FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE AND THE INTEGRATED APPROACH

Part I of this text focuses on the foundations of social work practice and introducing you to the integrated approach. This part of the text is broken into five chapters:

- Chapter 1 explores the historical foundations underpinning social work. It discusses the three pillars of contemporary professional social work practice and introduces key concepts of the integrated approach.

- Chapter 2 describes the value base of professional social work. It discusses the core values of social work practice, ethical principles of practice, and the importance of social diversity and intersectional. It also describes how your own personal and social values may influence your practice.

- Chapter 3 introduces key knowledge areas of social work practice. It discusses the influence of major theories and perspectives that influence social work as well as seven key social work roles you may fulfill in practice. It also outlines key features of evidence-based practice.

- Chapter 4 describes the importance of developing communication and rapport-building skills in social work practice. It discusses key skills for communicating in different situations and other essential skills needed for professional social work practice.

- Chapter 5 describes the importance of ethics in social work and the ways social work's three pillars promote ethical practice. It also describes resources that may help you identify and resolve ethical dilemmas.

Chapters throughout the rest of this text will refer back to the concepts, theories, and frameworks discussed in this part.

1 | AN INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE WITH INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES, AND GROUPS: AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

1.1 Recall the focus of the text and its relationship to microlevel social work practice.

1.2 Describe the mission and evolution of social work, including the four historical roots of social work.

1.3 Discuss the components that comprise the three pillars of contemporary professional social work practice.

1.4 Describe the three concepts of the integrated approach and the benefits of implementing this approach.

1.5 Illustrate how an integrated approach to social work practice might look in the practicum setting.

In Practice: Collette Remembers Her First Social Work Job

I still have vivid memories of my first day as a social worker. It was 1988 and I had just graduated with my Master of Social Work (MSW) following years of hard work. The job search was difficult for me because I was interested in pursuing many different career paths. In the end, I decided to go with a position at a crisis intervention center. It ended up being the perfect job for me because I was able to engage in so many roles and provide several very different services.

My primary role was to provide crisis intervention services on the county's suicide prevention hotline. This was both difficult and rewarding. It was difficult because the service was delivered via telephone, and I often found it hard to process the stories of individuals who called in. That being said, it was excellent training for several reasons. First, it exposed me to a variety of clients with unique stories and needs early in my career. This exposure was very helpful in increasing my understanding of the wide variety of challenges faced by different individuals. Secondly, it helped me develop unique communication skills. Since I did not have the luxury of seeing my client, I remember closing my eyes so I could concentrate better on what my client was saying. I also tried to picture them as a way to make them more present. Finally, it helped me develop skills in crisis intervention, especially suicide assessment and intervention. These skills are invaluable.

In addition to working on the hotline, I provided face-to-face services, such as facilitating support groups and providing short-term crisis counseling to individuals and families. I really enjoyed that part of my day. Although we would only work with clients for a maximum of 12 sessions, I saw how beneficial counseling could be to the clients with whom I worked. The cases and needs were varied as were the interventions used to assist clients.

I also had the chance to serve as an educator by providing community-based prevention and education services. This involved going to schools and giving presentations on depression, stress, and suicide. As part of this role, I was a member of the Interagency School Crisis Team and would provide crisis intervention services to schools after the death of a student or teacher.

It was also during my first job that I began to work with students and volunteers as the organization's volunteer–student coordinator, which is a role I loved. In this role, I not only developed and implemented our volunteer program, but I also provided supervision to social work students who were doing their practicum placement at the agency.

My first job really reflects the spirit of integrated practice. I was a social worker who had been prepared to apply a wide range of knowledge, values, and skills to different client systems (individuals, families, and groups). I was also serving the organization and community while applying what I had learned about the needs of the individuals and families with which I worked. Similarly, I used my knowledge from my work within my organization and community to advocate for large-scale change in the context of practice with the individual and client families. Together, this reflects integrated practice.

Even though I went on to practice in other areas and have been in social work education for over 20 years, I feel this first job influenced me the most. It provided me with an excellent foundation for the work I do now as a social work educator who assists in developing other social work practitioners. I feel so fortunate to be a part of this profession, which provides such dynamic, important, and interesting work.

AN INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE WITH INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES, AND GROUPS

As shown in the In Practice feature, social work practitioners are educated and trained to use a variety of intervention strategies directed toward changing and enhancing how clients at all levels function. Throughout this text, the term *multilevel client systems* will be used to include all social work client levels (individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities). All social work practitioners draw on a foundation of knowledge, values, and skills (KVS) from both the liberal arts and social work curriculum. This foundation of applying KVS to multilevel client systems is referred to as generalist

practice and it is the basis of both baccalaureate and master's programs in social work (Council on Social Work Education [CSWE], 2022).

This text focuses on providing the necessary foundation for developing competent social work practice with three of the client systems: individuals, families, and groups. It is likely that you will take another class in order to focus on practice with organizations and communities. In addition, the text provides a vision of social work practice called an **integrated approach**, which aims to inspire practitioners to see the potential social work has to offer clients. This chapter begins with a review of some key aspects of social work including the definition, mission, historical roots, and pillars of the profession. Then, the chapter provides an overview of the integrated approach which distinguishes the text and reflects the complex nature of the profession.

TIME TO THINK 1.1

Social work practice involves helping different types of clients, called multilevel practice. What are the five client levels typically used to designate them?

THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION: AN OVERVIEW

Social work is defined as "the applied science of helping people achieve an effective level of psychosocial function and affecting societal changes to enhance the well-being of all people" (Barker, 2014, p. 402). This definition reflects what the National Association of Social Workers, or NASW, calls social work's "dual focus" (2021, p.1). **Dual focus** means social workers consider an individual's needs and social functioning, but also address how society and the environment are or can be structured to facilitate the social functioning of many people. This dual focus is key to understanding the uniqueness of the profession as social workers simultaneously attend to both the individual and to society. Isn't it exciting to think about being part of a unique profession that positively contributes to the lives of individuals while also making large scale contributions to society?

TIME TO THINK 1.2

What do you recall about the history of the social work profession most likely taught in your introductory coursework? How might that history relate to practice today? What might society be like without social workers?

Many of the functions professional social workers perform today were historically performed by neighbors or religious institutions. In the 1800s, volunteers called **friendly visitors** set out to assist individuals who were living and working in very difficult conditions, particularly immigrants during the Industrial Revolution. Helping these individual immigrants was the initial focus of the volunteer's efforts, but these volunteers began to recognize that many of the problems faced by the individuals were rooted in societal structures and the role society and the community played in meeting or contributing to their needs. They started challenging the conditions people were living in with the goal of assisting individuals to function better. They also challenged society to be more responsive to the needs of its citizens. Then, around the turn of the century, the social work profession was born when, "friendly visitors, settlement house workers, muckrakers, social activists, and union organizers generated the enthusiasm and energy of this nascent profession, which was largely an informal, fragmented, and volunteer-led initiative to organize and distribute charitable acts, goods, and services" (Mizrahi & Davis, 2011, p. 145). This approach of addressing environmental and societal components contributing to challenges faced by the individual is the hallmark of what makes social work unique (National Association of Social Workers [NASW] 2021, p. 1).

