



An Authentic Breakthrough for
Teaching the Practice Course!

MCGRAW-HILL DONATION NOT FOR RESALE
10ASAD7

Contemporary Social Work Practice

MARTY DEWEES

Contemporary Social Work Practice

Marty Dewees

University of Vermont



Boston Burr Ridge, IL Dubuque, IA Madison, WI New York San Francisco St. Louis
Bangkok Bogotá Caracas Kuala Lumpur Lisbon London Madrid Mexico City
Milan Montreal New Delhi Santiago Seoul Singapore Sydney Taipei Toronto

The McGraw-Hill Companies



Published by McGraw-Hill, a business unit of The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 1221 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020. Copyright © 2006 by The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means, or stored in a database or retrieval system, without the prior written consent of The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., including, but not limited to, any network or other electronic storage or transmission, or broadcast for distance learning.

Some ancillaries, including electronic and print components, may not be available to customers outside the United States.

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 DOC/DOC 0 9 8 7 6 5

ISBN 0-07-284598-8

Editor in Chief: *Emily Barrosse*
Publisher: *Beth Ann Mejia*
Special Projects Editor: *Rebecca Smith*
Developmental Editor: *Robert Weiss*
Editorial Coordinator: *Ann Helgerson*
Media Producer: *Sean Crowley*
Media Project Manager: *Alex Rohrs*
Production Editor: *Leslie LaDow*
Production Supervisor: *Jason Huls*
Design Manager: *Kim Menning*

Interior Designer: *Glenda King*
Cover Designer: *Marianna Kinigakis*
Art Editors: *Katherine McNab & Ayelet Arbel*
Photo Research: *Natalia Peschiera*
Composition: *9.5/13 Stone Serif by*
Interactive Composition Corporation
Printing: *50# Windsor Offset Smooth by*
R.R. Donnelley-Crawfordsville

Cover image: © Photodisc

Produced in association with NASW Press, a division of the National Association of Social Workers.



Credits: The credits section for this book begins on page C-1 and is considered an extension of the copyright page.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Deweese, Marty.

Contemporary social work practice / Marty Deweese.
p.cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-07-284598-8 (alk. paper)

1. Social service. 2. Social service—United States. I. Title.

HV40.D534 2005

361.3'2—dc22

2004061007

The Internet addresses listed in the text were accurate at the time of publication. The inclusion of a Web site does not indicate an endorsement by the authors or McGraw-Hill, and McGraw-Hill does not guarantee the accuracy of the information presented at these sites.

www.mhhe.com

Contemporary Social Work Practice



For Caroline, Will, Ricky, Delilah, and so many others
in the hopes that with more practice, we'll get it right.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

MARTY DEWEES came to social work via the field of counseling. After receiving a master's degree in counseling in 1974, she moved on to social work and obtained another master's degree in 1985 from Adelphi University's Vermont-based program. She became a staff social worker at Vermont State Hospital in 1985 and stayed until 1988 when she became a clinical supervisor for Spectrum, Inc., a youth agency in Burlington, VT. Beginning her doctoral studies at SUNY Albany in 1990, she returned to the State Hospital to be Chief of Social Work Services for the following five years. When she completed her PhD she joined the University of Vermont faculty in the Department of Social Work, where she is now serving as an Associate Professor. Her interests remain closely related to mental health, disability practice, global human rights, and contemporary theory. At UVM she teaches generalist practice, mental health, assessment, and interdisciplinary practice. Her current research focuses on the interface of the mental health system and the domestic violence system as it relates to women in domestic violence programs.

She lives in North Ferrisburgh, Vermont, with her husband, dog, and cat, and frequently entertains her four children, their spouses, partners, and her four grandchildren.

P R E F A C E

The major purpose of this book is to help translate the guiding theoretical perspectives of social justice, human rights, the strengths perspective, and critical social construction into purposeful social work practice with real people in real social contexts.

