained, and clients' conditions are described. Managed care in mental health is critiqued, and cultural competence in the field is examined.

Chapter 14 explores alcohol and other drug abuse (AODA). It describes AODA terms, methods of ingestion, types of substances, the development and personal dynamics of abuse, the family dynamics involved, the treatment process, treatment approaches, two treatment models, and available resources for treatment.

Chapter 15 focuses on social work with youths and in the schools. Positive social programming in macro practice, violence in the schools, bullying, and teenage sexual activity and pregnancy are examined. Social work roles with respect to each are discussed.

Chapter 16 explores social work and corrections. Questions requiring critical thinking are posed regarding the complexity of the crime rate, the issue of punishment versus empowerment, and health care for prisoners. Practice settings and gang membership are also discussed.

The epilogue, "Your Values and Your Future: Applying Critical Thinking Skills," serves as a capstone for the book. Students are urged to come to conclusions about various issues in social welfare policy and programming. Finally, they are encouraged to evaluate their personal characteristics and values and their potential for a career in social work, responding to many questions initiated in Chapter 1.

My sincere hope is that students will find this text interesting and informative and that instructors will find it an easy one from which to teach. The intent is to provide a sound foundation on which to build professional expertise and commitment.

Relationship Between Content and the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS), and Professional Competencies

This book addresses accreditation standards established by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE).[2] Our intent is to facilitate programs' ability to link content provided in this textbook with expectations for student learning and accomplishment. As is true in almost all learning, students must acquire knowledge before they are expected to apply it to practice situations.

CSWE has identified 31 component behaviors that operationalize 9 core competencies that are critical for professional practice (CSWE, 2015). For

[2]Please note that this content addresses standards posed in the EPAS. In no way does it claim to verify compliance with standards. Only the Council on Social Work Education Commission on Accreditation can make those determinations.

clarity, we have alphabetized in lowercase the component behaviors listed under each competency. **Multicolor icons** located within paragraphs clearly show the linkage between content in the textbook, and competencies and their component behaviors (see the multicolor image inserted in this paragraph). Each icon is labeled with the specific behavior or competency that relates directly to the content conveyed in the paragraph. For example, an icon might be labeled EP [Educational Policy] 3b, which is the behavior, "engage in practices that advance social, economic, and environmental justice" (CSWE, 2015, EP 3b). Accredited social work programs are required to prove that students have mastered all component behaviors for competence as specified in the EPAS. (Please refer to http://www.cswe.org/File.aspx?id=79793 for the EPAS document.)

For all icons **"Competency Notes"** are provided at the end of each chapter. These Competency Notes explain the relationship between chapter content and CSWE's competencies and their component behaviors. They also list page numbers where icons are located and this content is discussed. A summary chart of the icons' locations in all chapters and their respective competency or practice behavior is placed in the inside front covers of the book.

New to This Edition

This edition places a new emphasis on learning objectives and incorporates the 2015 EPAS throughout the entire book. In addition to updating subject matter throughout, other new and expanded content in this edition includes the following:

Chapter 1

- Elaboration of competencies and their related behaviors inherent in the 2015 EPAS
- Environmental justice
- Introductory descriptions of quantitative and qualitative research
- Evaluation of practice and accountability

Chapter 2

- Updated content on international social work organizations

Chapter 3

- Incorporation of new content and concepts concerning human diversity recognized in the 2015 EPAS, including tribal sovereign status, (religion/)spirituality, (disability and) ability, and marital status as dimensions of diversity
- Updated information on racial demographics in the United States and other statistics
- New content on racial and cultural differences (including collectivism, the desire to keep problems within the family, and interpersonal harmony in Asian American families; and child-centeredness in African American families)
- The gender spectrum
- Updated statistics on the status of women

Chapter 4

- Spokesperson, coordinator, and manager roles

Chapter 5

- Expanded information concerning social work organizations
- Updated numbers of accredited social work programs
- Updated information on licensure, the Association of Social Work Boards, and NASW credentials
- New and updated data on social work practice settings and salaries including earning variations by geographical location

Chapter 6

- Updated content on Charity Organization Societies
- Elaboration of trends during the progressive period
- Updated facts about the future of Social Security
- Updated content on the fringe economy and unsecured credit

Chapter 7

- Using electronic media and supporting political candidates as approaches to policy practice and advocacy
- Updated content on social workers in politics

Chapter 8

- Updated statistics on poverty
- New content on globalization

- Updated content on health care and the poor
- New and updated content on homelessness
- New content on OASDHI, Unemployment Insurance, Workers' Compensation, Medicare, TANF, SSI, Medicaid, CHIP, SNAP, and housing assistance

Chapter 9

- Updated content on international legalized gay marriage
- New information on family life education
- New content on advocacy for resources at the macro level

Chapter 10

- Updated demographic data and information on poverty concerning older adults
- Significantly expanded content on older adult abuse including incidence, types, assessment, and treatment
- New content on gay aging ("gayging")
- Assisted living facilities

Chapter 11

- Updated citations on the NASW policy on people with disabilities
- Critical thinking about personal feelings and stereotypes concerning disabilities
- Update on the American with Disabilities Act including 2010 amendments

Chapter 12

- New content on public health
- New content about Veterans Affairs (VA) health services and the social work role within the VA
- Updated content on the Affordable Care Act
- Updated statistics and content on HIV/AIDS concerning race and gender, treatment options, and international incidence

Chapter 13

- Updated content regarding the 2013 Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (5th ed.) (DSM-5) including neurocognitive; depressive; paraphilic; disruptive, impulse-control, and conduct; and obsessive-compulsive and related disorders
- New content on managed care and mental health
- New content on cultural competence in mental health settings

Chapter 14

- Updated statistics on the incidence of substance abuse
- Updated criteria on substance use disorders established by the DSM-5
- New recently appearing recreational drugs
- New content on engagement, assessment, and the importance of a continuing care plan during AODA treatment

Chapter 15

- Updated and new content on gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth
- Updated content on youth violence including incidence in addition to risk and protective factors
- New content concerning bullying including the incidence, new case examples, and sexting
- Updated content on prenatal care for teenage mothers
- New content on teenage fatherhood

Chapter 16

- Identity theft
- Social workers as Victim Specialists in FBI-operated specialized victims assistance programs
- Suggestions for preventing problematic behavior and emphasizing strengths in youths
- New content on gangs

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MindTap for *Introduction to Social Work and Social Welfare* engages and empowers students to produce their best work—consistently. By seamlessly integrating course material with videos, activities, apps, and much more, MindTap creates a unique learning path that fosters increased comprehension and efficiency.

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In addition to the benefits of the platform, MindTap for *Introduction to Social Work and Social Welfare* includes valuable resources to help students fully understand and master key social work concepts.

- The **Practice Behaviors Workbook** is now included online in MindTap. The experiential exercises provided here give students opportunities to develop the practice behaviors, facilitating their mastery over practical aspects of social work.
- Case Studies taken from **Careers in Social Work** provide students with examples and stories from social workers in the field highlighting real work application of concepts.
- Specially selected articles from **Questia,** an online database of professional journals and textbooks, give students further insight into social work concepts in practice. Students are asked to reflect on these articles so that they further understand and apply what they have learned to their own lives and the real world.
- Newly selected videos from CNN and BBC bring to light important contemporary issues within society and provide critical thinking questions to assist students in thinking through issues that impact both social workers and those they serve.

Supplements

Online Instructor's Manual

The Instructor's Manual (IM) contains a variety of resources to aid instructors in preparing and presenting text material in a manner that meets their personal preferences and course needs. It presents chapter-by-chapter suggestions and resources to enhance and facilitate learning.

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PART ONE

THE PROFESSION OF SOCIAL WORK

What is social work? How does it differ from sociology, psychology, or any other type of counseling? What types of people choose it as a career? This book answers these and many other questions you might have about what social workers do, what rules and policies they must follow, and whom they serve.

This book has four parts:

1. The Profession of Social Work
2. Social Work Practice
3. Social Welfare Policy
4. Client Populations and Contexts

Part 1 contains three chapters that emphasize key aspects of social work and provide a general introduction to the field. Chapter 1 defines social work and social welfare and discusses various theoretical perspectives you can use to think about how to help people. It introduces you to the concept of critical thinking, which will be emphasized throughout the book. It also describes the content areas in the social work curriculum.

Chapter 2 focuses on social work values and ethics. It summarizes social work's ethical principles and practitioners' ethical responsibilities to clients. It also challenges you to examine your own personal values and how they relate to social work values. Finally, it examines a range of ethical dilemmas that social workers potentially face.

Chapter 3 explores human diversity and the ways in which people might be empowered to enhance their well-being and reach their full potential. It stresses social work's quest for social and economic justice, especially for populations at

risk of deprivation and oppression. Populations at risk include groups characterized by diverse aspects of "age, class, color, culture, disability and ability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, marital status, political ideology, race, religion/spirituality, sex, sexual orientation, and tribal sovereign status" (Council on Social Work Education [CSWE], 2015).

I hope you will enjoy this book and gain a much better understanding of social work and social welfare. Let's begin.

