Chapter 1
The History of Social Work and Social Welfare

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To what extent and in what ways is modern social work a product of the experiences of the past?

Religious Origins of Social Work

Social work as a profession grew chiefly out of the development of social welfare policies and programs in the United States, Europe, and Muslim countries. Judeo-Christian and Muslim practices and beliefs underlie many of the early attempts to provide help to the poor, the sick, widows, orphans, the "insane" and "imbeciles" (as those with problems of mental illness and developmental disability used to be called), and the elderly. This history begins with a discussion of the development of social welfare in Middle Eastern and European countries and then moves to the transfer of social welfare policies and practices to the New World of the American colonies. We then discuss the transition from the work of government officials and "people of good will," who both helped and regulated those who were needy, to the creation of the profession of social work as we know it today.

Islam

Two thousand years before the birth of Christ, a ruler of Babylonia named Hammurabi made the protection of widows and orphans an essential part of his code. The Ancient Greeks and Romans were similarly concerned about helping the needy. The Greek philosopher Aristotle (384–322 BC) described man as a social animal who should "cooperate with and assist his fellow men." He also said it is more blessed to give than to receive. As the social welfare historian Walter Trattner notes, "the words 'philanthropy' and 'charity' and the concepts for which they stand—love of mankind, love

of humanity, brotherhood—are of Greek and Latin origin" (Trattner, 1999, pp. 1–2).

The Arab world has also contributed to charitable traditions. Islamic thought draws a distinction between social justice and charity. The faith has a strong tradition of social reform, based on the Prophet Muhammad's advocacy on behalf of women, children, and the disadvantaged. This tradition is operationalized through the requirement that all Muslims who are financially able shall contribute 2.5% of their net wealth each year for support of the needy. This practice, called *zakat*, is not considered to be charity but rather an act of social justice through the redistribution of wealth. Any contributions in addition are seen as charity, or *sadaqah*, which is one of the five pillars of Islam. The Koran lists eight uses for charitable contributions: aid to the poor, the needy, those who collect the contributions, "those whose hearts must be reconciled," debtors, wayfarers, the redemption of captives and, "for God's cause" (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2000; Augustine, 2002; Canda & Furman, 1999, pp. 137–138; Stillman, 1975).

Judaism

Trattner emphasizes the importance of Jewish tradition in the development of modern philanthropy. Ancient Jewish doctrines, he notes, teach the duty of giving and "equally important, the *right* of those in need to receive." Throughout the Old Testament, we find commandments to give to others, particularly the old, the sick, those with handicaps, and the poor. As in Islam, this giving is not a matter of charity but a matter of justice. Not only do the Scriptures state that "one might break off his iniquities" (or acts of wickedness) by showing a compassionate face to the poor, but they also go on to command that "thou shalt not harden thy heart nor shut thy hand" to the unfortunate. "It is forbidden," according to the Scriptures, "to turn away a poor man . . . empty-handed." And in a phrase that social workers would appreciate, people should give such aid "with a friendly countenance, with joy, and with a good heart" (Trattner, 1999, p. 2).

The Jewish philosopher Maimonides set out the following eight degrees of charity:

> Give, but with reluctance and regret. This is the gift of the hand but not of the heart.
>
> The second is to give cheerfully, but not proportionately to the distress of the sufferer.
>
> The third is to give cheerfully and proportionately, but not until we are solicited.
>
> The fourth is to give cheerfully and proportionately, and even unsolicited; but to put it in the poor man's hand, thereby exciting in him the painful emotion of shame.

> The fifth is to give charity in such a way that the distressed may receive the bounty and know their benefactor, without being known to him.
>
> The sixth, which rises still higher, is to know the objects of our bounty, but remain unknown to them.
>
> The seventh is still more meritorious, namely, to bestow charity in such a way that the benefactor may not know the relieved persons, nor they the name of their benefactor.
>
> The eighth and most meritorious of all is to anticipate charity by preventing poverty; that is, to assist a reduced person so that he may earn an honest livelihood and not be forced to the dreadful alternative of holding up his hand for charity (Macarov, 1978, p. 6).

From these ideas and principles, the Jews developed many social welfare practices. These included the education of orphans, burial of the dead, consolation of the bereaved, visitation of the ill and infirm, and the care of widows, divorcees, and the aged. Provision for the poor was made primarily through various agricultural practices, which included "gleanings," or the practice of leaving grain dropped during the harvest which could be picked up by the hungry (Lowenberg, 2001).

Christianity

Christianity carried on the charitable tradition, adding a particular emphasis on love and compassion. The founders of the Christian Church were Jews, so it is not surprising that many parts of the New Testament focused on charity. The basic principle underlying early Christian approaches to social welfare was similar to the Hebraic idea that poverty was not a crime. Even though discretion should be observed in giving aid, and rules set up for discriminating among the various classes of poor people, evidence of need was still the paramount factor in offering help. It was assumed that need came about as a result of misfortune for which society should take responsibility.

At first, charity was an informal system of help, but as Christianity became more established as a religion, the Church fathers felt it was important to set up a more formal system of charities. Beginning in the sixth century, monasteries began to serve as basic agencies of relief, particularly in rural areas. Some monastic orders were organized with a particular mission of serving the needy. These orders received income from donations, legacies, and collections, and used this to provide help to the poor who came to their doors. They also, in a forecasting of what we might now call "community outreach," carried food and other provisions to the sick and needy in their communities (Trattner, 1999).

During the First Crusade in the 11th century, which called for the abolishment of the Muslim states, military monastic orders were developed to care for and provide protection for pilgrims and the sick. These

orders were well-organized associations of devout Christians who cared for pilgrims, nursed the sick, and even eventually took part in the military defense of the "Crusader States." Once Jerusalem had been "reclaimed" by the Crusaders, there was a dramatic increase in the numbers of Christian pilgrims making their way to the Holy City. These pilgrims were often old and ill, coming to die in the same city where Christ had died. One of the first formal orders of those ministering to them was the Hospitallers. The order set up the great pilgrim hospital in Jerusalem. In what we might now call a "multicultural" approach, they sometimes employed both Jewish and Muslim physicians to care for the sick (Jordan, 2001).

Other monasteries expanded on the work of the Hospitallers, providing a medieval system of hospitals for the sick poor, including lepers. These hospitals did not solely provide for the sick, however. They also housed "weary wayfarers," pilgrims, orphans, the elderly, and the destitute. Like the "community-based social services" of today, hospitals were found along main routes of travel and later in cities. Eventually, these hospitals were taken over by municipal authorities, creating a link between religious and secular charity. Trattner notes that by the middle of the 1500s there were more than 1,100 hospitals in England alone. Some took care of up to several hundred people (Trattner, 1999).

Government Enters the Picture

The evolution of feudalism in Europe in the 11th century provided a system of government, which, at least theoretically, dealt with poverty or distress among the population. By the late 11th and 12th centuries, most "common" people in Western Christian countries lived on feudal estates as serfs to the lords who owned the estates. Although they had little freedom, serfs were to be protected by the landowners against the hazards of illness, unemployment, and old age. At the expense of individual freedom, serfs were thus provided a form of social insurance against the challenges of life. This might be considered a primitive form of social insurance (Trattner, 1999).

Those who were not serfs, and who lived in cities, were often helped by social, craft, and merchant guilds. Like labor unions today, guilds provided benefits for their members. They also provided some assistance to the town poor, such as the distribution of corn and other food and the provision of free lodging for poor travelers (Trattner, 1999).

The Deserving and the Undeserving Poor

As early as the Middle Ages, people were developing a distinction between the "deserving" and the "undeserving" poor. Monks praised poverty, generally meaning the voluntary poverty of those in religious orders. But they also spoke of the "blessed poor"—presumably meaning those who had not volunteered to be destitute. They saw people who worked hard,

and yet still suffered deprivation, as worthy of pity. People who begged, did not work, or "drank themselves into torpor," and women and men who "hired out their bodies for sex" were the undeserving poor (Jordan, 2001, pp. 191–192).