Simultaneously focusing on the person and the environment is challenging. There has been tension throughout the profession's evolution between focusing on service to individuals and challenging society. Morris (2000) provides a historical analysis of the influence professionalization has had on the social work profession and argues that the focus on individuals undercut efforts directed at societal change. Although this tension will likely continue, an advantage of being trained in practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities is developing KVS for intervening at different client levels.

TIME TO THINK 1.3

Which client systems do you picture when you think of social work practice? Do you think the social work profession today equally addresses individuals and society?

The Mission of Social Work

The mission of the social work profession is to "enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people" (NASW, 2021, p. 1). The NASW (2021) emphasizes that social workers must focus on the "needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty" (p. 1). This mission is fulfilled by social work practitioners who engage in professional practice. The social work profession is rich in tradition with a history that is over a hundred years old. The name of the profession itself reflects two key aspects of the profession.

- *Social* emphasizes the importance and focus on people interacting with other people.

- *Work* may have originated to designate that social workers were not simply volunteers, but workers who helped clients to facilitate change.

Today, the social work profession reflects the fact that social work practitioners assist individuals to address their needs, intervene with complex problems, and challenge society to create just systems. Although the profession has much to be excited about and proud of, the profession also has a history of exclusion, discrimination, and participating in upholding systems of social control. It is important to integrate all aspects of the profession's history and practices when preparing to become a social work practitioner. The profession is more than do-gooding, volunteering, and charity. It requires well-educated, trained social workers who are able both to reflect on all aspects of the profession's history and to be inspired to meet the current and future needs of client systems.

The Historical Roots of Social Work Practice

The evolution of this more than 100-year-old profession has grown from four rather different roots (Figure 1.1): the Charity Organization Societies, settlement houses, the psychological revolution, and the human rights movement. Each of these roots have distinct histories that have contributed to the profession of social

FIGURE 1.1 ■ The Four Roots of Social Work
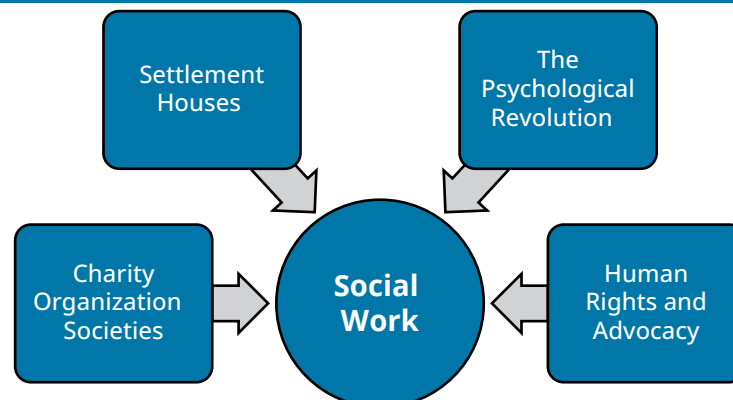
work in unique ways. In this section, key social workers from each root will be profiled to better illustrate how people within these four roots responded to similar needs with their own unique focus.

Each of the four roots were influenced by two main factors:

- the burgeoning disciplines of sociology, psychology, economics, and philosophy,

- the politics of the Progressive Era as well as the country's history of racism.

The Progressive Era, which started around the turn of the century and ended in World War I (1890–1920), was a time in U.S. history when many groups were focused on social reform. Reformers believed that societal structures led to many of the problems faced by women, children, and immigrants in the rapidly industrializing cities (e.g., poverty, violence, greed, racism, class warfare). As such, these problems could best be addressed by public education, public health, child welfare, and eradication of child labor (Mizrahi & Davis, 2011, Vol 4). The progressive movement provided a context in which early social workers challenged the unjust social and economic systems in operation and placed special emphasis key issues, such as safety, employment, sanitation, housing, education, and regulated labor. However, this movement contained two separate systems. The mainstream system fought for the rights of low-income workers and children living in low-income families who were predominately White immigrants. Another, lesser known one, served Black people and other people of color. This separation of service provision along with the emphasis within the profession primarily on White people and white immigrants continued throughout history. Even after major social welfare programs had been established, such Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), people of color often remained marginalized and underserved because standards for inclusion in such programs were discriminatory (Lash, 2017, p. 38).

All four of these roots responded to similar needs in society, but each had its own unique focus and will be discussed in the sections that follow. It is in these roots that both generalist and specialized practice can be found.

The Charity Organization Societies

The major contribution of the Charity Organization Societies (COS) was the "professionalization and bureaucratization of social work by advancing the concept of scientific charity in the late 1800s" (Mizrahi & Davis, 2011, Vol 4, p. 146). The COS utilized volunteers called friendly visitors who primarily targeted individuals and families who were struggling to meet their own needs. Over time, the COS friendly visitors developed a knowledge base and specialized skills through various trainings; these trainings improved over time and culminated in professionalization of the volunteers' work (Larson, 1977). The COS workers focused on **scientific charity**, which refers to delivering services efficiently and effectively (Mizrahi & Davis, 2017, Vol 4). The work of the COS culminated in Mary Richmond's passion to better instruct the friendly visitors to become trained workers. In 1917, Richmond published a book titled *Social Diagnosis,* which is credited as the first social work text to formulate a theory and method for assisting individuals. Although it focused on individuals served by the COS, it is still used today in social work education (Social Welfare History Project, 2011).

Social Diagnosis provides a sound articulation of practice. Many of its key points are still applicable today, particularly its approaches to assessment (Figure 1.2) and intervention. These approaches grew out of the findings friendly visitors discovered in their work. For example, initially the COS was staffed by friendly visitors who used home visits to address so called "character flaws" of clients; however, the volunteers who entered tenement homes could not help but notice that the challenges many individuals experienced were primarily due to conditions of living and not the personal characteristics of the individual. In addition to pioneering these approaches, friendly visitors and their organizations also contributed to consciousness raising regarding these social conditions, which is often forgotten or unmentioned (Agnew, 2004).

Although it is hard to imagine the conditions of life during this time, it was these social and environmental conditions that spurred Jane Addams, a contemporary of Richmond, to help bring the settlement house movement to America.