1 Introduction to Social Work and Social Welfare

Kali9/iStockphoto.com

Learning Objectives

This chapter will help prepare students to:

- **LO 1** Define social work and social welfare. **What Is Social Work?** (p. 5)
- **LO 2** Discuss various perspectives on social welfare (including residual, institutional, and developmental perspectives, as well as the concept of sustainability). **Perspectives for Viewing the Social Welfare System: Residual, Institutional, and Developmental** (p. 6)
- **LO 3** Explain critical thinking (including a framework for examining a wide range of concepts and issues). **Highlight 1.1** (p. 7)
- **LO 4** Explain the conservative–liberal continuum with respect to viewing the social welfare system. **The Conservative–Liberal Continuum** (p. 9)
- **LO 5** Examine your personal attitudes about some social welfare issues. **How Do You Fare on the Conservative–Liberal Continuum?** (p. 13)
- **LO 6** Explain social work's fields of practice. **Fields of Practice in Social Work** (p. 13)
- **LO 7** Explore the process of choosing a career. **The Continuum of Social Work Careers** (p. 15)
- **LO 8** Discuss the uniqueness of social work. **Social Work Builds on Many Disciplines** (p. 16)
- **LO 9** Identify relevant concepts in systems theories and the ecological perspective. **Highlight 1.3** (p. 22)
- **LO 10** Describe social work education's goals, curriculum, and competencies. **Accredited Social Work Programs** (p. 23)

Case A: *The couple is ecstatic. In their early 30s, they have been struggling with infertility for almost a decade and have been languishing on a waiting list to adopt a baby for almost five years. The moment has finally almost come: They will soon meet their new baby, Juliette. Alani, their social worker in the adoptions unit at a family services agency, is assisting them in completing the paperwork and helping them launch their new family life.*

Case B: *Cassius, a social worker at a community mental health center, is about to start the weekly support group session. His seven clients all are dealing with spouses who have Lou Gehrig's disease, which is characterized by deterioration of neurons in the brain stem and spinal cord. It involves loss of muscle function, paralysis, and finally death. The purpose of the group is to provide mutual emotional support and share information about coping with the disease. Cassius facilitates the group to keep things moving along and, when necessary, gives information about the disease. He notices that Erica, one of his clients, seems to be struggling to hold back a flood of tears. He knows that her husband, Tom, is deteriorating rapidly, so she must have had a rough week. This may be a difficult session.*

Case C: *Lolita is exhilarated. Several hundred people have shown up for and are eagerly participating in this "Take Back the Night" march against sexual assault. Lolita, a social worker at a rape crisis center, was one of the primary organizers of the event. The march's intent is to raise people's consciousness about this serious issue, promote education about sexual assault, and increase funding for crisis centers.*

These vignettes portray brief moments in the actual lives of social workers. Some moments may be tremendously difficult, and others enormously satisfying.

When you think of social work, what comes to mind? Helping people? Being on welfare? Facing bureaucratic red tape? Solving problems? Saving children? What do social workers actually do?

I once visited a quaint little crafts shop in Bar Harbor, Maine. It had little shadow boxes, about five inches square, filled with tacks. On these tacks, someone had painted little symbols to reflect the tools, tasks, and people involved in various professions. For example, one shadow box reflecting dentistry had tacks painted with tiny teeth, big toothy smiles, and toothbrushes (which is probably no surprise). I managed to find a box for social work. What do you think was painted on those tacks?

There were tiny images of the following: a Kleenex® box, a pencil, a compact car, a smiling face, a watch, and a heart. What do you think each of these is supposed to mean?

Here are some ideas. The Kleenex box reflects how social workers help people deal with tough, and frequently very sad, issues. Sometimes clients are hurting badly, and sometimes they cry. The pencil signifies record keeping and paperwork, a mainstay of what social workers do. It probably should have been a computer, but the artist most likely couldn't fit one on that little tack. The compact car symbolizes travel because social workers often must visit clients' homes and other agencies. The

*smiling face signifies how social workers aim to help people solve their problems, to seek social justice on their behalf, and to make their lives a little bit better. (**Social justice** involves the concept that all citizens should be treated equally and have equal access to resources.) The watch reflects scheduling—there's always a lot to do and limited time in which to do it. Finally, the heart symbolizes caring about the welfare of others: That's the core of what the social work profession is all about.*

What Is Social Work? LO 1

The National Association of Social Work (NASW) defines **social work** as follows:

> *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., those involving provision of food, housing, or income).*
> - *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.*
>
> *(NASW, 1973, pp. 4–5)*

What does this really mean? Imagine the vast range of human problems and issues. Because social workers can be in positions to help people deal with almost anything, it is difficult to define the field adequately in a few words. Highlighted here are some of the important concepts inherent in the definition just cited. Because of its breadth, the foundation of social work practice is referred to as *generalist practice*, described more thoroughly in Chapter 4.

Five themes permeate social work practice in virtually any setting (e.g., child welfare agencies, nursing homes, schools, or corrections facilities). First, social work concerns helping individuals, groups, or communities. Social workers provide counseling when necessary to help clients address problems. In addition to counseling an individual or family, much social work involves collaborating with organizations and communities to improve social and health services. Second, social work entails a solid foundation of values and principles that guide what practitioners should and should not do. Third, a firm basis of techniques and skills provides directions for *how* social workers should provide treatment and accomplish goals. Fourth, social workers help people get the services they need by linking them to available resources. If the right resources are not available, social workers may advocate for service development on their clients' behalf. Fifth, social workers participate in legislative processes to promote positive social change. Such participation might include urging lawmakers to pass laws that improve social services and conditions. Social workers can also serve as expert witnesses to educate legislators about social issues and client needs, write or phone legislators to share socially responsible opinions, and run for elected office themselves.

NASW reports how Representative Bob Etheridge (D-N.C.) paid homage to social workers during Social Work Month (March 2001). He shared with the speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives the following remarks:

> *Social workers affect our lives in so many ways.… Their work touches all of us as individuals and as whole communities. They are educated, highly trained, and committed professionals. They work in family service and community mental health agencies, schools, hospitals, nursing homes, and many other private and public agencies.*[1] *They listen, they care. And, most importantly, they help those in need.*
>
> *(Vallianatos, 2001b, p. 1)*

[1] *Public agencies* are those run by a designated unit of government and are usually regulated by laws that directly affect policy. The county department of social services is a public agency. *Private agencies*, of course, are privately owned and run by people not employed by government. Chapter 5 describes social service agencies in greater detail.

What Is Social Welfare?

What does the term *social welfare* mean? And exactly whose welfare are we talking about? Answers to these questions require critical thinking because, as a citizen and voter, your opinions are vital. You have the opportunity to help determine and shape how you and others are treated, how your own and their welfare is respected and nurtured.

A central theme of this book is encouraging you to think critically about problems, issues, and policies affecting people's lives and welfare. Highlight 1.1 defines critical thinking and provides a basic framework for analysis.

Social welfare is "a nation's system of programs, benefits, and services that help people meet those social, economic, educational, and health needs that are fundamental to the maintenance of society" (Barker, 2014, p. 402). Social welfare, then, is a broad concept related to the general well-being of all people in a society. Inherent in the definition are two basic dimensions: (1) what people get from society (in terms of programs, benefits, and services) and (2) how well their needs (including social, economic, educational, and health) are being met. Yet another way of portraying social welfare is the conception of an honorable, supportive society that offers its citizens the chance for adequate employment and the pursuit of happiness, affords an acceptably safe environment, advocates for justice and equality, and provides a context for financial security and growth (Reid, 1995).

How are social welfare and social work related? Simply put, **social work** serves to improve people's social and economic welfare. It does so in the many fields or settings discussed in this book, including health, mental health, and financial assistance, among many others. Populations served include older adults, children and families, people with disabilities, and people involved with the legal system.

Note that social work is not the only field concerned with people's social welfare. Others include those providing health, educational, recreational, and public safety services. Physicians, nurses, other health-care personnel, teachers, park recreational counselors, police, firefighters, and many others work to enhance people's well-being and quality of life.

Social welfare can be quite controversial on two counts. One involves individuals' responsibility to take care of themselves independently of government, which reflects the old saying "You get what you deserve." The other concerns society's responsibility to take care of all its members, especially those belonging to oppressed groups. There is constant political debate about what social services should and should not provide, and about who should receive them and who should not.

Perspectives for Viewing the Social Welfare System: Residual, Institutional, and Developmental

LO 2

The following section explores various perspectives that structure how you might think about social welfare. Each addresses the following questions: What should be the most important focus and goals of social welfare? Who should assume responsibility for people's social welfare? We can look at social welfare and the ways its programs

EP 7b*

***Note the multicolor icons next to designated content throughout the book. Accredited social work programs must demonstrate that they're teaching students to be proficient in nine core competencies that are operationalized by 31 component behaviors designated by the Council on Social Work Education's (CSWE) *Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards* (EPAS). Students require knowledge in order to develop skills and become competent. Our intent here is to specify what chapter content and knowledge coincides with the development of specific competencies and their component behaviors. (This ultimately is intended to assist in a social work program's accreditation process.)**

Throughout each chapter, icons such as those located on this page call attention to the location of EPAS-related content. Each icon identifies what competency or its component behavior is relevant by specifying the designated Educational Policy (EP) reference number beneath it. Competency Notes are provided at the end of each chapter that describe how EPAS competencies and their component behaviors are related to content in the chapter.

EPAS competencies and their component behaviors are cited in the inside covers of this book. A summary chart indicating where icons are located throughout the book along with their component competencies and related behaviors is placed after the Table of Contents in the front of the book. Highlight 1.5 cites the competencies and their component behaviors directly.

The EPAS document lists component behaviors under each of the nine core competencies as bulleted items. To clarify the Competency Notes at the end of each chapter, the bulleted component behaviors have been alphabetized under each competency.

HIGHLIGHT 1.1 WHAT IS CRITICAL THINKING? LO 3

Critical thinking is (1) the careful scrutiny of what is stated as true or what appears to be true and the resulting expression of an opinion or conclusion based on that scrutiny, and (2) the creative formulation of an opinion or conclusion when presented with a question, problem, or issue. Critical thinking concentrates on "the process of reasoning" (Gambrill & Gibbs, 2009, p. 4). It stresses *how* individuals think about the truth inherent in a statement or *how* they analyze an issue to formulate their own conclusions. As Gambrill and Gibbs (2009) so aptly state, "Critical thinkers question what others take for granted" (p. 9).

Two dimensions in the definition of critical thinking are significant. First, critical thinking focuses on the questioning of beliefs, statements, assumptions, lines of reasoning, actions, and experiences. Suppose you read a "fact" in a book or hear about it from a friend or an instructor. Critical thinking focuses on *not* taking this "fact" at face value. Rather, it entails the following "Triple-A" approach to examining and evaluating its validity:

EP 4b, 5c, 7a, 8a

1. *Ask* questions.
2. *Assess* the established facts and issues involved.
3. *Assert* a concluding opinion.

For example, a friend and fellow student might tell you, "It's impossible to get financial aid at our school." To what extent is this statement really true? To find out, you first *ask* questions about what the statement is really saying. What does "impossible" mean? Some people must be eligible for financial aid. What are the criteria for receiving aid? What experiences has your friend had to come to such a conclusion?

Second, you *assess* the established facts and issues involved by seeking relevant information. What does the financial aid policy state? To what extent does eligibility depend on students' and their parents' earnings? To what extent is a grade-point average or full-time student status involved? How many students are actually receiving aid at any given time? What percentage of the student population does this number reflect?