The Black Death, or bubonic plague of the mid-1300s, and similar epidemics in the next two centuries, brought poverty and death to new heights in Europe and the Islamic world. The plague bacterium is a pathogen carried by fleas. The rat is the preferred host of fleas, and in the Middle Ages the plague spread to Europe and Asia through the fleas on shipboard rats. Once the host rat died of the disease, the fleas sought other hosts, such as cats or humans. The death rate from the disease, particularly in crowded urban areas, was extremely high. The Black Death, which occurred in England in 1348 to 1349, killed almost a third of the population. During the years of the plague, strangers who earlier might have been granted relief were seen as vagabonds "to whom the State prohibited almsgiving under pain of imprisonment" (Herlihy, 1997; Jordan, 2001; Trattner, 1999).

The Statute of Laborers

The Black Death, as you might expect, created a lack of labor. Surviving workers were in a position to demand higher wages. Landowners put a stop to this with the Statute of Laborers enacted in 1349. It set a maximum wage and compelled workers to work for whomever needed them. It forbade laborers from traveling, and made it illegal for an able-bodied man to beg. Punishment for begging included whipping for several days and having one or both ears cut off. Social welfare historian Blanche Coll notes that in this period, "those seeking work at better wages and under freer conditions . . . were deemed criminal." In other words, poverty among the able-bodied was beginning to be seen as a crime, and people should deem themselves lucky to get any job available (Coll, 1969; see also Quigley, 1996). This set the tone for welfare legislation of centuries to come. Poverty was blamed on unwillingness to work, so people should be forced to work at whatever wages were offered. Contemporary emphases on "workfare" and on the prevention of welfare cheating continue this Medieval thinking.

Subsequent centuries brought new challenges and problems. In England, the feudal system was declining, mercantilism (or commitment to commerce and trade) was rising, new trade routes were being opened, and new industries were being developed. As the New World began to open up, the potential for increased prosperity grew. Systems like serfdom, however, which at least offered some protection to individuals by the lords of the land, went into decline. With the coming of industrialization and urbanization, many people no longer had any rights to the land they lived on nor to their dwellings. To make things worse, the Protestant Reformation brought about the expulsion of the Catholic Church from England in 1536. This meant the demise of the system of monasteries and their hospitals, which had carried much of the responsibility for helping the

sick, the old, the traveler, and the poor in general (Popple & Leighninger, 2011).

The Elizabethan Poor Laws

Following the Statute of Laborers, various laws were passed that proposed to deal with the problems of labor, begging, and crime. These acts were eventually collected in one major piece of legislation, the Elizabethan Poor Law of 1601. This major law established "the first secure basis for public assistance to the poor." It required each parish or town to provide for the poor through levying taxes on property held within the jurisdiction. The Elizabethan Poor Law, which would stand with only minor changes for almost 250 years, defined three major categories of dependents. These were the vagrant, the involuntary unemployed person, and the helpless. The law established ways for dealing with each. It also established the parish, "acting through the overseers of the poor appointed by local officials, as the administrative unit for executing the law" (Coll, 1969; Quigley, 1996; Ziliak, 2005).

Indoor and Outdoor Relief

In a system that might seem familiar today, the parish was given the power to use the tax revenues to build and maintain almshouses, to supply help to the aged, the sick, and handicapped, and other helpless people in their own homes, and to "purchase materials with which to put the able-bodied unemployed to work." The law held parents, if they had the means, responsible for the support of their children and grandchildren. In turn, children were liable for the care of their "unemployable parents and grandparents." Those children whose parents could not provide for them "were to be set to work or bound out as apprentices." Finally, vagrants and able-bodied people refusing to work could be committed either to a "house of correction," a workhouse, or a common jail. Putting people into almshouses (or "poorhouses"), workhouses, or other institutions was considered "indoor relief." "Outdoor relief" referred to providing some sort of help to people in their homes. As we will see, these terms were later transplanted to the American colonies, and lingered in the parlance of the American social welfare system for some time (Coll, 1969; Marx, 2004).

Most of the institutions for indoor relief, even orphanages, were unpleasant, often punishing places. Many were not much more than sheds divided into tiny rooms with little heat. Sanitation facilities were rudimentary, and food was inadequate. Watery gruel was a staple. Those who refused to go into workhouses were harshly dealt with. Vagrants "not willing to work," could be sent to an institution, whipped, branded, stoned, or even put to death. Clearly all able-bodied, and thus "undeserving" poor were to be strictly and punitively controlled (Day, 2000; Dolgoff & Feldstein, 1998; Trattner, 1999).

Although it sounds like their work could be grim and often punitive, the overseers of the poor constituted an antecedent to modern-day social workers. Theirs was the job of identifying the poor, the vagrant and homeless, the unemployed, and others who were having difficulty surviving. They then decided what should happen with each of these groups of people. Moreover, they were part of a system that said that the government had an obligation to help people (at least the "deserving" ones) who could not provide for themselves and a responsibility to control the other groups in some way. As "government administrators," they might be compared to contemporary child welfare social workers and social workers in the criminal justice system.

By the 1800s, dissatisfaction with the Poor Law system was growing in England. The effectiveness and equity of the system were being questioned. The system of parish responsibility for responses to the poor often led to unequal and inadequate standards. A body of "unpaid, untrained, and often incompetent overseers of the poor . . . did not make for effective administration." Perhaps even more important, many of the poorer areas had "a higher proportion of needy residents and less money to spend on relief than the more prosperous ones." Thus, not only was treatment of the poor unequal from parish to parish, but "the communities that could least afford it usually had the highest poor rates," or taxes. And taxes went up even for richer parishes. Between 1760 and 1818, "poor relief expenditures throughout England increased sixfold, while the population about doubled" (Trattner, 1999).

The Speenhamland Law

This happened in part due to a law related to poor workers that was enacted in the late 1700s. During a period of economic distress in England in the mid-1790s, a new policy changed the sense of the Elizabethan Poor Law. This was an allowance system set up by what became known as the Speenhamland Law. In 1795, during a particularly bad period of poverty, the justices of Berkshire met at an inn in Speenhamland and declared that subsidies to help poor workers and their families should be based on the price of bread. When a "gallon loaf" of bread cost one shilling every "poor and industrious person" would receive a relief allowance of three shillings weekly, based on his own or his family's labor. He would also receive one shilling, six pence for the support of his wife and other family members. If the cost of bread rose, he would receive proportionately more money. The system was financed by taxpayers. Although never made a formal law, this practice was soon instituted throughout most of the countryside, and even in some manufacturing areas. By the 1830s, middle-class critics saw this as an obstacle to the new capitalistic economy, and brought about the system's demise. However, as Trattner points out, the Speenhamland approach was actually a "forward looking measure that provided financial aid to the destitute according to need as determined by the cost of living" and family size (Polanyi, 1976; Trattner, 1999).

The Rise of the Market

At the same time, the Poor Law itself was coming under attack by classical economists as well as by the manufacturing interests that were gaining power in England. The economists had come to believe that poverty was the natural state of the working class. They argued that the possession of property and wealth was a "natural right," not to be interfered with by the state. The Poor Law was an artificial creation of the state that taxed the well-to-do for the maintenance and care of the needy. Earlier proponents of the poor law system, members of the old landed aristocracy, had a sense of social responsibility and reasoned that the stability of the state required public action to regulate the affairs of mankind, including the discouragement of labor mobility. The rise of a business class and the emergence of a capitalist economy that substituted the price mechanism for the state in determining the status of labor led to the belief that interference with the normal operations of the market, which included a fluid labor force controlled by supply and demand, would threaten, if not overturn, the economic order. In essence, the Elizabethan Poor Law was being replaced by a self-regulating market economy (Trattner, 1999).

Under the poor laws, another important approach to the deserving poor was for families to take them in. For example, a widow might be sent to live with a family. Sometimes this was on a rotational basis: 2 weeks with one family, 2 weeks with another, back to the first, and so forth. Another practice was to place poor people with families, where they could help with farming, caring for children, or similar tasks. The town or other local government body would reimburse the family for the poor person's care. Consequently, unlike the practice of a normal auction, the care and services of the person being auctioned went to the lowest bidder—the family that could feed and clothe them for the smallest amount (Trattner, 1999).

