

INVITATION *to* SOCIAL WORK



K A R E N S . H A Y N E S
K A R E N A . H O L M E S

I N V I T A T I O N
to
S O C I A L W O R K

K A R E N S . H A Y N E S

K A R E N A . H O L M E S

University of Houston

With contributions by Holly Van Scoy

Invitation to Social Work

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*The ability to think straight, some knowledge of the past,
some vision of the future, some skill to do useful service,
some urge to fit that service into the well-being of the community—
these are the most vital things education must try to produce.*

Virginia Gildersleeve, *Many a Good Crusade*

Gildersleeve (1877–1965) dean of Barnard College from 1911 to 1947, was an advocate for women's education and the only female delegate to the UN founding conference.

PREFACE

Social work educators write textbooks for any number of reasons: professional commitment and idealism, pragmatism born of frustration at not finding the “ideal” text, ego, the lure of recognition, and perhaps even a royalty check. Perhaps not surprisingly, we have at various times been motivated to varying degrees by all of these reasons.

In our divergent professional careers, we each found that what we believed to be significant educational and philosophical perspectives were noticeably missing from introductory or foundation social work texts. We also found that many texts were not organized as we would like, nor were many what we—or our students—considered “reader friendly.” As a result, we became interested in this project because we believed we could add some of those missing perspectives, provide content not always included elsewhere, and write in an engaging fashion.

We have both been social work educators in undergraduate and graduate programs for more than two decades. We are both committed strongly to the importance of a generalist perspective as a foundation for social work practice and our own training, teaching, and professional interests support this. However, we diverge with respect to methodologies as one of us (Holmes) tends toward the micro view and the other (Haynes) tends toward the macro view. More importantly, we share a commitment to a particular “world view,” which includes three specific perspectives that have influence beyond our work in this book.

Our Approach

We have three overarching perspectives that are relevant to the reader in understanding our approach in this text:

- our support for the generalist perspective on social work practice;
- our belief in advocacy as a central mission that underlies all of what we do as social workers; and
- our commitment to a personally integrated feminist world view.

The Generalist Perspective

We have used the generalist perspective on social work practice as a guide to the organization and content of this text. We believe that a focus on the commonalities of practice, and a focus on the transferability of social work knowledge, values, and skills is central to a foundation text like this one. We also believe strongly that these common and transferable elements are at the very core of the durability and strength of our profession. A generalist perspective prepares students to become professionals within and across fields of practice during the course of a career. A solid generalist foundation can transcend traditional social work settings by providing an infinite variety of professional choices over time. We do not necessarily accept the notion that the differences between and among practice settings—outpatient mental health clinics, nursing homes, public schools, hospitals, children’s or adult protective services, probation departments, employee assistance programs—require separate bodies of knowledge, values, or skills for effective practice. In fact, we would argue that the focus on separate fields of practice represents a somewhat artificial distinction. Our approach, not surprisingly, is to focus on the commonalities across and among diverse practice settings.

Advocacy

We see advocacy as essential to the central mission of all social work, and as connected to and integrated with the generalist perspective. We have framed advocacy as a necessary role for all social workers because we must advocate on behalf of our clients, on behalf of our profession, and on our own behalf. We have attempted to demonstrate how advocacy has been a mainstay of our profession through its early development to the present. We have also tried to highlight the unique and particular contributions that women have made to the evolution and development of social work practice and education. As we address professional issues, we have attempted to highlight the importance of advocacy on our own behalf as members of a profession that is still (regrettably) misunderstood. Equally important, we have addressed advocacy as a necessary skill for all practitioners on behalf of their clients. Advocacy has been and continues to be a part of what we each do in our professional roles as educators and administrators.

A Feminist World View

Currently, no major social work texts (with the exception of those designed for “women’s issues” courses) include a conscious and consistent feminist perspective. Certainly there are texts that address the concerns of women, and texts that include data about women, but neither necessarily suggests the inclusion of a feminist perspective. As we look toward the twenty-first century, we believe that a feminist perspective is needed to inform, to frame, and to enlighten not only social work practice, but public policy as well. In the political arena, 1992 was hailed as the “Year of the Woman,” with an unprecedented number of women running for public office. Patricia Aburdene and John Naisbitt’s new book, *Megatrends for Women*, hit the bookstores with its predictions of women having increasingly important and visible leadership roles in all walks of life.

These represent important accomplishments for women, but they do not reflect all the potential inherent in the feminist world view that we have integrated throughout this text. Our feminist perspective is not only about or for the benefit of women. Rather, the view that we hold is inclusive and encompasses potential benefits for all persons. Inequality—whether based on gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, or any other difference—carries a price for both the “have nots” and for the “haves.” We see no gain in social arrangements that serve to separate rather than to connect people. The feminist perspective we use in this text has guided each of us professionally and personally. At times, this has not been without a cost, both professionally and personally. Nonetheless, we have been, and continue to be, enlightened and empowered by a feminist world view, and by the contributions of women to our profession. In turn, we hope that we can share that with others.