Third, you *assert* a concluding opinion. To what extent do you agree with your friend's statement? If you find out that only two people on your campus are receiving aid, then you might agree that such aid is almost impossible to get. However, if you find out that about a third of the student population is receiving aid, then you might heartily conclude that your friend's statement is false.

Critical thinking can be applied to virtually any belief, statement, assumption, line of reasoning, action, or experience claimed as true. Consider the following statements of proposed "facts":

- Rich people are selfish.
- Taxes are unfair.
- A crocodile cannot stick its tongue out.
- Most lipstick contains fish scales.
- It is physically impossible for a person to lick his or her elbow.
- More than 75% of people who read this will try to lick their elbows.

These statements may seem silly (although some may also be true), but the point is that critical thinking can be applied to an infinite array of thoughts and ideas. For each statement, (1) what questions would you *ask*, (2) how would you *assess* the established facts and issues involved, and (3) what concluding opinion would you finally *assert*?

The second facet of the definition of critical thinking is the creative formulation of an opinion or conclusion when presented with a question, problem, or issue. Instead of being told a proposed "fact" to be scrutinized for its validity, you are asked your *opinion* about an issue, assumption, or action. Examples include the following:

- Should prisoners who commit violent crimes be ineligible for parole? (In other words, should they be required to serve their full sentences?)
- Should all interstate highways have toll booths to finance them and their repairs, so that only the people who use them pay for them (instead of general tax revenues paying for highway construction and repair)?
- What is the best way to eliminate poverty in this nation?

Consider answering the last question, which could be posed as a term paper or exam topic in one of your courses. First, what questions about it would you ask? What are the reasons for poverty in a rich industrialized country? What social welfare programs are currently available to address poverty? What innovative ideas

(continued)

HIGHLIGHT 1.1 *(continued)*

for programs might be tried? Where might funding for such programs be found? How much money would it take to eliminate poverty, and who would pay for this?

Second, what facts and issues would you seek to address and assess? You probably would first try to define poverty—what income level or lack of income makes a person or family "poor"? You then might research statistics, costs, and studies concerning the effectiveness of various programs intending to reduce poverty. You might also investigate innovative ideas. Perhaps there are proposals for programs that look promising. You might explore what various programs cost and how they are funded. Note that these suggestions only scratch the surface of how you might examine the issue.

Third, what opinion or conclusion would you assert? To what extent do you think it is possible to eliminate poverty? What kinds of resources and programs do you think it would take? What do you feel citizens and their government should do about poverty?

Critical thinking enhances self-awareness and the ability to detect various modes of distorted thinking that can trick people into assuming truth; critical thinking can help you do the following (Gambrill & Gibbs, 2009):

1. *Identify propaganda* ("ideas, facts, or allegations spread deliberately to further one's cause or to damage an opposing cause" [Mish, 2008, p. 996]). Propaganda may be true or untrue. It often sensationalizes a point of view by blowing it out of proportion. For example, a law firm with the slogan "Our Way Is the Only and Best Way" emphasizes its own prowess while demeaning the effectiveness of other firms. Critical thinking would prompt you to assess upon what basis this law firm is making its claim of superiority.
2. *Distinguish intentionally deceptive claims.* For instance, an advertiser might boast, "This miracle drug has been scientifically proven to make you lose a pound a day—without exercising or changing your eating habits!" when, in actuality, little or no meticulous research has been done. Critical thinking would lead you to question how the drug has been scientifically proven to be effective.
3. *Focus on and choose words carefully.* Critical thinking helps you focus your attention on the meaning of each word used to convey an idea or concept. For example, consider the statement "Schools produce a bunch of real losers these days." What does each word really mean or imply? Which schools produce "losers"? What is a "loser"? What does "a bunch" mean? To what are "these days" compared?
4. *Be wary of emotional ploys and appeals.* They play on your emotions and urge you to concur with their intent by using as little logical thinking as possible. For instance, a sales representative on a televised marketing program might urge you to "buy this genuine fake leather jacket now and we'll send a pair of matching gloves—and a pair of matching boots. This is the only time you'll get this additional value. Aren't they lovely? But you have to act now—we have only two jackets left!" The intent here is to pressure you to make a decision quickly based on desire rather than on logical thinking about what the jacket costs and how you will make the payments.

are developed from three different perspectives—residual and institutional (Blau, 2014; Chapin, 2014; Gilbert & Terrell, 2013; Segal, 2013), in addition to developmental (Dolgoff & Feldstein, 2013; Midgley & Livermore, 1997).

The Residual Perspective

The **residual perspective** conceives of social welfare as focusing on problems and gaps. Social welfare benefits and services should be supplied only when people fail to provide adequately for themselves and problems arise. The implication is that it's people's own fault if they require outside help. Society, then, must aid them until they can once again assume responsibility for meeting their own needs. Gilbert and Terrell (2013) reflect:

> *The traditional (i.e., residual) view is that social welfare itself is not a significant societal institution, but rather a supplemental activity necessary only when the "normal" helping channels fail to perform appropriately. Viewed as a temporary response to the failure of individuals and major*

institutions, social welfare is seen as a set of activities that, while necessary at times, is undesirable and expendable. (p. 12)

Blaming women and children for being "on welfare," for example, reflects a residual view. The focus is on their supposed failures and faults; they are viewed in a demeaning and critical manner.

The Institutional Perspective

The **institutional perspective** of social welfare, in contrast, views people's needs as a normal part of life. Society has a responsibility to support its members and provide needed benefits and services. It's not people's fault that they require such services, but rather it is an expected part of the human condition. People have a right to receive benefits and services on an ongoing basis. In many ways, this is a more humane and supportive approach to helping people. Public education available to all is an example of an institutional form of social welfare. Similarly, fire and police protection are available to all.

Prior to the Great Depression in the 1930s, the residual approach to social welfare dominated. Since then, however, both approaches have been apparent, depending on the program at issue. Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), described in a later chapter, is an example of a residually oriented program. Families in need receive temporary, limited financial assistance until they can get back on their feet.

The Developmental Perspective

Another view on social welfare is the **developmental perspective**. This approach "seeks to identify social interventions that have a positive impact on economic development" (Midgley & Livermore, 1997, p. 574). It presumes that people living today in our complex world may require help and resources in order to function effectively and support themselves (Dolgoff & Feldstein, 2013). The developmental perspective originated after World War II in Third World countries seeking to design social welfare programs that would also enhance their economic development. This perspective gained impetus in the United States in the 1970s because "it justifies social programs in terms of economic efficiency criteria" (Lowe, 1995; Midgley & Livermore, 1997, p. 575).

There are three major ways that economic development can occur in a developmental context (Midgley & Livermore, 1997). First, "investments in [services to people such as] education, nutrition, and health care" can be evaluated so that people get the most for their money (p. 577). For example, investments in education may result in a more skilled labor force that, in turn, generates a stronger economy. Second, investment in physical facilities involving "the creation of economic and social infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, irrigation and drinking water systems, clinics, [and] schools … provide[s] the economic and social bases on which development efforts depend" (pp. 577–578). Workers must have a transportation system to get to work and a building in which to work to get anything done. Therefore, resources expended on developing such things are economically productive. Third, developing "programs that help needy people engage in productive employment and self-employment" is more economically viable than giving people public assistance payments over years and even decades (p. 578). It is an efficient economic investment to educate and train people in need so that they can get jobs and eventually support themselves.

The developmental perspective is relatively new and requires a more extensive grasp of social welfare issues and policies than can be described in an introductory book such as this. It involves both in-depth analysis of current social programs and the ability to creatively propose new ones. Therefore, it will not be a primary focus in this book.

What are your views about social welfare? Focus on Critical Thinking 1.1 poses some questions.

Highlight 1.2 explores a concept related to the developmental perspective on social welfare—the notion of sustainability on a global basis.

The Conservative–Liberal Continuum

LO 4

Political ideology is the "relatively coherent system of ideas (beliefs, traditions, principles, and myths) about human nature, institutional arrangements, and social processes" that indicate how a government should be run and what principles that government should support (Abramovitz, 2007, p. 126). A person's political ideology will frame the way that

FOCUS ON CRITICAL THINKING 1.1 WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS ABOUT SOCIAL WELFARE?

We have established that a consistent theme in social work is the importance of thinking critically and formulating opinions about what is right and wrong. A key question here concerns your own views about social welfare. What ensuing questions might you ask? What facts would you need to seek out and assess? What opinions and conclusions would you finally assert?

A related question concerns the extent to which your opinions reflect residual or institutional views about social welfare programs, benefits, and services. What are your opinions about the following concerns posed? (The issues are more complicated than you might think.) Does your thinking lean more toward a residual or institutional perspective?

EP 1b

- Should single mothers of young children be required to work, or should they be entitled to public assistance while they care for their children at home?
- Should public housing be routinely provided to homeless people at public expense?
- Should homeless people who have mental illnesses be institutionalized, should they be allowed to roam at will in the community, or should adequate mental health services be provided on an outpatient basis regardless of the cost?
- Should children in families suspected of child abuse be placed elsewhere, or should treatment focus on strengthening the family so that children remain in their own homes?

HIGHLIGHT 1.2 SUSTAINABILITY ON A GLOBAL LEVEL

The developmental perspective emphasizes the importance of economic development. Such progress can affect communities of any size, ranging from small local communities to nations as communities at the global level. The well-being of the global community has become a pressing concern. Consider that

> [t]he world is changing. Our human activities are clearly becoming global in nature. Our understanding of nature—the infrastructure upon which all humankind rests—is changing as well.... We have reached a point in our understanding of systems at which social welfare must be considered part of a larger global imperative of planetary survival. There is a profound connection between the micro problems that individuals and families manifest (e.g., environmental pollution, the lack of sustaining and meaningful work, addiction, domestic violence) and the macro problems that local and global communities experience [e.g., rampant poverty, lack of educational infrastructure, widespread unemployment, inadequate food production, political unrest].
>
> *(Mary, 2008, p. 1)*

A concept related to global and international development is the concept of sustainability. **Sustainability** involves "development that meets the current needs of the present generations without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their needs" (Mary, 2008, p. 32; Pace, 2011). This concept encompasses much more than just economic development. In view of concerns about overpopulation and overcrowding, insufficient food and freshwater, global warming, and a host of other issues, sustainability involves the need for citizens of the earth to work together to save themselves and their world (Gamble & Weil, 2008; Healy, 2008; Mary, 2008).