Social Welfare Institutions

Just as in the Old World, as time went on, states and communities turned to the use of various institutions, or indoor relief, to respond to the problems of the poor, sick, elderly, "idle beggars," and others with particular needs. Where previously they were run out of town, able-bodied beggars were sent to the poorhouse, or almshouse. The goal of this new practice was to decrease the expense of pauperism by establishing cheaper care; another advantage of this cheaper, less pleasant treatment was that it would discourage people from applying for help. One estimate was that the annual cost of a poor person on outdoor relief was $33 to $65 (even more if the person was sick or old). In contrast, the cost of sending that person to a poorhouse would be only $20 to $35 (Trattner, 1999).

Poorhouses would also build character. Work, especially farm labor, was required of all able-bodied inmates. Idleness and alcohol were prohibited. According to officials, pauper children would receive "an education to fit them for future usefulness." While conditions in the poorhouse might

have constituted some improvement over the practice of auctioning individuals off to the lowest bidder, it was still basically a repressive system with the goal of deterring people from seeking relief except in cases of dire need (Trattner, 1999).

Another institution, the orphanage, has a long history in America. The Ursuline Convent in New Orleans established the first orphanage in 1727. This was set up to provide a home for children whose parents had been slain in an Indian raid. The next, and more permanent orphanage was Bethesda, founded in Savannah, Georgia, in 1740 by a priest. The first public orphanage was created in South Carolina 50 years later. Between 1860 and 1880, about 250 orphanages were founded, most by Catholic and Protestant organizations. Although an improvement over the poorhouse and other ways of dealing with orphaned children, these new institutions tended to be large structures in which rigid schedules and daily routines were stressed. Conjuring up pictures of Dickens' Oliver Twist asking "Please, sir, I want some more," the orphanages of the 1800s practiced harsh discipline and strove to suppress individuality among the children (Katz, 1986; Trattner, 1999).

Responses to those with mental illness also played a major role in the development of institutions. As early as 1689, the residents of Braintree, Massachusetts, agreed to finance the construction of a small house in which a man in the community could "secure his sister and goodwife" since both were "distracted." This decision was based on a Massachusetts statute that empowered town Selectmen to take care of unruly and distracted persons so that they would not "damnify [or annoy] others." But it was not until the well-publicized campaigns of Dorothea Dix that institutionalization of the mentally ill began in full force (Trattner, 1999).

Dorothea Dix

Dix's campaign and its results are an excellent example of the phenomenon that one era's solution to a social welfare issue can deteriorate into another era's catastrophe. Dix is credited with the first major campaign to get the national government to provide funding for institutions that would provide for the mentally ill. In fact, when we ask students in a beginning social work or social welfare class to name important historic figures in the profession, the first name is often Dorothea Dix, the second Jane Addams. Dix was born in Maine in 1802 and moved at age 12 to Boston to live with her grandparents. There she received a good education and went on to become a teacher. After opening a private school for girls, and then a free school for poor children, she suffered a "mental collapse" in 1836. After her recovery, she became a Sunday school teacher for women inmates in the East Cambridge jail. During this life-changing experience, she witnessed the cruel treatment of prisoners, especially those who were mentally disturbed (Katz, 1986).

As Trattner (1999) notes, "Horrified by what she saw [Dix] apparently experienced a tremendous emotional reaction which led her to embark

upon one of the most remarkable crusades of the century" (p. 64)—a campaign to ensure better treatment of the mentally ill. Since at the time private hospitals for those with mental illness were small, selective, and expensive, many of those deemed insane were placed in almshouses and jails. Others were held, often chained, in cabins, closets, and pens.

Eventually, individual states began taking on more responsibility for those with mental illness. Mental institutions were established in a number of states, and in 1890, the state of New York took over the complete care of all its "insane" poor. Much of this activity in the states was inspired by Dix, who was instrumental in the improvement of the state mental institution in Massachusetts and went on to inspire and cajole state legislatures to found hospitals for the mentally ill in nine other states. A genuine pioneer, she journeyed "by train, stagecoach, lumber wagon, and foot over muddy roads and swollen rivers" to get to remote facilities for those with mental illness (Katz, 1986).

Based on Dix's broad and detailed research, a Bill for the Benefit of the Indigent Insane was introduced in Congress in 1848 to provide millions of acres of land to the states to help pay for the construction of more state mental institutions. Dix lobbied hard for the bill, which had to be reintroduced a number of times and was not passed by Congress until 1854. Many prominent citizens, clergymen, and public and private organizations had lobbied for the measure. However, the measure was vetoed by President Franklin Pierce, on the grounds that he could not find any authority in the Constitution for making the federal government the great almoner of public charity throughout the United States (Crenson, 1998; Trattner, 1999).

Mothers' Pensions

Following the development of such institutions as orphanages and mental hospitals, the country began to swing back to more individualized approaches such as the "placing out" of poor and orphaned children and organized charity work with the needy. Matthew A. Crenson has developed a fascinating narrative of the connection between the abandonment of the orphanage and the development of a mothers' pension system that eventually led to the creation of the federal Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program (Crenson, 1998; Trattner, 1999).

Crenson's thesis is that the states' creation of public orphanages or their subsidization of private orphanages made them responsible, either directly or indirectly, for the religious upbringing of their wards. "A generation of tense maneuvering . . . led to a general search to sidestep these hazards." A potential solution was the development of mothers' pensions, which would enable destitute mothers to keep their children at home through state payments for financial support. While this approach was not carried out in most places until the New Deal, reformers concerned about the needs of neglected children developed programs in which foster families were paid for caring for children, and systems for supervising these families (Crenson, 1998).

Weaknesses of Institutions

By the end of the 1800s, state and local institutions no longer seemed the most effective way to deal with problems of poverty and dependency. The system of state mental institutions championed by Dorothea Dix was an important improvement over its antecedents. Yet, in the 1870s, these institutions went into a dramatic decline. Patients were increasingly subjected to restraints and punishments and ordered routines of care broke down. Part of the change stemmed from underfunding, part from the basic difficulty of "curing" mental illness. In addition, the patient population was changing from the acutely mentally ill to the chronically mentally ill and the aged (Crenson, 1998).

Concerns about the effectiveness of large institutions swung the pendulum back toward individual approaches to dealing with poverty, dependency, and other social problems. Each of these movements had a major impact on the development of social work as a profession. The first was the development of the Charity Organization Society (COS), which was first established in England and then transported to the United States in 1877 (Katz, 1986; Trattner, 1999).

The Charity Organization Society

The COS in England was inspired in part by the work of a Scottish clergyman, Thomas Chalmers, who set up a district plan to organize relief in his Glasgow parish in the 1820s. Chalmers put the poor relief work of each district under the direction of a deacon. The system stressed "friendly visiting" with the poor and based the giving of alms on the needy person's "reformation of character." A similar organization, called the "London Society for Organizing Charitable Relief and Repressing Mendicancy" had been established in England in 1869 (Sapiro, 1990; Trattner, 1999).

Impressed by the work of the London Society, S. Humpreys Gurteen, an Episcopal clergyman in Buffalo, proposed the formation of a similar agency in his city. The Buffalo Charity Organization was established in 1877. Gurteen told the citizens of the city that charity organization was the solution to the city's problems of "indiscriminate relief policies" in which overlapping systems of private charities and municipal relief led to indolence, pauperism, and fraud (Crenson, 1998, pp. 240–250).

The idea of "organizing" charity spread widely throughout the United States in the late 1800s. The New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, for example, set up a system of home visiting by volunteers, who would attend to the "moral deficits" of poor families as well as their economic needs. Basically the goal of the Association was to ensure investigation of every appeal for assistance, to distinguish between the deserving and undeserving poor, and to blend this "with a judicious mixture of moral exhortation." The organization placed each city ward under the responsibility of an advisory committee which would coordinate provision of relief through a system of friendly visitors (Crenson, 1998, pp. 250–251).

Spokespeople for the new system saw it as a new benevolent gospel. They pictured charity organization as a "crusade to save the city from itself and from the evils of pauperism." Leaders of the movement saw themselves as missionaries in a holy cause. As the New York Charity Organization (which grew out of the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor) put it, "if we do not furnish the poor with elevating influences, they will rule us by degrading ones" (Popple & Leighninger, 2011, pp. 71–75).