FIGURE 1.2   ■   A Model of Assessment From *Social Diagnosis*
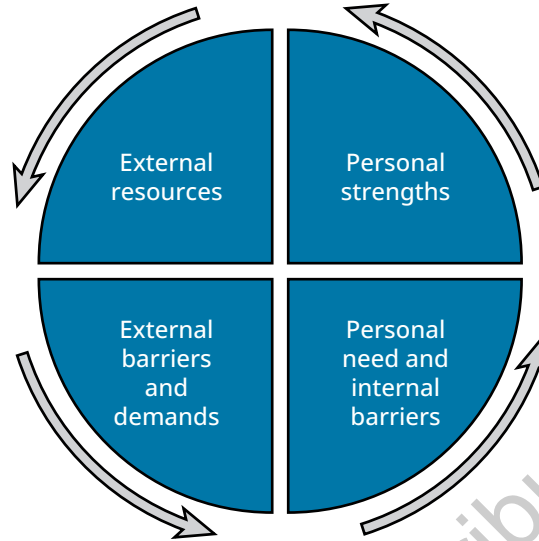
SOCIAL WORKER PROFILE
MARY ELLEN RICHMOND (1861–1928)

Mary Ellen Richmond

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Mary Richmond was born in Illinois in 1861 and was raised by her grandmother who was a women's suffragette. During her upbringing, she was exposed to discussions of unjust living conditions and inequality. These early experiences left their mark. She began working for the Baltimore Charity Organization Society as a treasurer in 1889 and 3 years later became general secretary. In 1899, she published *Friendly Visiting Among the Poor*, which was a compilation of practice suggestions. In 1900, she moved to Philadelphia where she became the general secretary of the Philadelphia Charity Organization Society. During her time there, she focused on both recruiting trained volunteers to serve individuals and advocating for legislation to support women who were left by their husbands. In addition, she founded the Public Charities Association, Pennsylvania Child Labor Committee, juvenile court, and a housing association. These accomplishments clearly demonstrate her understanding of the interaction between the needs of individuals and larger societal systems and institutions. She later worked for the Russel Sage Foundation's Charity Organization department in New York. She was an active teacher, lecturer and writer and is credited with the professionalization of social work (Social Welfare History Project, 2011).

The Settlement House Movement

The settlement house movement originated in London with Toynbee Hall, which is still in operation today. The movement was introduced to the United States in 1886 with the founding of the Neighborhood Guild in New York City (Mizrah & Davis, 2011, Vol 4). Soon after, the two most influential settlement houses were built: Hull House in Chicago, which was started by Addams; and Henry Street Settlement in New York City, founded by Lillian Wald. The movement flourished and by 1910 there were over 400 settlement houses in the United States (Mizrah & Davis, 2011, Vol 4).

Although both the COS and settlement house movements focused on both the individual and society, each movement took different approaches. A significant difference between the settlement house movement

and the COS was the idea of communing or living with the people in need. Addams lived in Hull House, which was located in the neighborhood also served by the organization. Another difference was settlement house workers focusing on challenging unjust societal conditions at the societal level. Individual needs and problems were not thought to be the fault of the individual, but that of the unjust systems and structure of society. Hull House in Chicago offered many services that reflected this philosophy. For instance, when asking those who lived in the neighborhood what they needed, one of the first things they identified was child care. In response, Hull House started a day care and eventually brought kindergarten and Montessori education to the children living nearby. It also provided health care to the community. Today, Hull House is a museum. One of its most influential exhibits is a sounds of life in the 1880s. This particular exhibit allows visitors to hear what those who lived in the neighborhood might have heard as well as read vivid descriptions of the harsh living conditions faced by the residents of this area of Chicago.

An important criticism of the settlement house movement was its focus on urban immigrants, which excluded those living in rural areas, and the exclusion of Black people. For example, there were few services that served low-income, White tenant farmers in the rural south. Although many Black people lived in the same neighborhoods as the settlement houses, they had to develop their own, separate systems which were often not as well resourced (Mizrahi & Davis, 2011). In 1900, Reverdy Ransom, who was a friend of Addams, started the Institutional Church and Social Settlement providing social services to Black people (Berman-Rossi & Miller, 1994). Sadly, many of these settlements closed due to lack of funding; as such, Black people pursued different efforts to help one another and found better ways to fight for change (Berman-Rossi & Miller, 1994).

It should be evident at this point that not only did both the COS and settlement house movements contribute to the social work profession, but also established a foundation for the dual focus of the profession discussed previously.

SOCIAL WORKER PROFILE
IDA B. WELLS-BARNETT (1862–1931)

Ida B. Wells-Barnett

Universal History Archive/Universal Images Group via Getty Images

Ida B. Wells was born in Mississippi in 1862. There are conflicting reports as to whether she was born as an enslaved person or to parents who had been newly freed. Her parents and three of her siblings died of yellow fever when she was 16 years old, so she raised her five younger siblings. In 1885, she married and chose to hyphenate her last name following marriage, which was very unusual at the time. As a teacher in Tennessee, Wells was forced off the train one day after she refused to move to the smoking car. She was asked to move because she was not White. She sued the railroad and wrote about her case in her church paper. This was the start of her work publishing against racial injustice. In 1892, she lived in Mississippi and published pamphlets and columns in local papers of her investigation into white mob violence, especially lynching. Local residents burned down her press and threatened her life, which forced her to move to Chicago. In 1910, she opened the Negro Fellowship League Reading Room and Social Center in Chicago in her own home. This is considered to be an early settlement house that served Black people. She secured a building for the Fellowship League with the salary she earned as a probation officer; soon after, the Fellowship League added a library, job center, and dormitory for Black men fleeing the South. In 1917, Wells-Barnett drew attention to an event called a "riot" in Texas involving an all-Black U.S. Battalion stationed there. Thirteen Black soldiers were court-martialed and hanged. As a result, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) investigated her and stated "she is considered by all of the intelligence officers as one of the most

dangerous Negro agitators" (Duster & Giorgis, 2021, p. 2). She is recognized as a significant activist in the suffrage movement, who fought against racial injustice and exposed the lynching of Black men (Carlton-LaNey, 2001; Duster & Giorgis, 2021; Ida B. Wells and Chicago's Black Settlement House, n.d.; Norwood, 2017).