An internationally supported document entitled the *Earth Charter* has been developed to define and stress the importance of sustainability on a global basis (Earth Charter Initiative, 2011). After many years of planning, cooperation, and compromise, socially concerned organizations around the world met to create a document with the following intent:

> We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace. Towards this end, it is

(continued)

HIGHLIGHT 1.2 *(continued)*

imperative that we, the peoples of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations.

(Earth Charter Initiative, 2011)

The charter emphasizes four categories of principles necessary to promote "a sustainable way of life by which the conduct of all individuals, organizations, businesses, governments, and transnational institutions is to be guided and assessed": "respect and care for the community of life [with all its diversity]," "ecological integrity," "social and economic justice, " and "democracy, nonviolence, and peace" (Earth Charter Initiative, 2011).

The charter calls for "a new sense of global interdependence and universal responsibility" where all the citizens of earth "imaginatively develop and apply the vision of a sustainable way of life locally, nationally, regionally, and globally" (Earth Charter Initiative, 2011). It has been endorsed by thousands of organizations around the globe and has significantly influenced the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (Healy, 2008). It is "now increasingly recognized as a global consensus statement on the meaning of sustainability, the challenge and vision of sustainable development, and the principles by which sustainable development is to be achieved" (Earth Charter Initiative, 2011).

To achieve sustainability, Mary (2008) calls for major shifts in our economic system. For example, she suggests that some military spending could be shifted to the following earth-preserving goals:

Basic Social Goals

- Universal primary education
- Adult literacy
- School lunch programs for the world's forty-four poorest countries
- Assistance to preschool children and pregnant women in the world's forty-four poorest countries
- Universal basic health care
- Reproductive health and family planning
- Closing the condom gap

Earth Restoration Goals

- Reforesting the earth
- Protecting topsoil on cropland
- Restoring rangelands
- Stabilizing water tables
- Restoring fisheries
- Protecting biological diversity (pp. 188–189)

The application of sustainability to social work practice will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

person views the world. It affects what that person feels is valuable and what is not; it influences how an individual believes things should be and how they should not be.

Another way of thinking about how people should be served by social welfare programs involves political ideology and the conservative–liberal continuum (Blau, 2014; Dolgoff & Feldstein, 2013; Jansson, 2014). In some ways, this continuum reflects concepts similar to those of the residual and institutional perspectives of social welfare program development. However, the continuum focuses more on values related to social responsibility for human welfare.

Note that people are complex. It would be radically oversimplified to imply that each conservative individual has the identical views and ideas of each other conservative person; similarly, liberals also vary significantly in their views on various issues (Dolgoff & Feldstein, 2013; Jansson, 2014). Regardless, various themes often characterizing conservatives and liberals are identified here.

Conservatism

Conservatism is the philosophy that individuals are responsible for themselves, government should provide minimal interference in people's lives, and change does not necessarily mean improvement.

At least three concepts tend to characterize conservatives. First, conservatives often oppose change and thrive on tradition (Gilbert & Terrell, 2013; Page, 2014). "This defense of the status quo is underpinned by a belief that institutions and practices that have stood the test of time should not be readily abandoned for untested 'modern' alternatives" (Page, 2014, p. 144; Scruton, 2013). Conservatives generally feel that change results in more trouble than it's

JEWEL SAMAD/Getty Images

Poverty is a social welfare issue. Depending on their political orientation, people view the causes of poverty and the potential solutions very differently.

worth, so it's best to leave things the way they are. In other words, if it ain't broke, don't fix it.

Second, conservatives generally assume what they consider "a 'realistic' or 'common sense' view of human nature" (Page, 2014, p. 145). Page (2014) elaborates:

> *While individuals are seen as having a propensity for rational action and selflessness, conservatives believe that these co-exist with baser impulses, which can give rise to selfish and anti-social forms of conduct. Given inherent human frailty, conservatives recognize that it is important to constrain undesirable conduct through the rule of law and the threat of punishment. (p. 145)*

Therefore, conservatives feel that society has the responsibility of regulating people's behavior so that it's in compliance with the laws of God and society (Abramovitz, 2008; Blau, 2014).

Third, conservatives usually conceive of people as perfectly capable of taking care of themselves (Abramovitz, 2008). This implies that if people would work hard and take responsibility for their actions, they wouldn't need any help. Most people "on welfare" don't deserve such resources, but rather should make their own way. If people can get public assistance, they'll take it, and society is unwise for giving it to a broad range of people. People have only themselves to blame if they don't succeed.

Government should provide minimal interference in people's lives and assistance only when it's absolutely necessary to help the very needy. Therefore, conservatives generally oppose "big government" and centralized federal control.

> *[C]onservatives are always alert to the possibility that governments can over-extend themselves and act in authoritarian ways that threaten ancient liberties.… In particular, they fear the prospect of a highly centralized socialist government that might exercise control in ways that threaten the free market … [and] local autonomy. (Page, 2014, p. 148)*

Liberalism

Liberalism is the philosophy that government should be involved in the social, political, and economic structure so that all people's rights and privileges are protected in the name of social justice.

At least three concepts tend to characterize liberals, more or less reflecting the opposite of a conservative perspective. First, liberals often seek change and tend to think there's always a better way to get things done (Dolgoff & Feldstein, 2013; Gilbert & Terrell, 2013; Jimenez, Pasztor, & Chambers, 2015). They are always looking for different approaches to improve policies and provide services. For example, liberals have tended to champion "efforts to assist persons of color, women, the disabled, and gay men and lesbians with regulations that curtail discrimination in employment and elsewhere" (Jansson, 2014, p. 49).

Second, liberals have a more positive perspective on human nature than conservatives (Abramovitz, 2008; Blau, 2014). They view people as rational beings fully capable of making their own choices and decisions about what is right and wrong. Each individual deserves the right to compete and be provided with equal opportunities to blossom and prosper.

Third, liberals view government as the best entity to provide a structure and an environment where adequate services and opportunities can be made available (Abramovitz, 2008; Blau, 2014; Gilbert & Terrell, 2013). Therefore, it is government's responsibility to make certain that citizens' needs are met, public participation is maximized, and people's equal rights are preserved in the context of social

justice. Additionally, liberals assert that it's "the mission of government … to balance market forces, to modify the power of elites in favor of the whole, and to ensure economic management for growth, employment, fair wages, and economic security" (Gilbert & Terrell, 2013, p. 18). Liberals also believe that it's the government's job to protect people from such impediments as racism, sexism, various other forms of discrimination, and poverty.

Radicalism

A more extreme approach is **radicalism**, the philosophy that the social and political system as it stands is not structurally capable of truly providing social justice. Rather, drastic, fundamental changes are necessary in the basic social and political structure to achieve truly fair and equal treatment.

According to a radical philosophy, for example, "poverty results from exploitation by the ruling capitalist class"; such poverty exists for at least two reasons (Karger & Stoesz, 2014, p. 97). First, having a multitude of poor people as workers enables higher classes to keep wages low because of numerous replacement workers. If low-paid workers complain, they can simply be fired, with someone else eagerly waiting to take their place to avoid poverty. The working class thus serves to labor for the wealthy and keep them rich. Second, keeping a class of people in poverty enhances the "prestige" and status of the middle and upper classes. To remedy this state of affairs, an entirely new social structure would have to be developed.

A radical perspective requires the ability to propose a new social structure. It is far beyond the scope of this book to discuss how to plan new policies and promote broad social change. Therefore, from here on, when the term *radical* is used, it will be in the context of soliciting any *very general* ideas you might have about changing social welfare service provision.

How Do You Fare on the Conservative–Liberal Continuum? LO 5

Return to Focus on Critical Thinking 1.1 and review the answers you gave to those questions. Do they lean toward a liberal or conservative point of view? Focus on Critical Thinking 1.2 contains a series of statements geared to assessing further your liberal or conservative views.

Note again that this discussion of conservatism and liberalism is overly simplified. Many people, and perhaps most, have a complex mixture of views depending on their perceptions and personal experiences. (That last sentence probably reflects a liberal perspective.)

Social Work and Social Welfare History

Social work has been a developing field since the late 19th century. The profession is intimately intertwined with historical events and trends in social welfare. Social work emphasizes the importance of the social environment as it affects the quality of people's lives. Therefore, the way people are treated by laws that govern them and the services and resources provided to them are integral parts of the social work perspective.

EP 1

Chapter 6 reviews the history of social welfare beginning in European medieval times, continuing throughout U.S. history, and culminating with today's programs and services. It elaborates on the effects of history on the social work profession's development. The chapter is placed immediately before Chapter 7 (which addresses policy, policy analysis, and policy advocacy) because today's programs, all based on current social welfare policies, are products of historical events concerning social welfare. Chapter 8 then discusses the policies and programs developed to combat poverty.

Fields of Practice in Social Work LO 6

The remainder of the book focuses on **fields of practice** in social work. These are the various practice contexts that address certain types of populations and needs and require a special knowledge and skill base for effective work. Each field of practice involves a labyrinth of typical human problems and the services attempting to address them. Current fields of practice include children and families, aging, disabilities, health, mental health, substance abuse, schools, and corrections. Other contexts for practice are occupational social work (focusing on work in employee assistance programs or directed toward organizational change), rural social work

FOCUS ON CRITICAL THINKING 1.2

WHERE DO YOU STAND ON THE CONSERVATIVE–LIBERAL CONTINUUM?

Rate how much you agree with statements 1–6 by assigning a number for each. The scale is as follows:

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
1	2	3	4

1. I don't like change very much.
2. The old tried-and-true way of getting things done is usually the best way.
3. People will do whatever they can to get things for themselves.
4. If they're sure they can get away with it, students will inevitably cheat on exams.
5. People should be independent, take care of themselves, and not rely on the charity of others.
6. People who commit crimes should be punished with severity to match the severity of their crimes.