The COS movement reflected a conservative interpretation of the causes of poverty. According to one of its leaders, Josephine Shaw Lowell, individual dependency was one of the greatest evils of modern industrial life. Lowell was a reformer who came from a wealthy Boston family. She stressed that the poor were in need "largely because of their own shortcomings, including drunkenness and idleness." Haphazard charity must be avoided, as it contributed to their dependency. The solution to the problems of poverty and dependency was to provide patient, skilled visiting of the poor by "dedicated volunteers." Lowell felt that well-to-do visitors, generally women, could bring not alms, but "kind action," and could serve as good moral examples for the poor. Visitors should avoid giving money, but to provide loans and assistance in finding jobs to "deserving" families (Katz, 1986; Popple & Leighninger, 2011, pp. 67–68).

Charity organization societies spread quickly among American cities in the late 19th century. However, the original goals of COS leaders proved difficult to sustain. Individual approaches to the complex problem of poverty failed to stop its growth. There was also an insufficient pool of volunteers to carry out an effective system of friendly visiting. Increasingly, charities turned to the use of paid staff to investigate applications and visit the poor (Lubove, 1969).

These paid agents were a major forerunner of professional social workers. Like the earlier charity volunteers, they were chiefly women. They also tended to be Protestant, white, and middle class. The job of charity worker offered an outlet for college-educated women at a time when taking care of a family "took center stage and career possibilities for women were few and far between." Charity work was a relatively acceptable job for women because it used traditional feminine characteristics such as caring for others (Lubove, 1969; Muncy, 1991).

Josephine Shaw Lowell was a good example of such a woman. Her parents had a strong interest in social reform, imbuing in Lowell a belief in the importance of public service. The Lowells were abolitionists, and Josephine joined a women's relief organization that provided aid to Union soldiers. Widowed at a young age, Lowell turned to even greater involvement in social reform. Her work with the New York Charities Aid Association, including a statewide study of pauperism, led to her appointment by the governor of New York to the Commission of the State Board of Charities. She was the first female member of the board (Lubove, 1969; Popple & Leighninger, 2011).

Although she dressed in black and seemed the symbol of a self-sacrificing reformer, Lowell was also tough, shrewd, and pragmatic. She

held strong views about the causes of poverty and the appropriate remedies for dealing with it. Many of her principles and ideas can be found in her book, *Private Charity and Public Relief*, published in 1884. Although sometimes portrayed as exhibiting a punitive, moralistic attitude toward the poor, Lowell had a mixture of values and beliefs regarding dependency. She viewed idleness as a major defect of the poor and government aid as a disincentive to honest work. Private charity, with its approach of friendly visiting, was necessary to elevate the moral nature of the poor. She had little sympathy for drunkards, vagrant women, and mothers of illegitimate children (Beatty, 1986).

Whose Fault, the Individual or the Market?

Lowell also believed, however, that certain groups of people, including orphans, widows, and the sick, were poor through no fault of their own. In these instances, she felt public responses, such as institutions and widows' pensions, to be appropriate sources of relief. She realized that low wages were one source of poverty, and she fought to improve working conditions for women. During the depression of 1893 she also came to realize that even hard-working people could find themselves unemployed. Yet, while she appreciated the importance of environmental factors in poverty, Lowell also tended to apply such insights only to the "deserving poor," such as those clearly demonstrating a desire to work. In essence, she was convinced that personal character was the most significant element determining a person's position in life (Popple & Leighninger, 2011).

Charity organization workers such as Lowell were a major forerunner of professional social workers. Elements of the COS system, such as investigations by caseworkers and one-to-one work with mothers of poor families, also made their way into state and federal child welfare programs. The National Conference of Charities and Correction, founded by state boards of charity in 1874, was a precursor of the American Association of Social Workers, one of the organizations that helped found today's National Association of Social Workers (NASW; Popple & Leighninger, 2011).

Jane Addams and the Settlement House

Another forerunner of modern social welfare programs and professional social work was the settlement house. Like the COS, this was an idea imported from England. However, unlike the charity movement, with its stress on individual defects, the social settlement focused chiefly on the environmental factors in poverty.

While Jane Addams' Hull House is regarded as the inspiration of the settlement house movement in the United States, the first U.S. settlement was actually founded in New York City by an organization of graduates from Smith College in 1887. But it was Addams' accomplishments in

a poor immigrant community in Chicago's West Side that captured the imagination of American reformers (Popple & Leighninger, 2011).

Addams grew up in a comfortable home in the small town of Cedarville, Illinois. Her parents were part of the second wave of pioneers in America; her father came to what was then the frontier "to organize and develop what others had discovered and settled." He bought a sawmill and gristmill, and in an effort to help build a community, he planted the hill across from his mills with the seeds of Norway pines. He invested in railroads and banks and became a wealthy man. John Addams believed in hard work and had a strong religious faith. He served for many years as a Republican in the State Senate and was instrumental in the improvement of prisons, insane asylums, and the state industrial schools (Popple & Leighninger, 2011).

Jane Addams was one of eight children. Her mother died when she was 2 years old. While an older sister took over the management of the household, their father was the dominant force in the family. From him, Jane inherited a love of reading, but also a sense of ambition, purpose, and commitment. Her father's second wife encouraged Jane to think of herself as an intelligent woman. Like a growing number of young, well-to-do women of her generation, Addams attended college. Even though this was at a female seminary in Rockford, Illinois, rather than Radcliffe or Vassar, Addams and her friends at Rockford were "self-consciously aware that they were college women." One of her friends was Ellen Gates Starr, with whom she would later found Hull House (Davis, 2000, pp. 160–161).

Part of Addams' childhood had also included a series of illnesses. The most serious was tuberculosis of the spine, which left a slight curvature in her back and caused her to be pigeon-toed and to walk with her head slightly cocked to one side. This experience, along with the early loss of her mother and the death of one of her sisters when Addams was 6, may have increased her empathy for people facing difficulties in life (Davis, 2000, pp. 6–7).

After graduation from Rockford, Addams returned home to Cedarville, where she suddenly became ill and despondent. She had hoped to pursue a further degree at Smith College, but now this seemed out of the question. Her father and stepmother had not wanted her to go on to Smith anyway and probably helped convince her that she was too ill to continue her academic work. The sudden death of her father threw her into deeper despondency, and she eventually entered a mental institution. Part of her difficulty stemmed from "her inability to reconcile her career ambitions, her need to study hard . . . with the sense of responsibility she felt toward her family" (Davis, 2000, pp. 9–16, 24–29).

After several months at the mental hospital, she felt well enough to return home. Here she struggled with regaining a purpose in life, something beyond managing a household. Her feelings were similar to many in the first generation of college women, who had difficulty finding a suitable career or goal in life beyond marriage. Her solution for this impasse was not atypical—she chose, like many other well-to-do young people of her times, to take a European tour (Davis, 2000, pp. 31–32).

In Europe, Addams visited the usual sites for the American visitor: museums, cathedrals, and the homes and graves of celebrated poets and political figures. Yet she also noted the poverty of the Irish countryside and the slums of London's East End. She met and talked with a variety of people, and noted in one of her letters home "I am more convinced all the time of the value of social life, of its necessity for the development of some of our best traits" (Davis, 2000, pp. 32–37).

After two more years at home, where she continued to struggle with her search for some useful purpose for her life, Addams embarked on a second European tour, this time accompanied by Ellen Starr and another friend. This is the tour most familiar to those interested in Jane Addams. This trip included her famous encounter with the bullfights in Spain. The cruelty of the bullfights, legend has it (a legend created by Jane herself), led her to devote her life to helping the poor. In her book *Twenty Years at Hull House*, Addams describes it this way:

> *It is hard to tell just when the very simple plan which afterward developed into the settlement first began to form itself in my mind. It may have been even before I went to Europe for the second time, but I gradually became convinced that it would be a good thing to rent a house in a part of the city [of Chicago] where many . . . needs are found, in which young women who had been given over too exclusively to study might restore a balance of activity . . . and learn of life from life itself . . . I do not remember to have mentioned this plan to anyone until we reached Madrid . . .*
>
> *We had been to see a bullfight rendered in the most magnificent Spanish style, where greatly to my surprise and horror, I found that I had seen, with comparative indifference, five bulls and many more horses killed . . .*
>
> *In the evening, the natural and inevitable reaction came, and in deep chagrin I found myself tried and condemned . . . by the entire moral situation which [this experience] revealed. (Addams, 1910/[1960], p. 72)*

In her autobiography, Addams then describes her conviction to carry out the plan of creating what would become Hull House. She recalls the "stumbling and uncertainty with which I finally set it forth to Miss Starr. . . . By the time we had reached the enchantment of the Alhambra [in Spain], the scheme had become convincing and tangible although still most hazy in detail" (Addams, 1910/[1960], p. 73).