This book is about social work practice. At this point in your social work education, you probably feel quite inclined to get on with it! As an undergraduate or first-year graduate student, you want to get your feet wet. If you have already had social work practice experience, you want to get back to it and apply what you have been learning. You may already have been equipped with a solid foundation and have integrated the worlds of research, policy, and human behavior into your ideas about what social work is and what it can be. Or you may just be entering the adventure. This book is intended, then, for you as a new or returning student-worker. It will help you look at the components of your work and think about how you want to develop as a skilled practitioner.

The book begins by describing the underlying theoretical perspectives that guide the practice approach presented here. These perspectives include social justice, human rights, the strengths perspective, and critical social construction. Some or all of these may already be a part of your view of social work practice. Critical social construction may be the least familiar, and it will be addressed frequently throughout. All of these positions influence social work practice and imply the use of empowering skills, which will be discussed in detail.

You may also notice that the book is influenced by broader postmodern considerations. You will learn what that means to the contemporary practitioner, and this will equip you with some of the basic language so that postmodern approaches in the broader social work literature will be accessible to you. Specifically, the postmodern influence here will be on questioning taken-for-granted privileged positions (see Dewees, 2002); the analysis of power in varying relationships (professional and otherwise); and the recognition of “subjugated knowledge” (Hartman, 1994). *Subjugated knowledge* refers to the local, experiential knowledge of reality that is often lost in the dominant assumptions made in U.S. culture.

My goal in writing this book is to assist students in locating and working in that intersection between skills and theoretical perspectives in a way that supports the profession’s values (and explores them) while recognizing the lived experience of the people served by social workers. To that end, I start with what the worker brings to the relationship in the way of assumptions, values, and

commitments. Next I guide you through an exploration of what the work looks like in one-to-one practice and how it is then translated and extended into the system levels of groups, families, communities, and organizations.

HOW THIS BOOK IS ORGANIZED

This book is divided into 12 chapters. The first chapter is an introduction to the world of social work practice, some of the frameworks that have been used to understand practice, and the theoretical perspectives and ideas that shape this book in particular.

Chapter 2 addresses the questions of what the purpose of social work is and what social workers hope to accomplish. This discussion identifies tensions that exist in social work as a profession. Some of these are as old as the profession, and some are emerging as the world changes daily. Issues regarding the worker's own biases, contemporary notions of noticing what we notice, and recognizing the lenses through which we view the world resurface and are considered in this context.

Chapter 3 is devoted to a discussion of social work values and ethics as they occur in practice. Ethical concerns and issues will be infused throughout the entire book as well, particularly in practice situations, but this chapter goes deeper into various organizational position statements, the law, conflicts, dilemmas, and expected standards.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 use the traditional practice organization of engaging, assessing, and intervening, always keeping in mind the importance of a flexible interpretation of these phases. Evaluating, the final phase, is discussed at the end of the book (Chapter 12), but alluded to periodically as part of the ongoing effort. Fluidity is stressed, and each phase will suggest contemporary approaches. Chapter 4 addresses engaging in the relationship, Chapter 5, in deepening the dialogue that constitutes collaborative assessment of the person-situation-interaction dynamic; and Chapter 6 describes the intervening process. The processes described in these chapters are applied to one-on-one work, or individual clients, and will be extended, with appropriate variations, into other levels of client groupings.

Chapters 7 through 10 extend the generalist ideas and skills of individual practice and add some new ones for working in systems with more than one person. Here there will be an emphasis on consolidation of the common ground for social work practice across service levels, as well as an identification of the dimensions that are particular to each constellation.

Chapter 7 focuses on types of small groups, group work, the indications for a group, the planning process, and the traditional phase models, as well as some examples of traditional and more contemporary groups.

Chapter 8 addresses family work and its systemic background in social work practice. Different types of families are considered, and mapping tools will be extended from their introduction in Chapter 5 to the broader constellations of family and culture. Some controversies related to families are also raised for exploration. The importance of exploring your own family is emphasized here as well.