Now rate how much you agree with statements 7–12 by assigning a number for each. The scale is as follows:

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
4	3	2	1

7. I like to see and do new things because it makes life more interesting.
8. Trying some new way to get things done often results in a better, more effective approach.
9. People are generally good at heart.
10. It's often the bad things that happen to people that make them "go wrong."
11. With a little help and support, people who are less privileged than the rest can usually pull themselves together and do pretty well.
12. It's better to try to rehabilitate people who commit crimes than to throw them in jail.

Now add up your total score for all 12 items and divide by 12. A score of 1 means that you probably are quite conservative, a 2 that you're somewhat conservative, a 3 that you're somewhat liberal, and a 4 that you're quite liberal.

This exercise in no way defines your political orientation or labels you as a conservative or liberal for life. Its intent is to give you some food for thought about your own values.

Social work values tend to be more liberal than conservative, as is demonstrated by the NASW *Code of Ethics* and NASW's usual support of Democratic political candidates, who traditionally are more liberal than Republicans.

However, people's values and belief systems often are much more complex than that. For example, you may be conservative in that you don't want to pay a high percentage of taxes for social welfare programs. But you may also be liberal in that you believe in a woman's right to choice when it comes to having an abortion. Or you might feel just the opposite.

Social workers must continuously examine their personal values, on the one hand, and respect the values of their clients, on the other. They must constantly strive not to impose personal values on clients. It's a difficult but interesting task.

EP 1b

(addressing the unique problems of people living in rural areas), police social work (emphasizing work in police, courthouse, and jail settings with crime victims, alleged offenders, and their families), and forensic social work (dealing with the law, educating lawyers, and serving as expert witnesses) (Barker, 2014).

Social workers require information about people who need help in each area. They also must be knowledgeable about the services available to meet needs and the major issues related to each area. A social worker may be called on to work with a problem that clearly falls within one field of practice or a problem that involves several fields.

For example, the Wullbinkle family comes to a social worker's attention when a neighbor reports that Rocky, their 5-year-old son, is frequently seen with odd-looking bruises on his arms and legs. The neighbor suspects child abuse. Upon investigation, the social worker finds that the parents are indeed abusive. They often grab the child violently by a limb and throw him against the wall. This problem initially falls under the umbrella of family and children's services.

However, the social worker also finds a number of other problems operating within the family. The mother, Natasia, is seriously depressed and frequently suicidal, so she needs mental health services. And the father, Boris, is struggling with a drinking problem that is beginning to affect his performance at work. A program is available at his place of employment, where an occupational social worker helps employees deal with such problems. Thus occupational social work may also be involved. In addition, the maternal grandmother, Emma, is living with the Wullbinkle family. Emma's physical health is failing. Although her daughter dreads the idea of nursing home placement, the issue must be addressed. Emma, who is also overweight, finds it increasingly difficult to move around by herself. She is demanding more and more physical help and support from Natasia. Natasia, who has back problems, is finding it increasingly burdensome to help her mother. Finally, Vernite, Boris and Natasia's 12-year-old daughter, is falling behind in school, and truancy is becoming a problem. This last issue falls under the school's umbrella.

Most of the problems that social workers face are complex. They may involve a variety of practice fields all at one time. To understand clients' needs, social workers must know something about a wide range of problems and services.

The Continuum of Social Work Careers LO 7

There are various ways to look at advancement through a social work career. Some workers progress through a series of levels, while others remain at an earlier point of entry. Degrees in social work include the baccalaureate, master's, and doctorate.

Baccalaureate Social Workers (BSWs)

Baccalaureate social workers (BSWs) complete an accredited course of study, with required content described later in the chapter, to prepare for entry-level social work. They are also required to complete at least 400 hours of field experience supervised by a social work practitioner. Job settings involve many fields of practice and include child welfare agencies (e.g., those involving protective services, foster care, or adoption), residential treatment centers (e.g., serving adolescents with behavioral or emotional problems), services for people with various disabilities (including intellectual [mental retardation]), settings serving older adults, correctional institutions, public welfare agencies, schools, health centers and hospitals, substance abuse treatment centers, shelters for the homeless, shelters for domestic violence survivors, and family planning organizations.

At the preprofessional or paraprofessional level involving people who assist social workers in their practice are social service technicians and social service aides (Hopps & Lowe, 2008). **Social service technicians** typically hold an associate's degree (e.g., in human services) or a baccalaureate degree in a non–social work discipline and serve as a paraprofessional (a person trained to assist the social worker under the social worker's supervision in designated tasks such as conducting basic interviews, making referrals, and completing paperwork). **Social service aides** are people with a high school degree, often with relevant life experience or strong connections to the community, who perform clerical and scheduling tasks. Aides may or may not have an associate's degree.

Master's Social Workers (MSWs)

Master's social workers (MSWs) receive more specialized training built on the same foundation as the BSW curriculum and integrated with field internships. Most master's programs require two years of study. However, many give *advanced standing* to BSWs (as opposed to people entering the program with non–social work undergraduate majors) where up to one year of study is waived because they've already completed the foundation curriculum.

Both BSWs and MSWs can find employment in a wide range of settings. However, there are some differences in the types of jobs for which each is qualified. MSWs are considered more specialized than BSWs. The implication is that MSWs are competent to address more difficult problems than BSWs and have the potential to assume greater responsibility. In reality, this distinction is not always so clear-cut. Performance expectations and job availability vary significantly depending on the area of the country and state.

The realm of psychotherapy is generally limited to MSWs instead of BSWs. **Psychotherapy**, sometimes referred to simply as **therapy**, is a skilled treatment process whereby a therapist works with an individual, couple, family, or group to address a

mental disorder or alleviate other problems the clients) may be having in the social environment. Another difference between MSWs and BSWs is that higher-level supervisory and administrative positions in any field of practice often require an MSW or other master's-level degree. Such positions usually offer higher salaries. MSWs generally earn significantly more than BSWs, although years of experience enhance salaries for both groups.

Licensure or certification of some level of social work practice exists in all 50 states. Chapter 5 discusses this more thoroughly. Chapter 5 also discusses social work salaries and employment prospects at the BSW and MSW levels.

Doctorates in Social Work

A small percentage of social workers hold doctorate degrees, either a Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy) or DSW (Doctor of Social Work). Either degree qualifies the holder to teach at the college level or conduct research. (Note that some social workers without a doctorate but with an MSW get jobs teaching at community colleges, in universities as part-time instructors, or, sometimes, in non–tenure-track faculty positions.) Some Ph.D.s or DSWs assume administrative positions or enter private practice in psychotherapy. These degrees involve advanced and specialized study, a focus on research, and completion of a dissertation.

This section has reviewed the continuum of social work careers according to the college and university degrees attained. Focus on Critical Thinking 1.3 suggests how you might start thinking about the career that's right for you in whatever field you choose.

Social Work Builds on Many Disciplines LO 8

The foundation of professional social work is a body of knowledge, skills, and values. Knowledge originates not only from social workers but also from a range of disciplines that focus on understanding people's needs and behavior. These include psychology, sociology, political science, economics, biology, psychiatry, counseling, and cultural anthropology. Figure 1.1 illustrates how social work knowledge builds on both other disciplines and its own firm and growing body of research. It summarizes the primary focus and core concepts involved in each discipline. Social workers use knowledge drawn from each field, in conjunction with social work skills and values, to help individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities solve problems and improve their quality of life.

Social Work Is Unique

We have established that social work builds on the knowledge base of other professions in addition to its own. Other fields perform some of the same functions as social work. For instance, mental health clinicians in psychology, psychiatry, and counseling use interviewing skills, and some also use a planned-change approach. Figure 1.2 illustrates how social work overlaps, to some extent, with other helping professions. All, for example, have a common core of interviewing and counseling skills.

However, social work involves much more than simply sitting down with an individual, group, or family and solving some problem. (This is not to imply that this is all other helping professions do. Their own unique thrusts and emphases are beyond the scope of what can be included here.) Social work has at least five major dimensions that make it unique.

EP 6, 7, 8, 9

Focus on Any Problem

First, social workers may focus on any problems or clusters of problems that are complex and difficult. Social workers don't refuse to work with clients or refer them elsewhere because those clients have unappealing characteristics. For instance, there may be a family in which sexual abuse is occurring, and that abuse must be stopped. Likewise, there may be a community in which the juvenile crime rate is skyrocketing, and something must be done.

Not every problem can be solved, but some can be—or at least alleviated. Social work practitioners are equipped with a repertoire of skills to help them identify and examine problems. They then make choices about where their efforts can be best directed.

Targeting the Environment for Change

The second dimension that makes social work unique is that it often targets the environment