Hull House

Addams' visit to Toynbee Hall in London was probably much more influential in the founding of Hull House. Two months after the famous bullfight, the future American settlement founder came to Toynbee Hall settlement in London carrying a letter of introduction from Canon Fremantle. She had high expectations that whatever challenges concerning the life of the poor were in store for her, she would at least know something at firsthand about how to respond to their needs. Addams felt that she had

finally finished her "preparation for life" and was ready for the next stage (Davis, 2000, p. 49).

By the next January, Addams and Starr had located an old run-down mansion in a poor neighborhood on Chicago's West Side. The neighborhood was home to newly arrived Italian, Polish, German, Russian, and Bohemian immigrants. At that time, the Italian community was the largest in the neighborhood. When Addams and Starr first moved into Hull House, they had vague notions of becoming "good neighbors" to the poor around them, as well as studying the conditions in which they lived. As present-day social workers might observe, this idea of "meeting the client where he or she is" was not a bad idea. As Addams and her friend studied the conditions in which their new neighbors lived, they began to create a specific agenda of both services and reform. What they saw helped them to understand that exploitation of these newcomers from southern and eastern Europe, poor employment conditions and low wages, a lack of educational opportunities, substandard housing, and an inefficient city government (rather than personal deficiencies of the immigrants) were the major factors that led to the poverty of the area and called for specific responses (Popple & Leighninger, 2011).

Following the Toynbee House model of sharing their knowledge of arts and literature with members of the community, the two women began their work by inviting their new neighbors to visit the settlement to hear George Eliot's *Romola* read aloud in Italian and to see Addams' slides of Florentine art. As Allen Davis, one of Addams' biographers, notes, while some of the visitors may have appreciated the lecture and the novel, "more probably they were baffled by these two cultured ladies and their big house." One bewildered visitor called it the "strangest thing he had met in his experience" (Davis, 2000, p. 67).

Community Services

However, soon more neighbors came because they needed a welcoming place in this overcrowded neighborhood to simply sit and talk with their friends. Before long they were arriving at Hull House in great numbers, accompanied by their children. Addams and Starr's genius was to meet the needs of people in their adopted community in concrete ways, such as creating a nursery and a kindergarten. Responding to the need of the moment, they set the path toward a new kind of help. Women and men with similar goals came to live at Hull House in order to help carry out its work (Addams, 1910/[1960]); Davis, 2000, pp. 67–68, 75–81).

As they continued to observe the situation of their neighbors and the poverty of the area, the two Hull House founders began to create a specific agenda for reform. In addition to the nursery and kindergarten, they developed a club for working girls, a free labor bureau for both men and women, meeting spaces for neighborhood political groups, and a visiting nurse service. In addition, in a move that seems particularly refreshing in the context of today's frequent outbreaks of hysteria over

the surge of Hispanic immigration to the United States, Addams and her cohorts created a Labor Museum at Hull House. This was a place where immigrants demonstrated their skills at spinning, making clothing, building furniture, and weaving baskets. The many outside visitors to Hull House were impressed by this "living" museum. But perhaps its greatest contribution was the pride instilled in immigrant children when they saw their parents in a situation in which they were recognized for their skills, rather than their poverty and difficulties in adjusting to a new land (Addams, 1910/[1960]); Popple & Leighninger, 2011).

Community Reform

Addams and her Hull House colleagues soon turned to reforms in the neighborhood itself. Noting the lack of vital services provided by the city, Addams lobbied Chicago's city officials for sanitary and housing reforms. Appalled by the trash piled up in streets and alleys, Addams became a city garbage inspector. She and her colleagues supported labor union activity and set up the Immigrants' Protective League in an attempt to fight the pervasive discrimination in employment and other exploitation of the newcomers (Addams, 1910/[1960]); Davis, 2000).

In a move that made Addams and her colleagues contributors to the developing field of sociology, Hull House also undertook an active program of research. The settlement's residents surveyed conditions in workplaces and tenement houses. They publicized their findings widely, attempting to create an atmosphere that would be conducive to governmental and legislative reform (Popple & Leighninger, 2011).

The Idea Spreads

Following the Hull House example, a number of settlements were established in other American cities, such as New York City's Henry Street Settlement and Boston's South End House. Graham Taylor, a Dutch Reformed Church minister, founded the second settlement house in Chicago, the Chicago Commons. The Commons was located in an Irish-German-Scandinavian community. Taylor's wife and children joined him at the Commons, becoming the first American family to live in an American settlement. While most settlements were established in white neighborhoods, settlements were also developed by African Americans in African American areas. Lugenia Burns Hope started a settlement in Atlanta, Georgia. Both of Hope's parents came from racially mixed marriages. When her father died, Hope, as the oldest of seven, had to drop out of high school to become the family breadwinner. After working as a bookkeeper and a dressmaker, she took a position as a secretary in a charity organization called the Board of Directors of King's Daughters. Burns was the first African American in this job. In 1897, Burns married John Hope, a college classics professor. The couple moved to Atlanta, where John became the president of what would become Morehouse College. In 1908, Lugenia

Burns Hope led a group of women in establishing the Neighborhood Union. This was the first women's social welfare organization for African Americans in Atlanta. Through the Union, the women hoped to improve "the standard of living in the community and to make the West Side of Atlanta a better place to raise our children." By 1914, the Union had established branches throughout the city (Popple & Leighninger, 2011, p. 77).

The Progressive Era

A broad social movement in the United States, often labeled the Progressive Era, developed in the early 1900s and climaxed in the 1912 election of Theodore Roosevelt. As a Republican, Roosevelt had served as vice president under William McKinley and as president after McKinley's assassination in 1901. He served a second term in 1904 to 1908, and hoped his successor, William Howard Taft, would carry out a series of reforms, Roosevelt had in fact left a lengthy "reform agenda" for the incoming president. However, Taft did not live up to Roosevelt's expectations. When Taft planned to run again in 1912, Roosevelt decided that he would also run for president, this time under the banner of a new party, called the Progressive Party.

Progressivism was a period of social and economic reform that began in America at the beginning of the twentieth century. According to historian Richard Hofstadter, a previous period of agrarian discontent "was enlarged and redirected by the growing enthusiasm of middle-class people for social and economic reform." This was not a cohesive movement, but a gathering of many impulses and suggestions for change. The movement was not confined to the Progressive Party, but affected all the various political parties and "the whole tone of American political life" (Hofstadter, 1955, pp. 133–135).

The Stresses of Urbanization and Immigration

The movement took place during a rapid transition from the conditions of an agrarian society to those of modern urban life. Another stimulus for reform was the increasing heterogeneity in American society, caused in large part from the major migration of Europeans, mostly of peasant stock, whose traditions, religions, and languages seemed to make easy assimilation impossible. As Hofstadter (1955) notes in his classic book, *The Age of Reform*:

> *In many ways the struggles of the Protestant Era were influenced by the conflict between the two codes elaborated on one side by the highly moral leaders of Protestant social reform and on the other by the bosses, political professionals, and immigrant masses. (p. 9)*

Hofstadter draws a picture of a movement with much complexity, which combined desires to maintain some of the traditional values of agrarian life with the preservation of individual opportunity and personal

entrepreneurship. These desires often clashed with the interests of political professionals, immigrant masses, and political bosses.

Absorbing at least part of the earlier Populist movement, Progressives championed and were able to enact laws that regulated the working conditions of women and children, improved working conditions in industry, set up community housing codes, limited patronage in the civil service system on the local and federal levels, established prohibition in various localities, regulated the reserve requirements of banks (the Depression of the 1930s was not the only time of bank failures), improved sewage and garbage disposal systems in many local communities, and restricted prostitution on the local level. There were also many attempts to pass federal laws to restrict immigration (just like today) and at both the national and local level, controls were put on people who hired the newcomers (Hofstadter, 1955, pp. 8–9, 181–184).