Chapter 9 discusses organizational practice, culture, missions, and types. It looks at the social agency and considers and contrasts public, private, and social movement emphases. It also considers organizational structures and institutions that serve as hosts for social work, with their accompanying challenges. It introduces interagency alliances, partnerships, and other networks.

Chapter 10 discusses the ideas and forms of community and some of the dynamics of, and skills required for, moving into a global community. It focuses on the functions of local communities on a ~~variety of levels~~ and extends its concern to global interdependence and international social work, as it emphasizes our efforts to become both local and global citizens.

Chapter 11 raises the issues of troubling contexts, including those of abject oppression, involuntary clients, managed care, and situations in which the worker encounters the “unconscionable event,” which may involve such an egregious act against human rights that the worker experiences a traumatic response. These span service levels to relate to individuals, smaller, and larger groups. The chapter will identify the opportunities as well as the challenges inherent in these contexts. The ideas of sustaining ethical practice and avoiding burnout are considered here as well.

Chapter 12 completes the practice sequence with coverage of ending and evaluating the work. It addresses closing the work, managing the dynamics of both expected and unexpected endings, sharing perspectives, and a few formal mechanisms for evaluation. It also focuses on the need for continuing evaluation throughout the process of work with a client. It ends with a call to critique the work by looking at who benefited and whether power arrangements are altered or not. Finally, it addresses the limitations and strengths of evaluation.

Within each chapter, you will find multiple examples, vignettes, and exercises to help you make sense of the material and experiment with how it fits for you. You will also find, most likely, that there are as many questions raised as answered about the world of practice. This should help to prepare you for a career’s length of remaining open to the questions emerging from your work and your clients’ experiences. This in turn can help you tolerate—and hopefully thrive in—a place in which you don’t know all the answers.

Each chapter contains a section called “Straight Talk.” These are intended to help you synthesize (or, perhaps, come to grips with) the major ideas in the chapter with the demands for, and requirements of, real practice in the real world of the social organization or agency. In some respects they help to bridge

the transition between a thoughtful postmodern practice and some of the traditional expectations of the current professional culture. Each chapter also makes mention in the margins of readings available to you on *The Social Work Library*, the password protected Web site that accompanies this text. These readings apply, extend, and enrich the key concepts of each chapter and may be assigned to you by your instructor.

Finally, each chapter ends with three exercise sections, “Practicing Social Work,” “The Social Work Library,” and “Other Exercises.” The first will encourage you to apply what you are learning to simulated “real” situations that are presented on the CD-ROM included with your book. The other two sets of exercises make use of the wealth of additional material available to you on the Web site that accompanies this book. These will give you a flavor of integrating the perspectives as well as the skills that are discussed in the book. Through reflection and class discussion, you will begin to shape your own distinctive social work practice.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book is an attempt to document a vision. The vision is represented in the efforts of the University of Vermont's Department of Social Work to bring alive our commitments to a set of beliefs about people and the structures we as social workers use to understand them. Our explicit focus on social and economic justice, the strengths perspective, human rights, and critical social construction provides the backdrop for this book and its approach to social work practice in the real, global community of contemporary life. In recognition of the ongoing challenge to breathe life into these ideas, I want to thank our faculty, students, and staff, who have entered into a vibrant, ongoing dialogue, and occasional struggle, over the last ten years. I thank Julie Richards, our BSW Program Coordinator for lending her creativity to the Instructor's Manual. I especially want to thank Susan Roche, who as my colleague and comrade in teaching practice, has contributed (mostly unknowingly) to my understanding and implementation of every important idea in this text. While I recognize the presence of others on every page, this rendition is my own along with whatever flaws in interpretation may abide.