The Psychological Revolution

The third root of the profession is the psychological revolution spurred by the work of Sigmund Freud. An early program to train psychiatric social workers was created in 1918 at Smith College in Massachusetts. Programs like the Smith Psychiatric Training School laid the foundation for the profession to embrace the ideas of Freud and the growing discipline of psychiatry with a focus on the mind, unconscious drives, and diagnosing psychiatric illness. As an early student, Bertha Reynolds (1963) stated "We social workers were most concerned, as the psychiatrists were, with what went on inside the patient" (Reynolds, 1963, p. 61). It was at this point in the history of the profession that social workers began to focus inward on the psychological realm of the individual and provide therapy as the primary intervention. Reynolds (1963) recounts what her instructor at Smith said when she and her classmates were disappointed when they were assigned to work with the COS and not with a hospital:

> the future of our new discipline held two possibilities: we could think of ourselves as assistants in psychotherapy, working under the direction of psychiatrists much as psychiatric nurses or psychotherapeutic aids do; or we could develop a profession in our own right, bringing into psychotherapy the social outlook and skills which would require our thinking for ourselves (not mainly following orders) and would place us alongside the psychiatrist as another different but allied professional. (p. 62)

The transition from service to the poor and social reform to psychiatric interventions of the individual laid the ground work for the growth of the profession in mental health and the rise of specialized practice.

SOCIAL WORKER PROFILE
BERTHA REYNOLDS (1885–1978)

Bertha Reynolds was born in 1885 and as a young child moved to Boston following her father's death. She was fortunate enough to have an aunt who paid for her to attend Smith College where she received a Bachelor of Science degree in 1908. After college, she took a 2-year course in social work at Simmons and graduated with a second bachelor's degree. She expressed an interested in working with people who were poor and Black people. When Smith began their psychiatric social work course, she was in the first class. She later taught at Smith and eventually became dean; however, she was let go due to her focus on unionization and Marxist views, which were deemed controversial at the time. She went on to write her book *Teaching and Learning in the Practice of Social Work* and is now regarded as an important contributor to social work (NASW Foundation, 2004).

The Human Rights and Advocacy Base

Social workers "apply their understanding of social, economic, and environmental justice to advocate for human rights at the individual and system levels" (CSWE, 2022, p. 8). **Human rights** are universal, meaning they belong to every person simply for being born (Reichert, 2011). Human rights safeguard basic survival and freedom from discrimination so that individuals have the opportunity to participate in society (van Wormer & Link, 2018). Van Wormer and Link (2018) propose that approaching social work practice from a human rights perspective "provides the most relevant and comprehensive framework within which to orient students to the social welfare system, which is the context in which social work is practiced" (p. 7).

The United Nations (UN) Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1984) was a major step forward in promoting human rights, but many in the United States saw the Declaration as applying more to international, legal, and political issues to those events going on around them (Reichert, 2011). Social workers are an essential part of implementing human rights in many countries, but social workers in the United States have been slower to use the term *human rights*, preferring a focus on social justice. Social justice is a core value for the social work profession, but social justice focuses attention on fairness. This is distinct from human rights, which "on the other hand, encompasses social justice but . . . transcends civil and political customs. It takes into consideration the basic, life-sustaining needs of all human beings, without distinction" (NASW, 2009, p. 205).

Human rights include political, economic, and civil rights. The civil rights movements of the 1960s saw several advances in human rights. These movements advanced the rights of Black and Indigenous people of color, children, and those living below the federal poverty threshold (van Wormer & Link, 2018). The civil rights movement pushed social workers toward action as they recognized that larger system change was needed. Many people of color found the civil rights movements more welcoming and inclusive of difference than the other roots of social work. Social workers became more focused on advocacy and policy change rather than social casework. Social workers embraced grassroots efforts and community organizing.

Today, advocacy remains an important part of social work practice. The human rights framework serves as a solid base for cause advocacy in the social work profession where social work practitioners advocate for social change through political action and community organizing (Barker, 2014).

SOCIAL WORKER PROFILE
ANTONIA PANTOJA (1922–2002)

Antonia Pantoja

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Born in 1922 in Puerto Rico, Antonia Pantoja spent her life advocating for the rights of Latinx persons. Raised by her mother and grandparents, the family experienced great financial hardship following a hurricane. Although many children in Puerto Rico did not attend school, Pantoja graduated from high school. She and her mother worked to save money so that she could go to college. After obtaining her undergraduate degree, she taught in a one-room school in a rural, remote community to support her mother and stepfather. After moving to New York in 1944 at the age of 24, Pantoja was surprised by the racism she experienced. Schools would not hire her as a teacher, so she worked in a factory. It was here that she organized a union to better negotiate working conditions. She joined the Hispanic Young Adults Association (which went on to become the Puerto Rican Association of Community Affairs) to advocate for the rights of Puerto Rican people in New York City. In 1954, she attended Columbia University and graduated with her Master of Social Work degree.

In 1961, Pantoja founded ASPIRA (Spanish for "aspire"), a grassroots organization which eventually grew nationally, to empower students through teaching about Puerto Rican culture and history. Even though other organizations thought they were better suited to meet the needs of these youth, she fought for grassroots organizing which she believed would bring about more lasting change. Notably, along with ASPIRA's leadership and the Puerto Rican Defense Fund, she sued the New York City Board of Education for refusing to offer educational options for students who were Puerto Rican. They won the case and the board was forced to add bilingual education.

Pantoja spent the rest of her life, until she died from cancer in 2002, working with Wilhelmina "Mina" Perry, her partner in life and work, to advance human rights and racial equality.

New York Historical Society Museum & Library. https://wams.nyhistory.org/growth-and-turmoil/growing-tensions/antonia-pantoja/

Each of these four roots contributed individually and collectively in unique ways to the development of the profession that today is social work.
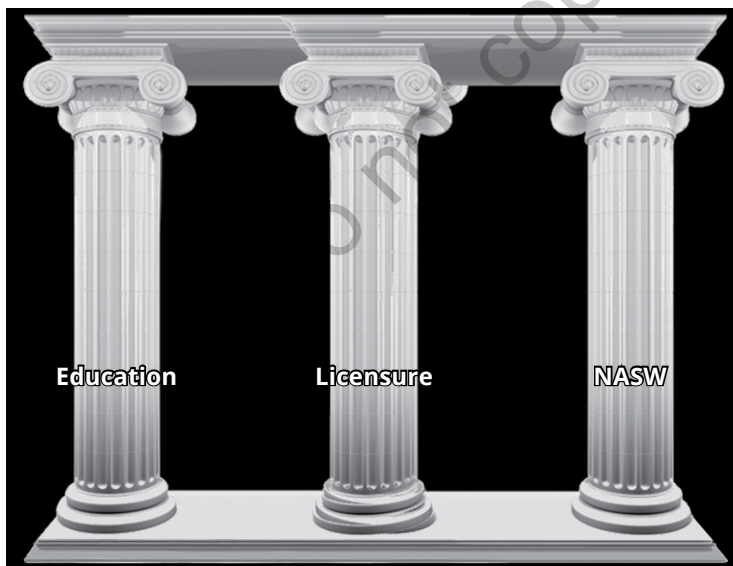

TIME TO THINK 1.4

Social work has four distinct and different historical roots. Is there one root that is more interesting to you? What might this mean for your social work practice?