Child Labor, Prostitution, and Racism

Many social workers were active in the Progressive Movement. Jane Addams and other settlement workers were particularly involved. In promoting better working conditions for young people, Addams noted how increasing industrialism had "gathered together multitudes of eager young creatures" from every part of the earth to serve as a labor supply "for the countless factories and workshops, upon which the present industrial city is based." In her first Christmas at Hull House, Addams offered Christmas candy to "a number of little girls [who] refused to take the candy," saying simply that they worked in a candy factory, and "could not bear the sight of it." This led to an investigation of child labor by Florence Kelley, a resident of Hull House. One result of the investigation was the first factory law in Illinois, which regulated the sanitary conditions of these factories and set 14 as the age at which children could be employed (Addams, 1910/[1960]), pp. 148–150).

Addams and other settlement reformers, as well as Charity Organization workers, also railed against the evils of "gin joints" and prostitution. For these reformers, the problems of prostitution were not just the rise of illegitimacy, the spread of venereal disease, and the destruction of families. They also included the use of a "white slave trade" to ensnare innocent young women. Likewise, establishments that sold alcohol helped fathers avoid the responsibility of supporting their wives and children (Davis, 2000).

Based on her involvement in issues such as child labor, prostitution, and other social problems, Addams joined the Progressive Party. She felt the goals and actions of the party seemed to be a "legitimate way . . . to bring social justice to America." Addams seconded the nomination of Theodore Roosevelt at the Progressive Party convention of 1912 (Davis, 2000).

Addams and at least some others in the settlement movement were concerned about justice and opportunity for African Americans. Addams was one of the founders of the National Association for the Advancement

of Colored People (NAACP) and not only attended a conference of the National Association of Colored Women in Chicago, but also invited the delegates to Hull House for lunch. By 1910, there were 10 settlements around the country that specifically served African Americans, and at least a few more that reported having a mixed clientele (Davis, 2000; Popple & Leighninger, 2011; Trattner, 1999).

Professionalization Begins

Amid the ferment of social reform in the early 1900s, some social work leaders were turning their attention to the development of formal education in the field. By 1910, *social work*, as it was coming to be called, boasted five professional training schools. As early as 1897, Mary Richmond, who directed the Baltimore Charity Organization Society, had urged the establishment of formal training in social work. A leader in the charity organization movement, Richmond was interested in research and in establishing a "scientific" foundation for social work practice. It was time, she felt, "to get educated young men and women to make a life vocation of charity organization work" (Popple & Leighninger, 2011; Richmond, 2000).

Following calls for formal training by Mary Richmond and other COS leaders, the New York Charity Organization Society responded by establishing the New York Summer School of Applied Philanthropy in New York City in 1898. This initial series of courses for charity workers soon became a full-fledged school of social work (now the prestigious Columbia School of Social Work). In 1895, Graham Taylor, founder of the Chicago Commons settlement, launched a series of lectures at the Commons. The series grew into an institute, with courses offered through the University of Chicago's extension program. In 1908, the program became the free-standing Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy. This was the start of today's well-known School of Social Service Administration at the University of Chicago (Leighninger, 2000).

Other schools quickly followed, including the psychiatrically oriented Smith College School for Social Work (which grew out of an early training program to prepare social workers to help patients at a state mental hospital in Boston), the Boston School for Social Workers (later housed in Simmons College), the St. Louis School of Philanthropy (which became part of the University of Missouri), and the Pennsylvania School for Social Service (Lubove, 1969).

African American social workers generally found little acceptance in the field. This led to the development of their own social agencies and training schools. George Haynes, a notable African American social worker, received a BA at Fisk University in 1903, an MA at Yale, and became a secretary of the Colored Men's Department of the International Committee of the YMCA. After becoming the first African American graduate of the New York School of Philanthropy, he helped form the National Urban

League. In a creative effort to provide training for Black social workers, who would then help staff the League, Haynes set up a program at Fisk in which social science students would do field work at the League offices (Popple & Leighninger, 2011).

As social work education programs expanded, a desire to share ideas and deal with common problems led to the creation of the American Association of Schools of Social Work in 1919. These schools varied in their structure; some were undergraduate programs, others graduate schools, some tied to social work agencies, and others affiliated with universities. A movement to standardize schools in the 1930s, to promote the master's degree as the only qualifying degree for social work practice, led to a restriction of membership in the organization to schools that offered at least one year of graduate training and followed prescribed guidelines regarding course content (Leighninger, 2000).

Edith Abbott and Sophonisba Breckinridge were major figures in the establishment of the University of Chicago's School of Social Administration—a prestigious school that focused on education for both administration as well as casework practice in the field of public welfare. Edith's sister, Grace Abbott, had a more activist bent, and went to Washington, DC, in 1917 to head the U.S. Children's Bureau. The Bureau had been created to administer the first child labor law (Leighninger, 2000).

Professionalization Questioned

By the 1920s, charity workers, the directors and residents of settlement houses, social work educators, and "policy people" such as Grace Abbott were beginning to come together under the broad umbrella of the term *social work*. At the same time, this new entity was developing an increased sense of professionalization. Two important figures helped influence the move toward professionalism, Abraham Flexner and Porter Lee.

Flexner was the assistant secretary of the General Education Board of New York City. In 1915, the National Conference of Charities and Correction invited him to talk about social work's status as a new profession. The Conference had been organized in the 1880s by the various state charitable institutions serving the mentally ill, orphans, and the like; by the turn of the century, charity and settlement workers had also joined the group. Today, nearly every article or book about social work professionalism begins with a reference to this famous speech. At the time, Flexner was widely regarded as an authority on graduate professional education. His title "Is Social Work a Profession?" posed a major question for the field, and his listeners no doubt waited on the edge of their seats for his answer (Flexner, 1915, as cited in Leighninger, 2000).

To their dismay, Flexner's answer was no. His chilling words were:

> *Is social work a profession in the . . . strict sense of the term? . . . I have made the point that all the established and recognized professions have definite and*

> *specific ends . . . This is not true of social work. It appears not so much a defined field as an aspect of work in many fields. (pp. 37–39, 43–46)*

He saw social workers as mediators between clients and true professionals like doctors and lawyers. They did not have their own set of specific competencies and skills. This required specialized education based on scientific research. A profession was "intellectual in character" but also practical, bringing a "free, resourceful, unhampered intelligence applied to problems and seeking to understand and master them." It developed its own body of knowledge, not just borrowing from others. Hence, it had to engage in research, based on the "the laboratory and the seminar." This body of knowledge and skills had to be bound into an agreed-upon course of training that would clearly communicate to students what social work was and should do. Flexner concluded that social work did too many things in too many fields to ever come together in such a course. It was too vast and to vague to coalesce as a profession.

However, social work could share with established professionals a "professional spirit." Professions were responsible to society, not just their own members. "The unselfish devotion of those who have chosen to give themselves to making the world a fitter place to live in can fill social work with the professional spirit and thus to some extent lift it above the distinctions which I have been as such pains to make" (Flexner, 1915, as cited in Leighninger, 2000, pp. 39–47).

Professionalization Marches On

Many in Flexner's audience were no doubt greatly disappointed in this assessment of their professional status. Yet, others took his words as a challenge. As they heeded his observations about the need for systematic technique and specialized education based on scientific knowledge, some felt that the "scientific charity" approach had been vindicated and that social work should turn away from its reform activities. "Scientific charity" was reinventing itself as social casework. Social reform was already becoming suspect in the more conservative and disillusioned years following World War I (Ehrenreich, 1985; Lubove, 1969; Popple & Leighninger, 2011, p. 74).

The field's aspirations toward professionalism were also encouraged by another famous speech, this time by a social work academic. Porter Lee, director of the New York School of Social Work, addressed the National Conference of Social Work (a telling name change for the National Conference of Charities and Corrections) in 1929. In his presidential address, "Lee praised the achievements of pioneers in the field of social welfare, and heralded a new period about to unfold." Lee told the audience about the transition from "cause" to "function" in a modern society. Zeal would now give way to training and intelligence, and "sacrifice and flaming spirits" to methods and standards. Social work was changing from social

reform to the organized provision of social casework and other help to individuals with problems (Leighninger, 1987, pp. 7–8).