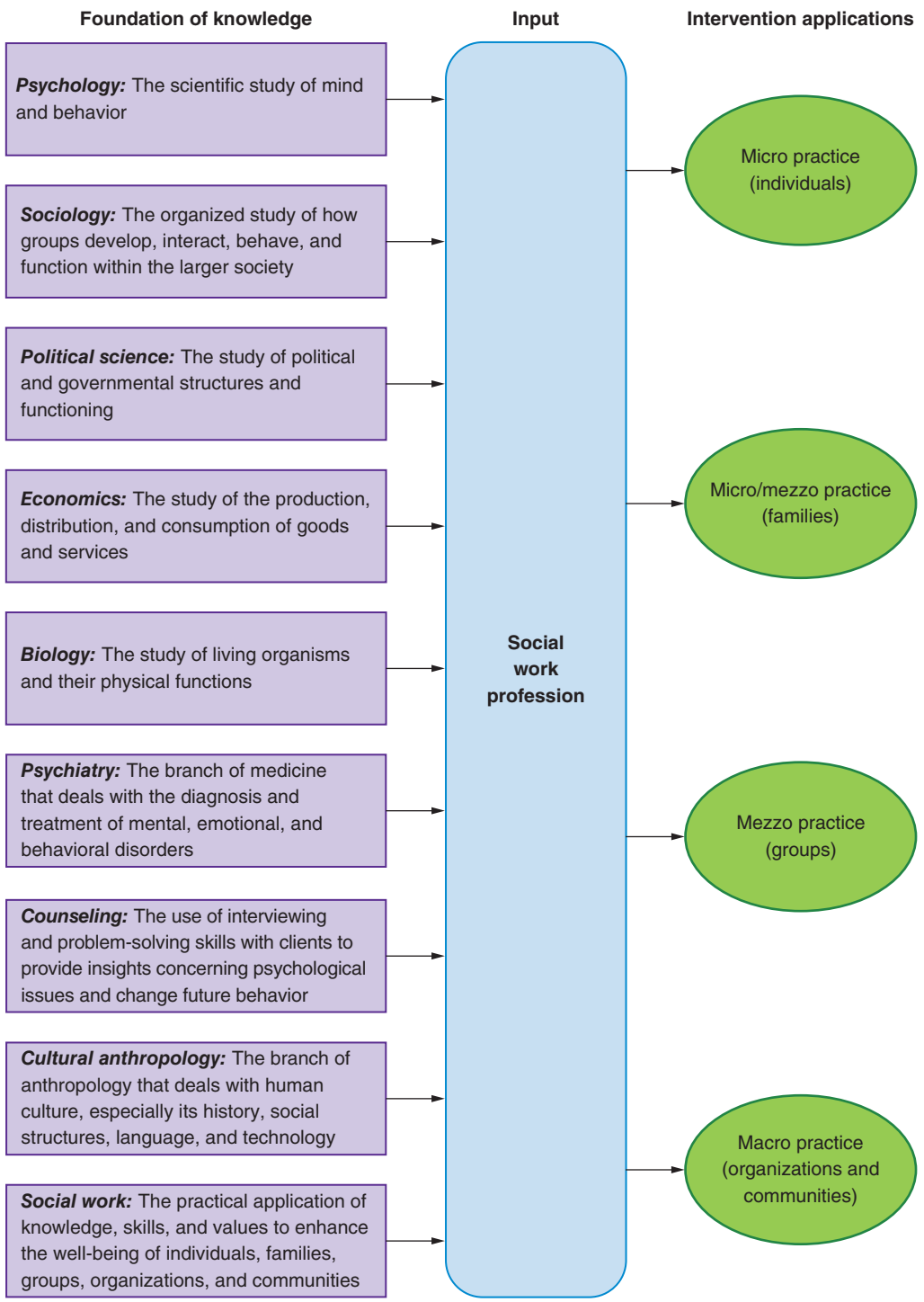

FIG-1-1 The Social Work Knowledge Base

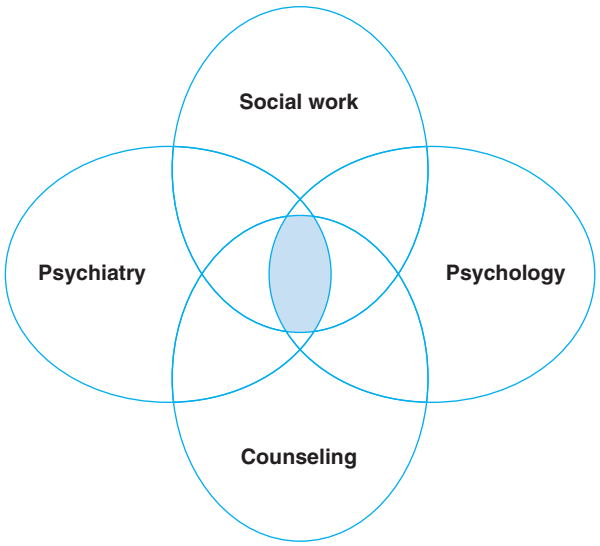

FIG-1-2 Social Work and Other Helping Professions

encompassing clients, and not the clients themselves, for change. Sometimes services are unavailable or difficult to obtain, policies are unfair, or people are oppressed by other people. Administrators and people in power don't always have the motivation or insight to initiate needed change. Social workers must look at where change is essential outside the individual and work with the environment to effect that change. Highlight 1.3 discusses some of the theoretical concepts underlying social work practice.

EP 3a, 3b, 5a, 7b, 8b

Consider an example of targeting the environment for change involving a midwestern city of about half a million people. Several dozen teenagers in the city had been expelled from various schools. They all had lengthy delinquency records and serious emotional problems. These young people had been attending a private day treatment program that provided them with special education and counseling at the individual, group, and family levels. The day treatment approach allowed them to remain living at home in the community but still receive special treatment. The program had been paid for by public funds, with the county department of social services purchasing treatment services from the private agency. The public schools had no special resources to help these teens. Therefore, purchasing such services from a private agency was more cost-effective for the county than developing its own program from scratch. Suddenly, however, money became scarce, and community leaders decided they could no longer afford a day treatment program. Now these teenagers had nowhere to go.

This problem involved many children and their families, and the social environment was no longer responding to their desperate needs. A social worker addressing this problem might look at it from several perspectives. First, the city's various communities might need to be made acutely aware both of the existence of these teens and of the sudden cuts in funding. The media may need to be contacted as well. Second, the public school system may need to develop its own program to meet these children's and their families' needs. Third, the parents of these children may need to band together and lobby for attention and services. In this case, social workers involved in the agency whose funding had been cut off mobilized immediately. They contacted the parents of their clients and told them about the situation. Outraged, the parents demanded that the community provide education for their children as it did for all the other children. Several parents became outspoken leaders of the group. Assisted by social workers, they filed a class-action suit. The court determined that until the situation had been evaluated, funding for services must continue. Eventually, the public school system (also with the help of social workers) developed its own programs to meet the needs of such teenagers, and the private program was phased out.

Advocacy

The third dimension that makes social work unique is related to targeting the environment: namely, social workers often find it necessary to advocate for their clients. **Advocacy** involves actively intervening to help clients get what they need. Most frequently, this intervention focuses on "the relationship between the client and an unresponsive 'system'" (Epstein, 1981, p. 8). Clients have specified needs, and social agencies, organizations, or communities may not be meeting these needs. These unresponsive systems must be pressured to make changes so needs can be met.

EP 3a, 5c, 8d

FOCUS ON CRITICAL THINKING 1.3

THINKING ABOUT YOUR CAREER

As a student, you may have some career goals clearly in mind. Or you may still be wondering what the best career path is. The following is a discussion of how you might think about determining a career course. You might be a student of traditional age or an older student returning to school. Note that not all career ideas and possibilities are mentioned because they are countless. Although this career consideration process is oriented toward social work, the purpose here is to stimulate your thinking, not to tell you what to do. Each person must decide for herself or himself how to spend time and life.

EP 1b

1. General orientation toward the future (conducting a self-assessment)

What values are important to you? Achieving personal satisfaction? Becoming famous? Earning money? Being respected? Building a family life? Finding security? Having adventures? Leading others? Finding excitement? Developing personal relationships? Having fun? Being loved? Helping others? Getting ahead? Being successful? Being happy? Being popular? Fitting into a work environment? Feeling important? Having free time? Traveling? Having a good reputation?

What work have you done or thought about doing in life?

What dimensions of work appeal to you most? Liking the people you work with? Communicating with others? Working alone? Working with others? Giving attention to detail? Solving problems creatively? Using specific skills? Being successful? Having flexibility? Having structured work expectations? Maintaining predictability? Helping others? Having opportunities to get ahead? Being productive? Making lots of money? Being a leader? Fitting in? Being challenged?

What jobs or careers come to mind? Which, if any, have you given any thought to?

Your answers may be vague or specific at this point, depending on where you are in your decision-making process. You may know more about what jobs you don't want (e.g., fast-food restaurant worker, waitress or waiter, pizza delivery person, factory worker, or cashier) because of prior experience in minimum-wage or close to minimum-wage jobs that you know you don't want to do for the rest of your working life.

Why are you taking the course that requires this book? Is it to fulfill some general education requirement? Is it because you're mildly interested in the topic? Or is it because you think this might be the major for you?

2. People-oriented versus non–people-oriented careers (exploring your options)

What types of things tend to interest you?

Do you enjoy being with others? Or do you prefer being by yourself?

Are you interested in human relationships, issues such as mental health, health, and women's concerns; and problems such as substance abuse, child maltreatment, and crime?

Do people tend to come to you to talk about their problems? Do you enjoy "helping" people?

If you say yes to these questions, then you might consider occupations that deal with people and continue the career consideration process addressed here. Non–people-oriented career courses might include those such as engineering, accounting, biology, chemistry, or computer science. Of course, it's not that you don't have to work with people in those jobs. Relating to and communicating with others in the work environment is always important. However, in non–people-oriented careers, the focus and goal are accomplishing specific tasks using specific skills, not interpersonal interaction and problem solving.

3. Ways of working with people

In what capacities do you think you'd like to work with people? Are you more interested in physical, business, legal, educational, spiritual, or psychosocial aspects?

Examples of hands-on work with people include being a medical doctor, nursing, **occupational therapy** (OT) (treatment that uses creative activity to improve psychological or physical rehabilitation), and **physical therapy** (PT) "the treatment of disease, injury, or deformity by physical methods such as massage, heat treatment, and exercise rather than by drugs or surgery" (Lindberg, 2007, p. 1034). These fields also have varying requirements in science, so you probably should have some interest in this area.

Many business careers also focus on developing relationships, but, of course, with the ultimate goal of

(continued)

FOCUS ON CRITICAL THINKING 1.3 *(continued)*

making a monetary profit instead of helping people improve their life conditions. To what extent is your ultimate goal to earn large amounts of money instead of having impacts on the human condition? This is a significant issue. One family comes to mind in which almost all members have various types of business degrees. They can't understand why I might be interested in how to address human problems such as child maltreatment, sexual assault, or mental illness. They cringe when I talk about watching movies about such issues. They think of these issues as someone else's problem and focus their energies on their own families, finances, and lives. Social work would not be their preferred field. Each of us must follow our own calling.

Law or teaching provides other career options. Law, of course, requires a serious interest in the legal process and more years of study beyond the bachelor's degree. In my school we see many students deciding between social work and teaching. They must determine whether they're more interested in helping children learn information and skills, or in working with clients and their families to help them deal with psychological, behavioral, and economic issues. Students more interested in pursuing a spiritual career such as rabbi, priest, or minister might seek education preparing them for such religious callings. One person comes to mind who, after receiving his master's degree in meteorology, decided that he really wanted to be a minister and attained a degree in divinity four years later.

If you're primarily interested in psychosocial aspects of human functioning and improving the human condition, continue reading the next section.

4. Selection of a major

To what extent do you understand the differences among fields addressing psychosocial issues such as social work, psychology, sociology, psychiatry, criminal justice, or counseling? How can you determine which field is for you?

