GENERALIST SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

AN EMPOWERING APPROACH

Second Edition

Karla Krogsrud Miley • Michael O'Melia • Brenda L. DuBois

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Preface

In the preface to the first edition of *Generalist Social Work Practice* we wrote:

> *The approach to social work practice presented in this text acknowledges our interdependence and celebrates the resources that collaboration creates. It maintains a broad-based view of human functioning and explores processes for activating resources in people and their environments. Moreover, it specifically focuses on the nature of the helping relationship itself as a resource for both workers and clients. Collaboration is the heart of this empowering approach. We believe in the creative synergy of collaborative processes. It's how we wrote this book.*

This passage still applies, though it means something more to us now. We continue to find new ways to collaborate—with our students, our colleagues, social workers in our local community, readers and reviewers of the first edition, and social work professionals contributing to the knowledge base of the profession through articles, books, and presentations. We appreciate all the astute feedback we've received, especially the people who noticed what we did right.

As before, this edition emphasizes an empowerment-based generalist approach to social work practice. To this end we have added over 200 new sources to the reference list concentrating on generalist practice, empowerment, the strengths perspective, and cultural sensitivity. We have increased our use of examples and discussed additional applications at the mid- and macrolevels of practice. We have added a chapter on creating alliances (Chapter 13) to focus on the power of collaborative resources beyond the social worker–client relationship. We have strengthened our discussion of culturally competent practice with a new section (Chapter 3) describing ways to develop worker skills, agency operations, and community character to support cultural competence.

Plan of the Book

This book organizes material into four parts. Part One creates a perspective for empowerment-oriented generalist social work practice. Parts Two, Three, and Four describe and explain empowering processes that generalist social workers apply with clients at the micro-, mid-, and macrolevels of practice.

Part One, "Social Work Practice Perspectives," describes how generalist social workers using an empowerment-based approach can meet the purposes of social work to enhance human functioning and promote social justice.

Chapter 1—Generalist Social Work Practice: overviews the profession of social work including its value base and purpose. This chapter defines generalist social work, describes roles for generalist practitioners, and introduces the empowering approach to generalist practice featured throughout this text.

Chapter 2—The Ecosystems Perspective: considers the importance of theoretical frameworks for practice, describes the ecosystems view and related concepts about human systems, and proposes an ecosystems framework to apply these perspectives in practice.

Chapter 3—Values and Cultural Competence: explores the various filters through which we experience the world including expectations, values, and culture. It describes how practitioners can infuse professional values and cultural competence into their practice.

Chapter 4—Strengths and Empowerment: introduces the strengths perspective, describes the principles of empowerment, and discusses the implications of these orientations for practice.

Chapter 5—An Empowering Approach to Generalist Practice: integrates the perspectives offered in Part One into an empowerment-based generalist practice model and applies it to examples at the micro-, mid-, and macrolevels of practice.

Part Two, "The Dialogue Phase," describes the practice processes related to constructing and maintaining empowering client system–worker relationships, communicating effectively with diverse clients about their situations, and defining a purpose for the work.

Chapter 6—Forming Partnerships: examines the social worker/client system relationship and the qualities necessary for building professional partnerships. Also, this chapter discusses how to relate with clients who are culturally different, oppressed, or reluctant to participate.

Chapter 7—Articulating Challenges: discusses fundamental skills in communication. It emphasizes how social workers respond to clients in ways that clarify their challenges and leave them in charge of the direction of the work.

Chapter 8—Defining Directions: explains how workers reorient clients away from describing what is wrong toward creating a vision of how they would like things to be. It

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also discusses how to increase client motivation, collaborate with clients who resist, and take priority actions in response to crisis situations.

Part Three, "The Discovery Phase," presents solution-oriented processes for identifying client system strengths and environmental resources and using them in planning.

Chapter 9—Identifying Strengths: describes how workers can orient their conversations with clients to uncover strengths and potential solutions. Specifically, this chapter helps workers locate strengths in how clients cope with challenges, in clients' cultural memberships, and in how clients have responded to adversity.

Chapter 10—Analyzing Resource Capabilities: offers processes and tools for social workers and clients at all system levels to explore their resources and the resources of their environments. This chapter also describes how workers and clients analyze this information by applying an ecosystemic view.

Chapter 11—Framing Solutions: describes planning processes in which clients and social workers collaborate to look at situations, determine what is useful, set concrete goals and objectives, and generate possible strategies for change.

Part Four, "The Development Phase," features generalist social work skills for implementing, evaluating, and stabilizing change efforts.

Chapter 12—Activating Resources: describes intervention activities to empower client systems with their own resources and increase their access to the resources of their environments. Workers implement processes to enhance interaction, develop power, change thinking and behavior, manage resources, and educate clients.

Chapter 13—Creating Alliances: explores ways to initiate alliances to support client systems in their change efforts. New relationships formed among clients such as in the examples of empowerment groups, natural support networks, and service delivery alliances all have potential benefits.

Chapter 14—Expanding Opportunities: examines possibilities for resource expansion through social reform, policy development, legislative advocacy, and community change. These activities fulfill the professional mandate to ensure a just distribution of societal resources.

Chapter 15—Recognizing Success: discusses how to monitor the success of the social work effort in order to maintain client motivation, determine effective strategies, and recognize successful outcomes. Specifically, this chapter describes practice evaluation, research, and the use of single-system designs.

Chapter 16—Integrating Gains: focuses on closure processes. Workers use skills to complete contracts with clients, make necessary referrals, stabilize the progress achieved, and resolve the emotional elements of the relationship. Endings with larger client systems receive special attention.

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