THREE PILLARS OF PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

There are three pillars of professional social work: social work education, licensure, and its professional organization, the NASW. Many social workers have a degree in social work, hold a social work license for the state in which they practice, and belong to the NASW. However, there are also social workers who graduated with a social work degree, but did not pursue licensure. There are even some older social workers who never received a social work degree, but hold a social work license in their state through a legacy process.

Many social workers join NASW as students and continue as members throughout their life, but NASW membership is not required. Notably, there was a major break from the NASW in 1963 when a group of Black social workers walked out of the national social welfare meeting, noting the voices of Black social workers were excluded, even when discussing the plight of Black families. These social workers developed the National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW), which today is a thriving national organization supporting and advancing the needs of both Black individuals and families and Black social workers.

Although interrelated, these three pillars are separate processes. Most people would agree that if an individual does not possess an appropriate social work degree, credential, or license, they should not be called a social worker. Indeed, licensure laws for social workers in many states provide title protection for social workers. This means one cannot call themselves a social worker in that state without being a licensed social worker who has the appropriate qualifications.

Education

Professionalism in the United States became fashionable in the late 1800s and early 1900s as a way to establish credibility and organize a discipline. At the heart of most professions is a commitment to professional values, education, and training. As previously noted, social work education is often traced back to Mary Richmond. In addition to publishing various seminal texts on social work, Richmond also gave a speech in 1897 at the National Conference of Charities and Correction in which she called for the development of schools to train professional workers (NASW Foundation, 2004). This speech served as a catalyst for the establishment of social work training programs and schools. The first training program was started that year in New York City and consisted of a 6-week program of classroom instruction, agency visits, and fieldwork; this was the origin of the Columbia School of Social Work (Fortune, 1994). Richmond (1898) could also be credited with initiating the idea of generalist and specialist education in her first publication, *Friendly Visiting Among the Poor*, when she suggested students, "would probably begin with general principles, and would specialize later" (p. 186).

The Three Pillars of Professional Social Work Practice

iStockPhoto/Rawf8

At that time, most schools of social work in the North accepted Black students interested in social work, but admission in other regions of the country varied; as such, the Atlanta School of Social Work was established in 1920 to train Black social workers in the South (Gary & Gary, 1994).

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) was established in 1952 and has over 800 accredited undergraduate and master social work programs in the United States. The CSWE establishes program accreditation standards, currently called the Educational Polices and Accreditation Standards or EPAS (2022), which are used by accredited institutions in higher learning across the nation. The CSWE's educational policies define standards for both generalist and specialized practice (CSWE, 2022). EPAS outlines the nine core competencies necessary for effective social work practice (CSWE, 2022):

- Competency 1: Demonstrate ethical and professional practice.

- Competency 2: Advance human rights and social, racial, economic, and environmental justice.

- Competency 3: Engage anti-racism, diversity, equity and inclusion in practice.

- Competency 4: Engage in practice informed research and research informed practice.

- Competency 5: Engage in policy practice.

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

- Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities.

- Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities.

- Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities. (CSWE, 2022, p. 3)

The CSWE monitors programs to be sure the program's graduates are competent in these areas.

TIME TO THINK 1.5

Have you seen these competencies on syllabi in social work courses? Can you recall which ones you have discussed in your social work courses?

Program accreditation is important to students because most states require a social work degree from an accredited program as a requirement for licensure. It is important to note that during that last review of the EPAS, the CSWE added explicit focus on racial justice, anti-racism, equity, and inclusion to push the profession to directly advocate for social change and to redress the harm the profession had and continues to have on communities of color (CSWE, 2022).

Licensure

One of the advantages of a social work degree and being a professional is the opportunity to become a licensed social worker. The purpose of licensure is to protect consumers of services, society, and to provide a means to investigate instances of malpractice. A social work license is intended to convey that the social worker possesses the basic skills and knowledge to safely practice to both society and clients. In addition, "licensing has also been used to establish social work practice as a separate and distinct branch of mental health services" (Association of Social Work Boards [ASWB], 2018). All 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the 10 Canadian provinces regulate

social work practice in some fashion. Social work licensure is dictated by state law and differs across states. State licensure regulations often change, but many states offer some form of licensure at the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) level, with a small portion of states licensing only master's-level social workers.

Like many licenses, a social work license requires one to pass a test. Currently, all states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and all 10 Canadian provinces use tests from the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB). The ASWB is a nonprofit organization that sees its primary role as the regulation of professional social work. The mission of the ASWB is "to strengthen protection of the public by providing support and services to the social work regulatory community to advance safe, competent and ethical practices" (ASWB, 2018). There are several different levels of test that states may choose to require for licenses, but all tests

- consist of 170 multiple-choice questions

- are taken at local testing centers on computers

- are timed at four hours. (ASWB, 2018)

Professional Organization

Prior to the formation of what is now known as the NASW, various specializations had organized on their own to serve social workers who were practicing in those areas. However, in 1955, the following seven of these professional social work organizations in operation at that time merged to form the NASW:

- American Association of Social Workers

- American Association of Medical Social Workers

- American Association of Psychiatric Social Workers

- National Association of School Social Workers

- American Association of Group Workers

- Association for the Study of Community Organization

- Social Work Research Group

The NASW contributes to the profession of social work, to individual social workers, and to society in several important ways. First, and most notably, the NASW developed the Code of Ethics which guides professional practice and serves as the foundation for state laws around ethical practice. The NASW supports social workers by providing malpractice insurance, hosting continuing education trainings and conferences (both state and national), and releasing its journal (*Social Work*) and other publications. At the societal level, the NASW engages in political action and advocacy to advance services addressing the needs of those served by social workers and to address key issues of social justice in the areas of voting rights, immigration policy, and economic justice, to name a few.

Although the NASW is considered the premiere professional organization of social work, there are other professional organizations that support both clients and social workers. Most notable, is the NABSW, which was formed in 1968, at the height of the civil rights movement. As previously noted, the organization was created by a group of Black social workers who were attending the National Conference on Social Welfare (NABSW.org). The social workers protested and left the meeting with the goal of establishing a professional organization to address the concerns and needs of the Black community. The organization has been active in policy positions and support of both the Black community and Black social workers. At the international level is the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW). This organization seeks to "strive for social justice, human rights, and inclusive, sustainable social development through the promotion of

social work best practice and engagement in international cooperation" (International Federation of Social Workers [IFSW], 2023, para 1).

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

Attention to multilevel client systems and competent practice is the heart and soul of the social work profession. Multilevel practice reflects the history and evolution of the profession, which is rooted in a dual focus, the early work of the COS and settlement house workers, and the human rights movement. This is in contrast to some specialized social workers whose specialties grew out of the psychological revolution, which was more focused on individual therapy and case management. These specialized social workers, often MSWs, provide much of the mental health services accessed by people today.