If you decide you want to work with people concerning psychosocial issues, it's best to talk with advisers in the various majors available to you at your school. Think about what aspects of a major appeal to you most. Find out what kind of jobs its graduates tend to get. Explore what courses make up the curriculum, and determine the extent to which the major will give you the values, knowledge, and skills necessary for you to "hit the ground running" when you get your first job after graduating. Does it prepare you with skills such as interviewing, running groups and meetings, and working within organizations? Does the major provide a significant field internship to help prepare you for work with clients? To what extent does each major you're considering match your values, interests, and goals?

Understanding the primary focus of various majors can be confusing. Just a few alternatives will be mentioned here. Generally speaking, **psychology** emphasizes the study of behavior and cognitive processing (Barker, 2003). Work is often associated with treatment of mental disorders or testing people for intelligence or aptitude. A master's or Ph.D. degree is required to provide psychotherapy. **Sociology** is the study of human society, how various groups interact with each other, and how social institutions structure the social environment in which we live. **Social work** uses a significant amount of the knowledge produced both by sociology and psychology, and applies it to helping situations. Figure 1.1 illustrates the broad range of foundation knowledge contributing to social work practice. **Psychiatry** is the branch of medicine that specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders. Psychiatrists must have advanced training beyond a medical degree and assume responsibility for diagnosing mental illness and prescribing psychotropic drugs. **Criminal justice** is the configuration of programs, policies, and agencies dealing with crime, incarceration, legal processes, and the rehabilitation of criminal offenders. Social workers can assume a wide range of positions in the criminal justice system. **Counseling** is a field overlapping various other fields, including social work, which focuses on problem solving and providing help to individuals, families, or groups. Often it involves additional education and expertise such as that in marriage and family therapy. Many social workers in clinical practice also are licensed marriage and family therapists. Generally, counseling focuses on providing some kind of psychotherapy, whereas social work also emphasizes the importance of the social environment concerning human behavior and advocacy to improve people's quality of life.

An issue related to choice of major involves the extent to which you're interested in attending graduate school. Some career paths require graduate education. Graduate school raises more questions. To what extent do you think you'll be tired of school by the time you graduate? So many seniors tell me they can't wait "to get out" and "work to make money" instead of doing schoolwork and spending money on tuition. To what

(continued)

FOCUS ON CRITICAL THINKING 1.3 *(continued)*

extent is graduate school financially feasible? Do you have access to funding or loans? To what extent are you already financially burdened? What, if any, is your motivation to attend graduate school? Is your grade point average sufficient to be accepted?

If you decide to consider social work as a major or have already declared this major, the next section addresses some choices within the realm of social work.

5. Considering or choosing a social work major

Because social workers practice in so many different settings and work with so many kinds of people, it can be daunting trying to decide what field of practice is right for you. Such a struggle makes sense when you still know little about all the types of social work settings available. How can you make an informed choice without adequate information? Many students, even as they complete their major, have difficulty deciding what they prefer even as they enter a supervised field practicum within an agency setting. Usually, however, by that time students have narrowed their preferences considerably. It takes time to think things through as you acquire more information about the field and gain broader experiences.

The following list should at least give you an idea of the social work career options available. At this point, what interests you the most? What settings are most attractive to you? What client populations, problems, and issues concern you most? What are your reactions to considering work in the following settings, which are just a sampling of those available?

- Mental health settings such as inpatient hospitals, where people experience and seek treatment for various mental health problems.
- Health settings such as hospitals, where people need help understanding complex information and getting the appropriate resources.
- Settings aimed at enhancing the welfare of children, including protective services, adoption, foster care, school social work, and treatment for behavioral and emotional difficulties in outpatient, group home, or residential facilities.
- Settings for older adults, such as health-care facilities where older adults who require physical and medical support live, or supportive services aimed at keeping people in their own homes as long as possible.
- Agencies providing services to people with physical disabilities, including linking them to appropriate services and advocating for services when necessary.
- Correctional settings for adults or juvenile delinquents, such as prisons where social workers help inmates by providing counseling and assisting in inmates' adjustment to the correctional environment or preparation for release, and probation or parole offices where they monitor the behavior of people released into the community.
- Domestic violence hotlines and programs addressing the needs of women who have been physically and emotionally abused.
- Counseling programs for alcohol and other substance abuse.
- Services for people with intellectual disabilities, such as those aimed at linking them to needed services, supervising noninstitutional living settings such as group homes, helping them gain employment, and advocating for resources that are unavailable.
- Crisis hotlines, where a wide range of crises, including threats of suicide or violence toward others, mental health and substance abuse, issues, or physical abuse are addressed and referrals to appropriate services made.
- Family planning agencies that help people make choices about contraception.
- Homeless shelters that provide temporary shelter, counseling, and training for people on the street.

Another facet of thinking about your career involves the types of responsibilities characterizing a work setting and the skills needed to practice effectively in it. What are your thoughts about undertaking the following?

- counseling
- running groups
- working with families
- linking people with needed resources
- coordinating service provision for people receiving multiple services through case management
- supervising staff or administering agencies
- supervising volunteers
- undertaking community organization
- running meetings
- writing grants
- developing policy
- promoting
- lobbying

There are lots of things to consider. Choosing a career is not easy.

HIGHLIGHT 1.3 THEORETICAL WAYS OF VIEWING SOCIAL WORK: A FOCUS ON SYSTEMS IN THE ENVIRONMENT

LO 9

Theoretical approaches provide ways of organizing information and looking at the world. For example, the **medical model** is a theoretical approach characterized by four major features (Barker, 2014). First, the focus of attention is the individual, who is seen as having something wrong, such as an illness. Therefore, treatment focuses on curing or helping the individual. Second, little attention is paid to factors outside the individual in his or her environment. The individual, not the environment, is the target of change. Third, the problem or illness is identified or diagnosed and categorized by placing a label on it. Fourth, the individual is the target of treatment that usually involves a series of clinical treatments.

EP 1, 7a, 8a

In contrast, a common theoretical approach to social work focuses on the interactions between individuals and various systems in the environment. The focus on the individual and the environment is important because the latter is where social workers direct their efforts at change.

This system- and environment-oriented approach, called **ecosystems theory**, is particularly relevant to social work (Beckett & Johnson, 1995; McNutt, 2008). It combines some of the major concepts from two different theoretical perspectives: the ecological approach and systems theories.

Important Concepts in Systems Theories

Systems theories focus on the dynamics among and interactions of people in their environment. A **system** is a set of elements that are orderly and interrelated to make a functional whole. Social work refers primarily to social systems composed of people (as opposed to, say, an industrial manufacturing system or an ant colony system). An individual, a family, a social services agency, and a neighborhood are all examples of systems.

Social workers work with and on the behalf of various sized systems. A **micro system** is an individual, and a **mezzo system** a group. Families, because of their intimate nature, arbitrarily lie somewhere between micro and mezzo systems. A **macro system** includes organizations and communities. Working with micro systems is considered **micro practice**, with mezzo systems **mezzo practice**, and with macro systems **macro practice**. This terminology is important because it's used throughout social work and this book.

Target Systems and Client Systems

It's helpful to conceptualize social workers and clients in terms of systems. A **target system** or **target of change** is the system that social workers need "to change or influence in order to accomplish [their] goals" (Pincus & Minahan, 1973, p. 58). Targets of change may be individual clients, families, formal groups, administrators, or policymakers. At the micro level, a 5-year-old child with behavioral problems might be the target of change, the goal being to improve behavior. At the mezzo level, a support group of people with eating disorders might be the target of change in an attempt to control their eating behavior.[2] Finally, at the macro level, an agency director might be the target of change when the social worker's aim is to improve some agency policy and the director is the primary decision maker capable of implementing that change.

Another system critical to the planned-change process is the **client system**—any individual, family, group, organization, or community that will ultimately benefit from social work intervention (Pincus & Minahan, 1973; Resnick, 1980a; Resnick, 1980b). For example, individual clients are client systems when the social worker's goal is to get them needed resources. Families are client systems when the practitioner is working on behalf of the entire family. Similarly, a community is the client system when a social worker is trying to help residents open a new community center to improve their quality of life.

Important Ecological Concepts

Two important concepts taken from the ecological approach are the social environment and coping. The **social environment** includes the conditions, circumstances, and interactions that encompass human beings. Individuals must have effective interactions with their environment to survive and thrive. The social environment involves the type of home a person lives in, the type of work a person does, the amount of money that is available, and the laws and social rules people live by. The social environment also includes the individuals, groups, organizations, and systems with which a person comes into contact, such as family, friends, work groups, and governments.

Coping is the struggle to adjust to environmental conditions and overcome problems. This is significant because social workers often help people cope with problems in their environments.

[2]Eating disorders, extremely serious disturbances in eating patterns, are considered mental disorders by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) (APA, 2013). Examples include anorexia and bulimia.

Professional Values

The fourth dimension that makes social work unique is its emphasis on and adherence to a core of professional values. The NASW *Code of Ethics* focuses on the right of the individual to make free choices and have a quality life (NASW, 2008). Social workers do not force people into specific ways of thinking or acting. Rather, they help people make their own decisions about how to think or act.

EP 1, 1a

Partnership with Clients

The fifth dimension making social work unique is related to the core of social work values and how important it is for clients to make their own decisions. Social workers do not track people into specific ways of thinking or acting. Rather, they practice in a **partnership** with clients, making and implementing plans together. Most other professions emphasize the authority and expertise of the professional, on the one hand, and the subordinate status of the client as recipient of services, on the other.

EP 7c, 8e

Accredited Social Work Programs

LO 10

One way of understanding social work is to review the content and expectations evident in the curricula of accredited social work programs. The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) is the organization that accredits social work programs throughout the United States. **Accreditation** is the official designation by an authorized body (in this case, CSWE) that an educational program meets specified standards. This is usually required in becoming licensed as a social worker (described more thoroughly in Chapter 5).

EP 1

To begin with, CSWE's Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) emphasize that social work programs must reflect certain values throughout their curricula. The EPAS states that social work's purpose "is to promote human and community well-being"; this purpose "is actualized through its quest for social and economic justice, the prevention of conditions that limit human rights, the elimination of poverty, and the enhancement of the quality of life for all persons, locally and globally" (CSWE, 2015, p. 1). The EPAS also specifies the nine areas in which graduates of social work programs must display competency. These are discussed in the following section. Subsequently, the core social work concepts of generalist practice, advanced practice, and field education will be introduced.