This book has developed as part of a series; the long distance experience of working with and consulting three of the other authors, Marla Berg-Weger, Rosemary Chapin, and Anissa Rogers, has been invaluable in spite of the limitations of e-mail and the only occasional face-to-face gatherings. The commitment of these authors to our common social work values, strengths, and community has been important and sustaining. In addition, I want to thank people at McGraw-Hill, especially Steve Rutter, who has elsewhere been identified as an exceedingly smart and patient person, and who certainly has lived up to that wonderful, reputed combination. Becky Smith, special projects editor, Ann Helgersen, editorial assistant, and Leslie LaDow, production editor, have also delivered positive cheer in a heartening and always helpful way. Bob Weiss, developmental editor, skillfully transformed my tangled sentences into English that can actually be understood. Finally, Alice Lieberman, coordinator of the series, has been undauntingly enthusiastic and affirmative about this work. She also provides me a huge uplift in spirits with every meeting. Her ability to maintain a principled and even perspective, along with her proclivity for a good laugh and a good dinner, has been one of the best antidotes to academic fatigue I've encountered.

The book's numerous and varied reviewers have provided several intriguing and useful views of how social work practice, as a course in the curriculum of social work education, can be made real, alive, and compelling for both BSW and MSW students. This particular aspect of the writing process has affirmed for me once again that many minds are better than one and that as human beings we continuously grow only in the company of others. Ultimately, our growth is aimed to benefit the people who come to us as clients, and more basically, as human beings.

Don Dewees and our faithful dog, Jas, along with our ill-tempered cat, Moses, have put up with many delayed dinners, many pleas for "just a few more minutes" at the computer, and a lot of semi-coherent mumblings revealing half-formed ideas, responses, and "aha" moments. I remain grateful for their continued tolerance and support.

B R I E F C O N T E N T S

CHAPTER 1	<i>Understanding Social Work Practice</i>	1
CHAPTER 2	<i>Exploring the Practice Purpose</i>	29
CHAPTER 3	<i>Applying Values and Ethics to Practice</i>	56
CHAPTER 4	<i>Engaging in Relationship: Making the Connection</i>	86
CHAPTER 5	<i>Assessing and Planning: Deepening the Dialogue</i>	115
CHAPTER 6	<i>Intervening in Context: Initiating the Plan</i>	144
CHAPTER 7	<i>Social Work with Groups: Tapping the Power of Connection</i>	171
CHAPTER 8	<i>Exploring the Family Story</i>	200
CHAPTER 9	<i>Working in and with the Organization</i>	231
CHAPTER 10	<i>Working in and with the Community</i>	262
CHAPTER 11	<i>Negotiating Troubling Contexts</i>	293
CHAPTER 12	<i>Ending the Work, Consolidating the Gains, and Evaluating Practice</i>	323
	References	R-1
	Credits	C-1
	Glossary/Index	I-1

C O N T E N T S

CHAPTER 1	<i>Understanding Social Work Practice</i>	1
	What Social Work Practice Entails	2
	<i>Social Work as Role</i>	3
	<i>Social Work as Purposeful Conversation, or Discourse</i>	3
	Traditional Ways to Think about Social Work Practice	4
	<i>Knowledge, Values, and Skills</i>	4
	Knowledge	4
	Values	5
	Skills	6
	<i>Types of Client Groupings</i>	7
	<i>Process Loops</i>	8
	Engagement	8
	Assessment and Planning	9
	Intervention	10
	Evaluation	10
	Disengagement	11
	<i>Further Ideas about Traditional Structures for Understanding Social Work</i>	11
	Theoretical Perspectives for Social Work Practice	12
	<i>Origins of Social Work Theory</i>	13
	<i>The Role of Theoretical Perspectives in Social Work Practice</i>	14
	<i>Social Justice Perspective</i>	14
	Social Justice and the National Association of Social Workers	14
	The Challenge of Working for Social Justice	15