Social work practitioners are expected to be proficient in **multilevel practice**, which refers to practice with all client levels, such as individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities (CSWE, 2022). In addition to being equipped for multilevel practice, social workers also need to be prepared to use the knowledge, values, and skills (KVS) of key content areas from their education to practice in an array of settings. And, all practice is grounded in a helping, problem-solving or solution finding process called the planned change process. It is not sufficient to be trained to practice competently in these three aforementioned ways. To engage in competent practice most effectively, one must use an integrated approach that brings all of these aspects of practice together (see Figure 1.3).

But what is an integrated approach? The term *integrate* has several definitions helpful to conceptualizing the approach: "to form, coordinate, or blend into a functioning or unified whole . . . to incorporate into a larger unit, and . . . to unite with something else" (Merriam-Webster). Thus, an integrated approach in social work practice is one in which the practitioner brings together multiple concepts from all aspects of their education and practice experiences in order to create a holistic service.

It is interesting to note that the term *integrated practice* has been used in varying ways in social work. For instance, Hernandez et al. (1985) saw integrated practice as developing social workers who specialize in addressing social problems and treating individuals impacted by social problems. Parsons et al. (1988) envisioned integrated practice as addressing social problems along a continuum of small (the individual) to large (the environment) systems. An advanced integrated practice approach by Finn and Molloy (2021) includes the following:

FIGURE 1.3 ■ An Integrated Approach
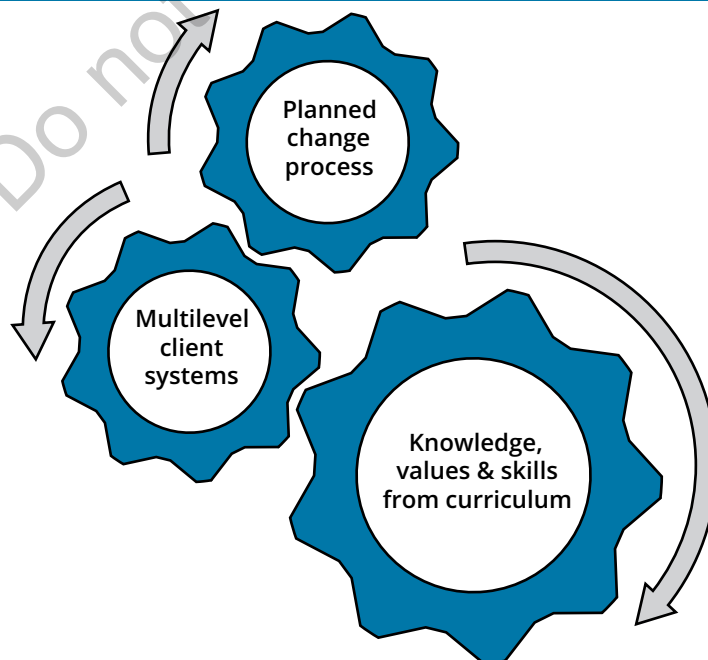
- Commitment to ongoing critical self-reflection and examination of the values and assumptions that shape social work.

- Critical understanding of historical, cultural, and political perspectives and the interplay of difference, privilege, and oppression.

- Integration of the skills of direct practice and community work.

- Application of knowledge and skills of research, policy analysis, and advocacy.

- Leadership in the profession and community to promote participation, empowerment, and social justice. (p. 175)

Although there are a variety of definitions and applications of integrated practice in social work literature, all applications and definitions share the vision of bringing together many areas of foci to serve as the foundation for practice. These definitions also share the idea that social workers need to draw on both micro and macro practice, regardless of the identified client system in order to be effective in practice (Finn & Molloy, 2021; Hernandez et al., 1985; Parsons et al., 1988).

The integrated approach put forth in this text draws from the mission of the profession, the literature on integrated social work practice and education, and social work's dual perspective. With regard to dual perspective, the integrated approach requires attention be paid to all system levels simultaneously as opposed to developing social work practitioners skilled in practice at the micro or macro level.

There are three foundational aspects of the integrated approach that provide both conceptual and practical ways to bring this approach to life in practice with individuals, families, and groups (Figure 1.4). An integrated approach applies KVS from the curriculum to multilevel client systems, practice, and the planned change process.

Applying KVS to all client system levels is relatively common in social work education. But, the integrated approach is different from more traditional ideas of educating and training social workers

FIGURE 1.4 ■ The Three Concepts of the Integrated Approach
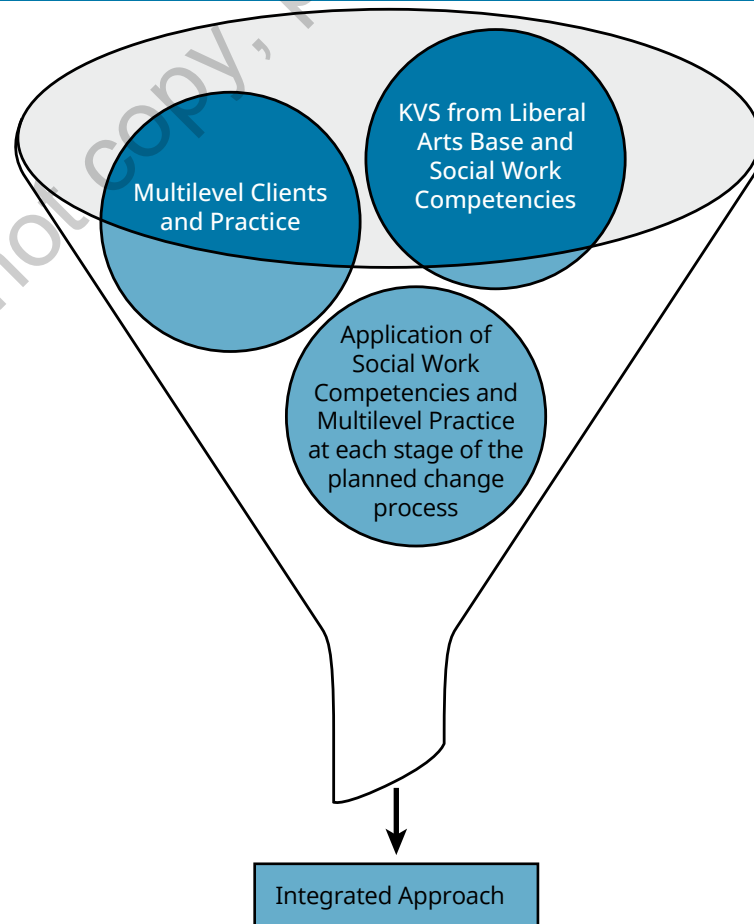
once the third area (the planned change process) is added. Thus, the integrated approach requires pulling together one's social work KVS as well as knowledge about multilevel client systems and practice to develop the nine core competencies.