Social Workers Demonstrate Competencies

Competencies are measurable behaviors that reflect social workers' acquisition of required knowledge, skills, and values so that they can demonstrate effective social work practice. Highlight 1.4 summarizes the nine required competencies for accredited social

HIGHLIGHT 1.4 SOCIAL WORKERS DEMONSTRATE COMPETENCIES

CSWE (2015) requires that social work graduates demonstrate competency in the following nine major areas.

Educational Policy Competencies

Social workers must:

1. Demonstrate ethical and professional behavior.
2. Engage diversity and difference in practice.
3. Advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice.
4. Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research.
5. Engage in policy practice.
6. Engage with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
7. Assess individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
8. Intervene with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.
9. Evaluate practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. (pp. 3–9)

work programs. The subsequent sections summarize each competency. Highlight 1.5 at the end of the chapter cites parts of the EPAS directly.

Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior

Social workers should abide by the profession's ethical standards, use critical thinking skills in their practice, understand the profession's history and mission, comprehend the roles of other professions, and appreciate the significance of lifelong learning. They should identify personal values and not allow such values to interfere with professional practice. Practitioners should display a "professional demeanor" in behavior, appearance, and communication. They should be knowledgeable about developing technology and use it appropriately. Finally, they should seek help from supervisors and consultants when needed.

Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice

Diversity refers to the wide variety of differences characterizing people. People meriting special attention from the social work profession include, but are not limited to, groups distinguished by "age, class, color, culture, disability and ability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, marital status, political ideology, race, religion/spirituality, sex, sexual orientation, and tribal sovereign status" (CSWE, 2015, p. 4). Any time a person can be identified as belonging to a group that differs in some respect from the majority of others in society, that person is subject to the effects of human diversity.

Because social workers have a wide variety of clients, demonstrating almost every type of need and problem, they must be integrally familiar with the concept of human diversity. Three facets are especially significant. First, social workers must appreciate how diversity and various events mold life experiences at the personal, family, social, economic, and political levels. Second, practitioners should actively learn from their clients, who are most knowledgeable about their own lives. Third, social workers should strive to identify any personal preconceptions about people in a diverse group and regulate the influence of such values on their practice. Chapter 3 examines various aspects of human diversity in more depth.

Competency 3: Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice

The concepts of human rights in addition to social, economic, and environmental justice are related to the concept of human diversity. **Human rights** involve the premise that all people, regardless of race, culture, or national origin, are entitled to basic rights and treatment. **Social justice** is the idea that in a perfect world all citizens would have identical "rights, protection, opportunities, obligations, and social benefits" (Barker, 2014, p. 398). Similarly, **economic justice** involves the distribution of resources in a fair and equitable manner. **Environmental justice** is "the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies" (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency [EPA], 2015). In other words, everyone should be equally protected from exposure to risks in the environment that may endanger their health. Social work graduates must demonstrate competency in understanding these concepts and their theoretical frameworks; social workers must advocate on the behalf of these principles and incorporate the principles into their practice (CSWE, 2015, p. 5).

Another important concept in social work is **populations at risk**, groups of people with some identified characteristics who are at greater risk of social and economic deprivation than those in the mainstream. Because social work practice involves getting people resources and helping them solve problems, social workers frequently work with populations at risk of such deprivations. It follows that social workers need information and insight concerning these people's special issues and needs. Therefore, social workers require both theoretical and practice content concerning the dynamics and results of differential, unfair treatment.

One especially important social work value is **empowerment**—the "process of increasing personal, interpersonal, or political power so that individuals can take action to improve their life situations" (Gutierrez, 2001, p. 210). Some groups of people suffer from stereotypes, discrimination, and oppression.

It is social work's task to empower clients in general and members of oppressed groups in particular.

Competency 4: Engage in Practice-Informed Research and Research-Informed Practice

Social work students should be able to engage in **practice-informed research**. This means they should understand research techniques and be able to apply them in their own practice. When possible, they should participate in research where the goal is to enhance effective practice. This research, which closely involves the everyday work of practitioners, focuses on collecting data and providing results directly related to the processes of social work practice (Tripodi & Lalayants, 2008, p. 518).

Research techniques include quantitative and qualitative techniques. "*Quantitative research methods* emphasize the production of precise and generalizable statistical findings" (Rubin & Babbie, 2014, p. 79). They include "experiments, survey research, and investigations that make use of numerical comparisons" (Barker, 2014, p. 350). "*Qualitative research methods* are more likely to tap the deeper meanings of particular human experiences and generate theoretically richer observations that are not easily reduced to numbers" (Rubin & Babbie, 2014, p. 79). Frequently used qualitative methods include "direct observation" and "intensive interviewing" (Rubin & Babbie, 2014, p. 669). One example of qualitative research is a field study where researchers go out into the field and conduct interviews to gather information or make other observations; another example is a "study and description of the behavior patterns of specific cultures or groups of people" (Barker, 2014, p. 147).

Social work programs have traditionally included a "Social Work Research" course or sequence of courses in their curricula that includes content on quantitative and qualitative research methods. Such a research course also includes content on evaluating a social worker's own practice. Note that throughout their careers, social workers should continue to monitor and learn new research methodology and approaches to effective practice. They should continuously evaluate their own ability to achieve their goals and initiate positive changes for clients.

Social work students must also demonstrate competency in **research-informed practice**. This means social workers should use the approaches and interventions in their practice that research has determined are effective. Social workers should employ critical thinking in using "research evidence to inform and improve practice, policy, and service delivery" (CSWE, 2015, p. 5).

Knowledge of social work research is important for two basic reasons. First, it can help social workers become more effective in their direct practice by choosing interventions that have been proven successful, thereby getting better and clearer results. Framing social work interventions so they can be evaluated through research provides information about which specific techniques work best with which problems. Evaluation of practice throughout the intervention process can help determine whether a worker is really helping a client.

Second, accumulated research helps build a foundation for planning effective interventions. Knowledge of what has worked best in the past provides guidelines for approaches and techniques to be used in the present and in the future. Research establishes the basis for the development of programs and policies that affect many people. Such knowledge can also be used to generate new theories and ideas to further enhance the effectiveness of social work practice.

Evidence-Based Practice Another term frequently used in social work, which has a meaning similar to research-informed practice, is **evidence-based practice**. This is "the conscientious, explicit, and judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions about the care of clients" (Gambrill, 2000, p. 46; Gambrill & Gibbs, 2009; Race, 2008; Rubin & Babbie, 2014). Gambrill (2000) explains:

> *It involves integrating individual practice expertise with the best available external evidence from systematic research as well as considering the values and expectations of clients. External research findings related to problems are drawn on if they are available and they apply to a particular client. Involving clients as informed participants in a collaborative helping relationship is a hallmark of evidence-based practice. Clients are fully informed about the risks and benefits of recommended services as well as alternatives (including the alternative of doing nothing) … The term evidence-based practice is preferable to the term empirical practice. The latter term now seems to be applied to material that has been published, whether or not*

it is evidence-based. Such use represents an appeal to authority (not evidence). (pp. 46–47)

Content of Social Work Research The content of social work research tends to fall within four major categories (Reid, 1995; Tripodi & Lalayants, 2008). First, many studies involve the behavior of individual clients and their interactions with others close to them, including families and small groups. Second, much research focuses on how services are provided to clients, what such services involve, and how successfully they accomplish their goals. Third, some studies address social workers' attitudes and educational backgrounds, in addition to major trends in the profession. Fourth, some research involves the study of larger systems such as organizations or communities, in addition to the social policies that affect them (Reid, 1995). This latter category emphasizes the importance of the more extensive social environment and its effects on clients' behavior and conditions.

Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice

Social workers must understand social welfare policies, their history, and how they affect work with clients. Policy, in its simplest form, can be thought of as **rules**. Our lives and those of social workers' clients are governed by rules—about how we drive our cars, when we go to school, how we talk or write sentences, and so on. (Note that Chapter 6 explores the history of social welfare policy development.)


EP 5

Policies, in essence, are rules that tell us which actions among a multitude of actions we may take and which we may not. Policies guide our work and our decisions. For the purpose of understanding social welfare and the provision of social welfare services, policy might be divided into two major categories: social welfare policy and agency policy. **Social welfare policies** are the laws and regulations that govern which social welfare programs exist, what categories of clients are served, and who qualifies for a given program. They also set standards regarding the type of services to be provided and the qualifications of the service provider.

In addition to the broader realm of social welfare policies, **agency policies** are standards adopted by individual organizations and programs that provide services (e.g., a family service agency, a department of human services, or a nursing home). Such standards may specify the agency's structure, the qualifications of supervisors and workers, the rules governing what workers can do, and the proper procedures for completing a family assessment.

Knowledge of policy and critical thinking about its effectiveness are vital for social workers. An organization's policy can dictate how much vacation an employee can have and how raises are earned. An adoption agency's policy can determine who is eligible to adopt a child. A social program's policies determine who gets needed services and resources.


EP 5c

Social workers must become actively involved in establishing and changing social welfare policies for the benefit of their clients; policies determine how money is budgeted and spent, and where resources are made available for clients. Practitioners must be competent in undertaking policy practice to enhance people's well-being and deliver effective social work services. **Policy practice** involves "efforts to change policies in legislative, agency, and community settings, whether by establishing new policies, improving existing ones, or defeating the policy initiatives of other people" (Jansson, 2014, p. 1).

Sometimes, for whatever reason, social welfare policies are unfair or oppressive to clients. Ironically, although such policies are intended to enhance people's welfare, sometimes they do not. A social worker may decide that a policy is ethically or morally intolerable and advocate on the behalf of clients to try to change it. Practitioners can work to change policy to advance social and economic justice and provide fair treatment to a wide range of people. Traditional social work curricula typically include a course or sequence of courses on "Social Welfare Policy and Services."

Social welfare policy sets the stage for what social workers can do in practice; Chapter 7 explores the topic more thoroughly. Other chapters discuss many types of social welfare policies that affect various client populations and social work practices.

Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Social work students must demonstrate that they have the knowledge and skills to work with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Earlier we defined an individual as a micro system, a group as a mezzo system, a family as a