Lee's address was no doubt disappointing to some of his listeners. Drawn to the field of Jane Addams and other prominent reformers, many were still eager to take up their role as bearers of a social conscience. But others were excited about the new theories of psychotherapy that had begun to filter into the profession, and the promise of a psychiatric social work. Perhaps social workers would finally find a new dignity as members of a skilled and legitimate profession (Leighninger, 1987).

Getting Organized

This increased interest in professionalism helped fuel more consciously professional organizations in social work alongside broader groups such as the National Conference of Charities and Corrections. The American Association of Social Workers was founded in 1921. This was a broad organization that included social caseworkers in a variety of fields of practice, although it tended to exclude settlement and group workers, as they often lacked the formal specialized training required for membership. The 1920s brought an expansion of the kinds of settings in which social work was carried out. Many now worked in private family agencies, as most charity organizations were coming to be called. A new type of practice, social work with groups, was developing within settlement houses and the YMCA/YWCA. Social workers also staffed the Home Service Program created by the Red Cross soon after World War I. This program marked the beginnings of rural social work, providing services to the families of servicemen and disaster victims in small towns and rural areas as well as cities. However, the private social agency was still the major setting for social work practice (Popple & Leighninger, 2011).

The Great Depression

All this was to be changed after the stock market crash of 1929 and the onset of the Great Depression. As the Depression spread, social workers were often the first to view its effects. In the various agencies and organizations where they worked, they encountered increasing numbers of the unemployed. Their clients were no longer just the traditional poor, but also growing numbers of working- and middle-class families. Gradually, as they looked at clients much like themselves, many social workers began to shift their perspective from a focus on individual defects back to an appreciation of the economic and social conditions causing dependency. Caseworkers had become interested in Freudian and other psychologically focused ideas in the 1920s and early 1930s; these ideas now seemed less salient in responding to widespread economic and social disaster (Popple & Leighninger, 2011).

President Hoover was slow to respond to the growing catastrophe, and social workers were among the earliest groups calling for a federal

response to the problems of widespread unemployment. They testified in congressional hearings on relief and helped to draft social welfare legislation. Most of them supported President Franklin Roosevelt's creation of a federally funded relief program and the subsequent development of unemployment insurance and a Social Security system that was created to deal with the financial needs of the elderly, dependent children, and those with physical disabilities. President Roosevelt's emergency relief program was headed by social worker Harry Hopkins, and the public assistance segment was directed by another social worker, Jane Hoey (Popple & Leighninger, 2011).

Jane Hoey and Public Assistance

Hoey had received her social work degree at the New York School of Social Work in 1916, and then worked in a variety of health and public welfare jobs in New York City. She had been Hopkins' assistant when he was secretary of the New York Board of Child Welfare. Hoey brought to this new position a sound knowledge of state and local government and a commitment to public social work. The new Bureau of Public Assistance was put in charge of developing congressionally mandated programs of federal aid for the poor. Among these were the dependent children of single mothers that earlier social reformers had tried to attend to. Hoey began her work with a staff of three: a small group, but eager to carry out the new and exciting ideas being generated in New Deal Washington. Hoey's task was to guide states in developing their own systems for administering these jointly funded programs. Some states, particularly in the South, had already developed child welfare programs, but many were starting from scratch (Coll, 1980; Popple & Leighninger, 2011).

Hoey promoted the use of professionally trained social workers in child welfare work on both the state and federal levels—not a widespread practice at the time. She fought vigorously against the attempts of many states to discriminate against African Americans and other minorities in providing welfare grants. She could be adamant in her cause to get important help to mothers and children. One state official complained strongly to the head of the Social Security Board: "That red-headed devil of yours is in my office. She's telling me certain things that I need to do. Do I have to?" "Yes sir," was the unwelcome answer. While Hoey was not always successful in her attempts to improve social welfare, she left her mark by bringing professionalism to most state welfare departments, and to the federal agency (Leighninger, 2000; Popple & Leighninger, 2011).

Social Security and Public Jobs

Perhaps the most important piece of New Deal legislation for social welfare was the Social Security Act of 1935. It established pensions for retired workers funded by equal taxes on employers and employees. It offered unemployment compensation financed by a federal payroll tax. It

also provided aid to people with visual impairments and to dependent children, the origin of the contemporary welfare system. The program had several important omissions. It did not cover domestic workers like maids and cooks, many of whom were African American. It also failed to cover sharecroppers and tenant farmers, many of whom were also African American. This minority group benefited in many ways from the New Deal, but in this case was excluded from a program that made a big difference in the lives of its participants and which they sorely needed. Social Security has been modified over the years but has remained in place buffering many elders from poverty despite recent attempts to destroy it (Altmeyer, 1966).

Roosevelt's New Deal not only created federally funded relief, unemployment insurance, and Social Security, it also created millions of public jobs through a variety of public works programs. The Civilian Conservation Corps took young men off the streets and put them to work in our National Parks and Forests, planting trees, stopping soil erosion, fighting forest fires, and building recreational and education facilities across the country. Twenty-five of the 30 dollars they earned per month was sent back to their families, helping avert starvation, malnutrition, and homelessness. The Public Works Administration, working through private contractors, built the backbone of the nation's physical and cultural infrastructure: dams, courthouses, hospitals, schools, museums, university buildings, and other public facilities. The Works Progress Administration did similar, though usually smaller, projects that were more labor intensive. These and other programs allowed workers to maintain their skills and dignity and feed their families. They had money to spend, which led to private investment to meet the new demand, created private jobs and revived the economy. Those today who say that only the private sector can create jobs should look more closely at this period of history (Leighninger, 2007).

The Rank and File Movement

A radical social work movement also developed in the Depression Era. Socialist and Communist groups formed among Americans from various economic and political backgrounds. This version of social work was called the Rank and File Movement. The movement stemmed largely from the organization of low-paid and overworked public relief workers, case aides, and clerical workers in Chicago, New York, and other cities into protective associations or unions to promote improved working conditions and salaries. The movement was soon joined by professionally trained social workers that were forming groups that focused on analyzing social problems and dealing with issues of unemployment from a social work perspective. Bertha Capen Reynolds, a well-known psychiatric social worker and the associate dean of the Smith College School of Social Work, was an important member of the Rank and File Movement. She credited her social activism to the effects of a keynote speech at the 1934 National Conference of Social Work in which Mary Van Kleeck of the Russell Sage Foundation spoke of the inherent conflict "between capital and labor" and the fact that

social workers were often caught upholding the status quo (Leighninger, 1987; Popple & Leighninger, 2011).

In the early 1940s, a growing national backlash against New Deal reforms, as well as our involvement in Work War II, contributed not only to the downfall of the Rank and File Movement, but also to social work's renewed interest in individual treatment. Many social workers came to view the provision of relief as the responsibility of public, rather than private agencies. Now, they felt, social workers could return to the more personal aspects of family and individual difficulties. They were free to deal with these issues in private family and children's agencies, expanding their services to a middle-class clientele. Sigmund Freud's theories had a tremendous appeal, and many social work educators incorporated them in their teachings (which this author experienced firsthand in her graduate education at the Syracuse University School of Social Work as late as the mid-1960s; Popple & Leighninger, 2011).

The Postwar Period and Further Organization

The 1950s brought new developments in social work professional and educational organizations, developments that reflected the wide variety of people now coming into social work education and practice as well as an impulse toward coordination within this large and varied profession. In 1955, five specialist social work organizations merged with the American Association of Social Workers to create a single voice for the profession: the NASW. This new group sought to solidify and strengthen social work's identity and recognition as a profession, to increase the group's impact on national social policy, and to attend to basic professional issues such as ensuring ethical practice, defining the skills and scope of social work practice, and helping to plan for adequate and appropriate staffing of social work agencies (Leighninger, 1987; Popple & Leighninger, 2011).

Shortly thereafter, the Council on Social Work Education grew out of a merger of the American Association of Schools of Social Work, which was made up of graduate schools only, and an organization of schools offering social work programs at the baccalaureate level. The latter, the National Association of Schools of Social Service Administration, was made up largely of programs in large state universities and some smaller institutions that saw their mission as preparing people to work in the new public social services first developed during the Depression. The group argued that social work's stress on graduate education as the only pathway into the profession was "elitist and impractical in a time of growing staffing needs" in the field (Leighninger, 1987).