Special Features of the Text

We realize that there is no perfect way to organize any text for the many faculty who will be using it. Everyone has a slightly different way of structuring a course, and many of you probably try to organize your courses to fit the needs and interests of your particular students. Those of us who have taught introductory or foundation courses, for example, realize that the Elizabethan Poor Laws, historically important though they may be, can put students into a

comatose state. We also realize that we may be addressing a new generation of students who may have different learning styles from those of earlier students.

Recognizing this, we have created an ongoing cast of students who first appear in detail in Chapter 1, but who stay with us throughout the text. These students, although hypothetical, are representative of some of the individuals who enroll in introductory courses and who go on to become professional social workers. We have also created several former students whose career paths over a 10-year period are detailed in order to give your current students an understanding of the potential that social work may hold for them. By using these casts of characters, we have attempted to bring the content to life and to inform students about the profession, its history and development, and the practice of social work. We also hope that this approach will help to engage your students more actively in their own learning process.

Diversity

Many social work texts include separate chapters on selected groups, or “special populations.” Our approach is different. We remain unconvinced that treating African Americans, or the aged, or gays and lesbians as special groups will enhance our understanding of those groups. We believe that, no matter how much information is provided about differences, that information will not be “heard” unless we understand that differences—diversity—can be a positive force in our society and in our own lives. Therefore, instead of offering discrete chapters on client groups, we provide an approach to diversity in Chapter 5. And because we believe that the client population of social workers represents a series of individuals and families, each representing many “special” characteristics, we integrate information on social work with a multiracial, multiethnic, multipreferenced population throughout this text.

Organization of the Text

This text is divided into four units comprised of 14 chapters. Unit One includes three chapters that serve as a contextual overview. The first chapter is devoted to presenting our perspective and to meeting

our cast of current and former students. We have also provided selected definitions of social work that serve as reference points throughout the text. Chapters 2 and 3 focus on the historical development of social welfare and social work as the basis on which the profession and practice of social work has evolved. In these two chapters we have included time lines that provide easy reference to significant dates and events in social welfare.

Unit Two includes four chapters that frame the social work perspective and differentiate the social work profession from other helping professions. Chapter 4 addresses several ways in which the practice of social work is often organized, then presents a matrix model that we believe more effectively captures the infinite variety of practice opportunities in social work. Unlike most texts that provide separate chapters on selected fields of practice, or on specific social problems, we have discussed social work practice as integrated opportunities that evolve from our generalist perspective. Chapter 5 also represents an approach that is different from other texts in addressing so-called special populations. We believe that an inclusive perspective, founded on a philosophical base of appreciating and valuing difference, is essential for preparing students for practice in a world increasingly characterized by diversity. Chapter 6 builds on our approach to diversity, and presents the profession's values and ethics in some detail. Case material is included to highlight selected real-life practice issues, and we follow our cast of students as they attempt to work through their own questions and issues. Finally, Chapter 7 presents a delineation of the social work knowledge base, including a brief explanation of social work curricula that is intended to help students understand the structure and content of their own educational experiences.

Unit Three focuses on social work practice. Chapter 8 includes an overview of systems theory and the "person-in-environment" perspective that informs and guides our practice. Chapter 9 provides a brief discussion of BSW and MSW roles, presents selected generalist practice skills in some detail, and includes a section devoted to selected practice roles for BSWs. Chapter 10 briefly examines advanced micro and macro practice skills, including the influence of gender. As in Unit Two, we follow our students and former students through a variety of case illustrations and dialogues intended to highlight relevant points from each chapter.

Unit Four is devoted to professionalization. Chapter 11 traces the evolution of social work practice and education, and highlights

the role of women in the profession. We have also included a time line to provide quick reference to significant dates and events in the profession's development. Chapter 12 helps students to identify and understand practitioner concerns, organizational issues, professional priorities, and public concerns that face us now and that are likely to exist for some time to come. In Chapter 13 we address the issue of professional identification, a topic that we have found to be of considerable interest (and concern) among social work students. However, in addition to identifying concerns, we also offer a number of specific strategies designed to enhance professional identification. Finally, Chapter 14 is devoted to a look at the future of social work. Through the medium of a futuristic guest lecture, we get a glimpse of what social work practice might look like in the years ahead, including a look at shifting demographic trends, at evolving technological changes, and at women in leadership.

Supplementary Materials

We realize that text selection is not necessarily based on the availability of an instructor's manual or other supplementary teaching aids. Nonetheless, we have developed the accompanying instructor's manual in the hope that it will be a helpful tool for both new and seasoned educators. Our experience in teaching and talking with students over the years has led us to develop *this* particular text, which represents *our* view of essential content and organization. The instructor's manual has similarly been developed, keeping in mind students' responses to particular kinds of content and to the delivery of that content.