The Three Aspects of the Integrated Approach

In order to further support your understanding of the integrated approach to social work practice with individuals, families, and groups, each concept will be discussed individually along with a few case examples to bring the approach to life.

Knowledge, Values, and Skills

The foundation of the integrated approach is the KVS social workers learn during their formal education. Social work courses are designed to develop the nine competencies. Social workers then demonstrate these competencies through behaviors they perform. In other words, one's ability to perform these actions comes from the knowledge, values, and skills they learned through their college's social work curriculum. That curriculum includes practicum, which is one of the most important sources for practicing skills or competency behaviors. It is important to note that the KVS needed to demonstrate the nine competencies come from taking both social work classes and courses outside of the social work department.

Applying competencies from course content is often harder that one might think. Effective application of content requires several key learning skills, including understanding and storing content, retrieving content, and accurately applying that information in practice-based situations. Competent practice transcends simple retrieval of information because of the varying and complex nature of clients of all levels. For example, you may have learned a great deal about human development in your coursework and may easily retrieve that information. However, applying that knowledge will look very different depending on the client system level with which they are working. When working with high school students, a social worker would use their knowledge of adolescent development, specifically the hormonal and neurodevelopmental changes of adolescence, differently based on the client level. This might mean taking different approaches when they work with one teen experiencing anxiety (individual client level), versus when they facilitate a support group for teens whose loved ones have died by suicide (group client level), or when they work with the school to set up a suicide prevention, mental first aid program (community client level). Similarly, how one uses their knowledge will depend on the phase of the planned change process in which they are using it. For instance, that same knowledge regarding rapid development in teens could be used to make sure the environment in which social workers meet a teen for the first time feels safe and comfortable to them (engagement). This knowledge may be used differently when implementing an intervention, such as sharing information with the teen about how some emotional reactions may be due to hormone changes.

Chapters 2 through 5 of this text provide an overview of the KVS that undergird several of the competencies outlined by CSWE (2022). These ground social work practice with individuals, families, and groups. In addition to this foundational content, the chapters that cover practice with individuals, families, and groups will provide additional KVS specific to practice with those client levels.

Multilevel Clients and Practice

The second aspect of integrated practice is applying one's KVS to multilevel client systems. Multilevel practice is also foundational to social work education and undergirds both generalist and specialized practice. The Council on Social Work Education explicitly identifies practice at five levels (individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities) in the core competencies (CSWE, 2022). Typically, social work curricula will provide specific courses to develop each student's ability to understand and practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and

communities. Each level of practice conceptualizes the client in a different way. Although social work competencies may cut across all client types, these client systems are also unique and distinct. For instance, all social workers need to be able to perform assessments; however, performing assessments will look different when working with an individual, family, or group. It is only as students develop both understanding and practice competence with all of the client systems (multilevel practice) that the full potential of the profession is realized.

Many social work programs have students take a practice course that targets individuals and families before one that targets communities. Yet, students need to consider all client levels in their social work practice with individuals. The integrated approach can help remind students to consider all client level systems throughout their education as those client system levels are intricately woven throughout all coursework. For instance, if one provides family preservation services due to substantiated abuse, the family is the target client. However, in order to be most effective, one needs to consider the individuals who make up the family and apply knowledge regarding individual clients to their understanding of the family. Perhaps the social worker has learned that effectively reflecting emotions when working with an individual client often helps the client share more information with the social worker. Applying this skill when working with the family can help develop trust, which allows the client to feel safe sharing valuable, but sensitive, information regarding the instance of child maltreatment. Furthermore, drawing on knowledge of the child protective service agency (an organization) and society (the community) missions to investigate and respond to instances of child maltreatment can help the family better understand the service provided by the social worker.

Planned Change

The third aspect of the integrated approach adds the planned change process to the first two aspects (applying KVS from curriculum to multilevel practice). Planned change is a process or sequenced set of actions focused on achieving a desired outcome. Like the CSWE (2022) competencies, this text will use a four-part planned change model, as illustrated in Figure 1.5.

The planned change process is a useful, logical model. Effective social work practice requires proficiency at each phase. Social work practice gets more complex when layering on careful application of KVS learned during each phase of the planned change process. One will apply the foundational KVS taught in one's curriculum (which includes multilevel practice) at each phase. Using the integrated approach helps social workers attend to all client levels in each phase of the planned change process. For instance, in the aforementioned family preservation example, knowledge of the client level (families) assists in both the assessment phase as well as intervention. Although organizations and communities are not focal points in this text, it is still important to develop the KVS necessary to integrate those system levels with one's practice with individuals, families, and groups. Social workers need to consider the needs of the identified client system within the context of other system levels, particularly how those other client levels are operating and influencing the target client. In addition, an integrated approach informs intervention in terms of considering the resources and challenges each system level may bring to bear on the identified client system.

FIGURE 1.5 ■ The Four Part Planned Change Model of Social Work Practice

Engagement   Assessment   Intervention   Evaluation
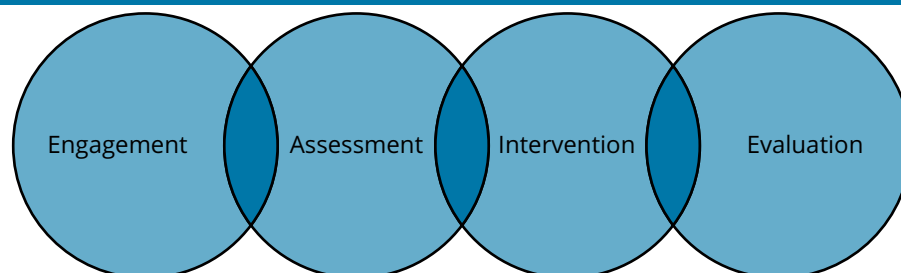
TIME TO THINK 1.6

Think of a difficult problem you have already successfully solved in your life. What steps did you take to solve that problem? Given what you now know about the planned change process, do you think you have you ever used it in your life without realizing it is a process with a name and phases?