<i>Human Rights Perspective</i>	16
The Origins of Human Rights	16
The Universal Declaration of Human Rights	17
Contemporary Views of Human Rights	17
Human Rights in the United States and U.S. Social Work	18
<i>The Strengths Perspective</i>	18
Principles of the Strengths Perspective	20
Challenges of the Strengths Perspective	20
<i>Postmodernism and Critical Social Construction</i>	20
Social Construction	21
Deconstruction	21
Critical Social Construction	23
<i>Complementary Aspects of the Theoretical Perspectives</i>	24
Straight Talk about the Translation of Perspectives into Practice	25
Conclusion	25
Main Points	26
Exercises: Practicing Social Work	27
Exercises: The Social Work Library	28
Other Exercises	28

CHAPTER 2	<i>Exploring the Practice Purpose</i>	29
	Historical Approaches: Broad and Narrow Views	30
	<i>System-Defined Roles, Methods, and End Points</i>	30
	<i>Social Location</i>	31
	Tensions in Social Work Practice	32
	<i>Social Control and Social Change</i>	32
	The Worker's Location	33
	The Profession's Ethics	34
	<i>Acceptance and Change</i>	35
	Adjustment and Challenge	35
	The Crossed Line	36
	<i>Clinical and Nonclinical Emphases</i>	37
	Developmental Socialization and Resocialization	38
	Integrating Approaches	39

<i>Experts and Shared Power</i>	42
The Metaphor of Professional Expertise	42
Quiet Voices Made Audible	43
Minimization of Distance	43
<i>Global Citizenship and the Local Community</i>	44
The United States as Everywhere	46
The Legacy and the Challenge	47
Noticing Our Noticing	47
<i>Noticing Our Practice</i>	48
<i>Noticing Multiple Realities</i>	49
Straight Talk about Questioning Your Own Biases	49
<i>Biases at Home</i>	50
<i>Biases of Culture</i>	50
Conclusion	51
Main Points	51
Exercises: Practicing Social Work	52
Exercises: The Social Work Library	53
Other Exercises	54
 CHAPTER 3	
<i>Applying Values and Ethics to Practice</i>	56
A Brief History of Social Work Ethics	57
Professional Codes of Ethics	57
<i>NASW Code of Ethics</i>	58
<i>IFSW Ethical Statement</i>	59
<i>Further Thoughts about Ethical Codes</i>	60
The Role of Context	60
Risk Taking and Creativity	62
Diversity	64
Ethics and the Law	66
<i>Parallels between Ethics and the Law</i>	66
<i>Conflicts between Ethics and the Law</i>	67

Duty to Report: Child Protection	67
Duty to Protect: Threats of Violence	68
<i>Collaboration between Ethics and the Law</i>	70
Dilemmas and Critical Processes	70
<i>The Distinction between Conflicts and Dilemmas</i>	71
<i>The Ethical Principles Screen</i>	71
<i>Models for Resolution of Dilemmas</i>	73
<i>Representative Examples of Practice Dilemmas</i>	73
Dual Relationships	74
Responsibility to the Larger Society and Client Well-Being	76
Paternalism and Client Self-Determination	77
Straight Talk about Expectations and Standards in a Litigious World	79
<i>Thoughtful Practice in a Postmodern World</i>	79
<i>Risk Management in a Litigious World</i>	80
Conclusion	81
Main Points	82
Exercises: Practicing Social Work	82
Exercises: The Social Work Library	83
Other Exercises	83
 CHAPTER 4	
<i>Engaging in Relationship: Making the Connection</i>	86
Hearing the Story	87
<i>Opening Skills and Approaches</i>	88
Looking with Planned Emptiness	88
Looking at the Old as If New	88
Jigsaw Puzzling	88
Looking from Diverse Angles	89
The Four Perception Skills	89
<i>Specific Skills for the Dialogue</i>	90
Intent vs. Impact	90
Discovery-Oriented Questions	91
Direct, Closed Questions	93
<i>Engagement Skills in Combination: Radical Listening</i>	94