We cannot guarantee that every exercise or discussion question will result in remarkable skill development or in lively debate. Social work education involves too many complex variables that influence both the content and the process of student learning to provide that kind of assurance. We can say that each exercise and discussion question has been used successfully by one or both of us over time, and that we have found them to be helpful adjuncts to student learning. The same is true for the test questions that are included for each chapter. Because many of us would prefer to spend less of our time developing tests, some or all of these items may be of help to you.

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No one can ever acknowledge all the persons who in one way or another have contributed to or influenced a creative work. Nonetheless, our thanks to all the students who have passed through our academic lives and through our courses (willingly or otherwise), and in so doing have pushed us to expand our thinking, demanded relevance of learning, and shared their histories and views with us, without whom we would neither have cared to write this book, nor known how. And, in case you're wondering, the students, practitioners, and clients you see throughout the text are, in fact, hypothetical. If they seem "real" to you, then we have done our creative work well.

To our colleagues in the Graduate School of Social Work at the University of Houston: Your comments and critiques (solicited and otherwise), your vision of our profession as a noble one, your patience during our "writing day" absences, and your support and assurance affirmed the need for this work. Ann McFarland typed and retyped numerous manuscript drafts, searched out lost references, and generally maintained a remarkable sense of humor under duress.

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I N V I T A T I O N

to

S O C I A L W O R K

UNIT ONE



CONTENTS

Preface	xiii
Acknowledgments	xix

UNIT ONE

An Overview and History of Social Welfare 1

1. <i>Introduction and Overview</i>	3
The Purpose	3
The Process	4
<i>Op-ed: Social Work Month Good Time to Praise Those Who Serve Others (Haynes)</i>	6
Our Perspective	17
Holistic, Nondichotomous Thinking	21
Analysis of Power	22
Relationship	23
Renaming and Reclaiming	24
The Personal as Political	25
Defining Social Work	26
Summary	27
NOTES	28
REFERENCES	28
2. <i>Early Social Welfare History</i>	31
Introduction	31
<i>Op-ed: "Wedfare"—or Welfare? (Abramovitz, Davis)</i>	32
Women's Roles	35
The Concept of Charity	37
The English Poor Laws	38
Social Welfare in the United States	46
Some Disclaimers	46
The U.S. Colonial Period: 1601–1776	47
Nationalization: 1776–1860	48
National Expansion: 1860–1900	54
The Progressive Era: 1900–1929	65
<i>Op-ed: We Say So Much, Do So Little to Help Children (Mickelson)</i>	68

Summary	69
REFERENCES	70

3. *Contemporary Social Welfare* 73

Introduction	73
The Social Security Act of 1935	74
Social Reforms of the New Deal	75
Postwar Welfare Reform: The 1940s and 1950s	82
The Great Society: The 1960s	83
The War on Poverty	86
The Era of Accountability: The 1970s	89
The New Federalism: The 1980s	95
<i>Op-ed: Washington's Shell Game with Social Security (Gross)</i>	98
Reinstituting the Charity Model	101
The 1990s and Beyond	103
<i>Op-ed: What's Good for Private-Sector Goose Not for Nonprofit Gander? (Haynes)</i>	104
Summary	107
REFERENCES	108

UNIT TWO

Social Work Practice: Opportunities and Populations 111

4. *Social Work Practice Opportunities* 113

Introduction	113
Social Work Practice	114
Approaches to Conceptualizing Opportunities	115
Field of Practice Model	116
Target Population Model	118
Social Problems Model	118
Methods/Skills Model	120
The Synthesis of Practice Opportunities	121
<i>CASE: Cara</i>	123
Social Work Practice Opportunities: The Life Span Model	125
Prenatal	125
Infancy and Early Childhood	127
School-Age Children	128
Adolescence	128

Young Adulthood	130
Middle Age	131
<i>CASE: Tran Nyen</i>	132
Older Adults	134
Social Work Careers	134
<i>CASE: Brenda</i>	135
Summary	136

5. *Diversity* 139

Introduction	139
Why Do We Need to Discuss Diversity Anyway?	139
<i>CASE: Barbara and John Goodtree</i>	141
<i>CASE: Carlos and Veneese</i>	141
<i>CASE: Luz</i>	142
A Few Definitions	144
Race	144
Ethnicity	145
Minority-Subordinate Status	145
Cultural Diversity and Minority Status	148
Sexual Orientation and Minority Status	152
<i>Op-ed: Paying the Cost for Keeping Silent (Palomo)</i>	154
The New Demographics of Diversity in the United States	156
Diversity and Political Correctness	159
How Does Diversity Affect What You Will Do in Practice?	162
<i>CASE: Carol</i>	162
Summary	165
REFERENCES	166

6. *Values and Ethics* 169

Introduction	169
Professional Purpose	169
Values	170
<i>Op-ed: Still Awaiting Independence Day (McPhail)</i>	172
Social Work Values	174
Inherent Worth and Dignity of All Persons	177
Self-Determination	179
<i>CASE: Kathy</i>	181
<i>CASE: Jason</i>	183
Confidentiality	185