The Integrated Approach in Action

Collette's practice scenario from the beginning of the chapter serves as an excellent example of the integrated approach in action. For example, when Collette worked with an individual who was experiencing suicidal ideation, she was likely very focused on the needs and issues of the individual. This, in turn, directed her practice to the client level of the individual. However, a social worker cannot adequately serve a client who is experiencing suicidal ideation without also considering the client's environment, specifically their family. As such, it would be necessary for Collette to assess for potential issues at the family level that might be contributing to this crisis. It might also be necessary to include the family in a safety plan as part of the intervention. Similarly, Collette might consider sharing her practice experience with facilitating a suicide prevention support group to reassure the individual that they are not alone, and that they may consider participating in such a group once the crisis is resolved. In order for Collette to consider organizational level clients, she must know her agency's policies and practices regarding safety planning. In addition, other organizations might be needed, such as the police, an emergency room admission at a local hospital, or drawing up a contract with the client to call the hotline should they experience ideation again. Finally, at the community level, knowledge of community issues and larger system factors related to policy and research is also critical. For instance, if Collette learns that her client is a veteran who served in an active combat zone, she will want to apply her knowledge of potential increased risk factors related to funding issues that might result the client experiencing longer waiting lists to receive treatment at a veterans affairs (VA) hospital. All of this demonstrates an integrated approach, because Collette is applying their foundational KVS and multilevel practice competence to all aspects of the planned change process. Regardless of the initial client system level of focus, whether it be an individual, family, or group, it is only when the social worker considers the three concepts in tandem that an integrated approach is realized.

Benefits of the Integrated Approach

The integrated approach provides several unique benefits. First, it requires the social worker to act. After all, the word *integrate* is used as a verb that refers to the action of bringing together and blending these three concepts, which creates a unified, whole, and truly united approach to practice. This approach builds on Grise-Owens et al (2014) sentiment that "relevant practice requires that social workers not merely understand micro-, macro-, and mezzo practice. Through the lens of meta-practice, the profession of social work can engage the "and" that both connects and overarches our traditional understandings of practice" (p. 51).

Second, the integrated approach is pragmatic. It offers a step-by-step process to follow that is grounded in the three concepts. This ensures that social workers consider pertinent information during all aspects of planned change. Doing so can train one to approach practice in a holistic fashion as opposed to a siloed approach of competency building. Later chapters in this text will apply the integrated approach in practice with individuals, families, and groups. Specific chapters will apply the integrated approach to each phase of the planned change process. Initially, it can be helpful to learn and apply the approach to each client system level separately while also guarding against the tendency to further perpetuate a siloed approach to education and training.

IN PRACTICUM: INTEGRATED PRACTICE IN PRACTICUM

The transition from being a student in the classroom to a professional social worker can be challenging, both conceptually and practically. As a student sitting in a social work practice class right now you may be equally excited and overwhelmed by this transition. How will this transition take place and what will it look like? First, know that your social work curriculum has built in a practicum during which you will practice as a social work student under the supervision of a social worker. Programs have different ways to help you find a placement that is a good match for you. The purpose of this practicum feature throughout this text is to provide you with examples, based on students' experiences that will help you visualize how the content in each chapter might look like in a practicum placement. So, let's begin by describing what the integrated approach in practice might look like in your practicum using the three concepts outlined previously.

In order to bring the first concept (apply the KVS from your curriculum) to your practice in practicum, you will want to review your curriculum, including social work courses, with your agency supervisor (Larkin, 2023). This is usually structured for you through assignments from a corresponding course, often a seminar, you will typically take at the same time that you are in your practicum. Pay close attention to content from your courses that may be used in your specific placement. Discuss those connections with your supervisor while identifying gaps in specific KVS that you still need to develop to be effective in your placement site. Identified gaps in your knowledge or skills might be included on the individualized learning plan you and your supervisor will create to guide your practice for the semester. A great question to ask your supervisor, is "What course(s) did you like the most, and what course(s) did you find most helpful in your preparation as a social worker?" (Larkin, 2023).

Second, an integrated approach requires that social workers be prepared competently to understand and practice at all client system levels. This is why it is important to have the opportunity to experience multilevel tasks (tasks that target individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities) in your practicum. To do so, make sure you can have some experiences in your agency or organization at each level. You may not need to divide your time during practicum equally at each level. In fact, you will probably choose a placement that is focused at the particular client level that most interests you at the time you are interviewing. For example it is fine if you complete your practicum in a school primarily serving children. Most of your time likely will be spent with the students (individual client level); however, make sure you experience the other client systems as well. This means you likely will want to seek out opportunities to meet the children's parents or guardians (family client level) by attending a family meeting, making check-in calls, or going on a home visit. To engage on the group client level, you might co-facilitate a psychoeducational group for students who have recently experienced a stressor, such as homelessness or death of a family member. If you research evidenced-based practices and plan the group intervention, you will gain some organizational level skills. Maybe you can get involved in the community and participate in a community-wide back to school event (community level). Thus, even before you select your placement site, you should consider how multilevel practice will look in that particular agency, organization, or host setting. When interviewing, you may ask about the possibility of multilevel tasks and think creatively. Sometimes, it is as easy as asking if you can shadow someone else at your placement once or twice to see how, for example, groups are run there.

The third principle of an integrated approach requires that the social worker apply KVS from the curriculum and multilevel client systems to each phase of the planned change process. In order to bring this concept to life in practicum, first try to understand what the planned change process looks like in your setting. Then you can engage your supervisor in discussions of how to apply the first two concepts to each phase. For instance, when engaging a client system, you can first identify foundational aspects of your KVS, such as a client's dignity and worth, and client-centered practice, as well as your multilevel client knowledge and practice experiences that might inform the engagement process. Apply these same considerations to all phases of the planned change process (engagement, assessment, intervention, and evaluation) equally across all client systems.

Striving to implement an integrated approach in practicum provides you with a strong foundation from which to develop and demonstrate your competence as a social worker while also expanding your understanding of practice with individuals, families, and groups.

TIME TO THINK 1.7

What do you find most exciting about practicum? What do you think will be the biggest challenge for you?

SUMMARY

This chapter is an introduction to the social work profession and the integrated approach to social work practice with individuals, families, and groups. Social work has a rich history from four diverse roots and is a continually evolving field. The profession of social work is defined and governed by education, licensure, and professional organizations like the NASW. Social workers help individuals and society improve their functioning using a planned change process. All of this undergirds the integrated approach with specific focus on the application of foundational knowledge, values, and skills and multilevel practice to all phases of the planned change process in practice with individuals, families, and groups.

KEY TERMS

dual focus

friendly visitors

human rights

integrated approach

multilevel client systems

multilevel practice

scientific charity

social work

DEMONSTRATING COMPETENCY

This section gives you the opportunity to practice skills related to topics covered in this chapter. Each prompt correlates to a specific CSWE EPAS competency to help you build specific skills you'll need demonstrate in order to become a social worker.

1. As you train to become a social worker, it is quite likely that someone will ask you, "What exactly is social work?" Write a short speech that is around three sentences or less (sometimes called an elevator speech) of how you might answer when asked (Competency 1)

2. Search for *social worker* using your favorite search engine. What links and images come up? What do these results seem to represent about general public perception about what social workers do? Do these represent what you think you will actually do? (Competency 1)

3. The CSWE notes that social workers should "advocate for human rights at the individual, group, organizational, and community system levels" (CSWE, 2022, p.9). What are two ways you can use the integrated approach for this purpose? (Competency 2)