Poverty Is Rediscovered

Social work has never been a dull profession. In the 1960s, President John F. Kennedy brought a new conviction to creating a more equitable

society. Inspired in part by influential books like Michael Harrington's *The Other America, Poverty in the United States*, poverty was "rediscovered" and the federal government tried anew to fashion a broad response to the problems of the poor. The major approach of the Kennedy administration was embodied in amendments to the Social Security Acts that provided increased federal funding to the states to improve and enlarge their services to recipients of public assistance. These services included intensive social services, and greatly increased the number of social workers in public welfare settings. The law promoted the use of workers with master's degrees in social work, and money was allocated to public welfare departments to send employees to graduate schools of social work. Kennedy also promoted a sense of personal contribution to others by establishing the Peace Corps program to send Americans, particularly young people, to other countries to help poor communities (Patterson, 1994; Popple & Leighninger, 2011).

A War on Poverty?

After Kennedy's assassination, President Lyndon Johnson took over the war on poverty under the banner of the Great Society. Johnson significantly enlarged the federal partnership in American social welfare, including federal and state agencies as well as private institutions in administering the system. The Work Incentive Program (WIN to its supporters, WIP to its critics), funded training programs and child care for women on welfare. This was in many ways a punitive welfare reform, since clients could be cut off from AFDC if they refused to enroll in job training or to take any job offered. The program marked an important shift from the original Aid to Dependent Children system, which aimed to help mothers care for their children at home. WIN and subsequent welfare reform programs have failed to provide sufficient, good-quality child care programs, training for reasonably paid jobs, and other supports to make this type of approach a realistic response to poverty among women and children (Patterson, 1994).

Civil Rights and Welfare Rights

Johnson also inherited a tumultuous situation in which the continued discrimination of African Americans had boiled over into racial tensions, boycotts, riots, and the development of a very effective civil rights movement. The Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. and "ordinary people" like Rosa Parks were joined by many White Americans in fighting institutionalized and ingrained prejudice. Under Johnson's leadership, Congress passed the 1965 Civil Rights Act (Rouse, 1989).

By the end of President Johnson's term in office, the country's mood had begun to shift to the right. In 1968, Republicans put Richard Nixon in the White House. Although he had been critical of Johnson's Great Society programs, he continued to expand the federal partnership in social welfare. According to historian James T. Patterson, Nixon sought

welfare reform largely because northern governors were crying out for federal help in dealing with a rise in child welfare caseloads. In 1969, Nixon called for a Family Assistance Plan (FAP) that would guarantee all families with children a minimum of $500 per adult and $300 per child a year. Responding to the age-old concerns about individual responsibility for poverty, the program "promised especially to sustain the incentive to work and supplant welfare dependency." Critics quickly weighed in. They included social workers and advocates for the welfare poor organized under the banner of the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO). The advocacy group was set up by George Wiley, an African American professor of chemistry at Syracuse University. NWRO and other groups expressed concern about the workfare aspects of the program. Adult recipients (except for the disabled, aged, and mothers of preschool children) had to accept "suitable" training or work in order to maintain their grants. Yet, day care and other services were insufficient to support recipients and their families (Patterson, 1994).

The Age of Reagan

President Ronald Reagan's administration built on and accelerated the conservative trend in social policy that began in Nixon's second term and was continued under Presidents Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter. In the decade before Reagan's election, the economy had stagnated, inflation rates were high, and both taxes and the federal deficit were rising. Reagan's agenda included balancing the federal budget (through cuts in "wasteful government spending"), cutting taxes, and reducing government regulation. He also sought to diminish the federal government's role in supporting social welfare programs. The responsibility for many health and human services should revert back to the state and local level, were they had been lodged before the New Deal. The Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Acts of the early 1980s reduced support for programs such as Aid for Dependent Children, food stamps, unemployment insurance, and low income housing. Reagan's tax legislation which cut taxes for the rich also resulted in raising taxes for the working poor. Poverty rates increased and wealth was redistributed upward. In the process, it should be noted Reagan never managed to balance the budget, but in fact greatly increased the size of government and the national deficit (Bell, 1987, pp. 245–276; Popple & Leighninger, 2011; Trattner, 1999).

What Reagan was saying was more important than what he was doing. His insistence that "government was the problem, not the solution" and that people should have to pay only minimal taxes struck a responsive chord in American conservatives and put federally funded programs for the poor on the defensive for decades to come. One of his favorite stories concerned a "welfare queen" who collected thousands of dollars in public assistance payments using 80 aliases, 30 addresses, and 12 Social Security

cards. Though the story was never substantiated, there were much less dramatic examples of welfare fraud to base it on, and the stigma was indelibly imprinted on public welfare programs.

The Reagan years were challenging times for many social workers and their organizations. Ronald Reagan was a popular president, with public approval ratings higher than any president since Franklin Delano Roosevelt. As much as the profession tried to protect public programs for the disadvantaged, it often seemed like an uphill battle. The NASW frequently attacked the conservative positions of the Reagan administration and promoted national health insurance and other social reforms. NASW joined with other advocacy groups such as the Children's Defense Fund, and formed a political action arm, the Political Action Committee for Candidate Election, or PACE, which is still active today. PACE was set up to back candidates who supported social reforms (Katz, 1986).

Reagan Refined

Reagan's successor, George H. W. Bush, maintained much of Reagan's health and welfare agenda. Due to the large budget deficits he inherited from Reagan, it was difficult to fund new federal programs, especially since Bush had also pledged not to raise taxes. Bush did make two contributions that advanced social welfare: the enactment of the Child Care and Development Block Grant, which provided funding to local child care providers for staff training, administration, and direct care; and the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act. This important piece of legislation required employers to make "reasonable accommodations" for people with disabilities. It also made it illegal to discriminate against those with disabilities in areas such as employment, housing, and education (Popple & Leighninger, 2011; Trattner, 1999).

The election of Bill Clinton brought the Democratic Party back to the Presidential Office in 1992. However, Clinton shared Bush and Reagan's aversion to public assistance. While he came from a more modest background than Reagan and Bush, and had a personal style that enabled him to reach out to disadvantaged people and minorities, Clinton was wary of "long-term, costly assistance" to the poor. He promised to "scrap the current welfare system and make welfare a second chance" rather than a way of life. Accordingly, his major social welfare reform was the creation and passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunities Act (PRWOA). This replaced the AFDC entitlement with a block grant, called Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). Under TANF, people were not "entitled" to welfare. Instead, in the tradition of WIN and FAP, recipients had to participate in work activities and families were limited to a total of 5 years of assistance in a lifetime (Lindhorst & Leighninger, 2003; Popple & Leighninger, 2011).

Welfare reform under Clinton did not alleviate the problems of poverty. Many of the poor were simply moved from "welfare poverty"

into "employment poverty." Former recipients often had a lower financial status as workers than they had had under public welfare, and few of their jobs provided good benefits, such as health insurance. Over half of those who left the welfare rolls for employment in 1999 still had jobs below the poverty level (Popple & Leighninger, 2011).

Reagan Invoked but Ignored?

The presidency of George W. Bush brought back a more conservative approach to social issues and social welfare. Bush had used the argument that social welfare was "the historic mission of the churches" as a justification for cutting back on government programs. Under his "faith-based initiative," Bush proposed that religious groups should have the right to contract with federal agencies and to use federal dollars for a variety of services for people in need. By 2006, under the auspices of this initiative, millions of dollars in taxpayer funds had gone to groups that supported the president's agenda on abortion and similar issues (Popple & Leighninger, 2011).

George W. Bush believed in "compassionate conservatism," which meant that poor people didn't have a right to financial assistance, but people who were in a position to help others had a moral obligation to be benevolent. One significant legislative initiative under the second Bush was the Prescription Drugs extension of Medicare. It offered a variety of private plans for seniors to get drugs more cheaply. A very expensive program to run, it was passed without any consideration for how to pay for it. Another piece of landmark legislation was a tax cut that included the very wealthy as well as the middle class. Two wars in the Middle East were also started during the Bush administration. Though not exactly social welfare programs, they have had important implications for social welfare. First, they have produced thousands of physically and mentally disabled veterans who require expensive care for which the government is responsible. Investigations at Walter Reed Hospital revealed that this care is often inadequate, mismanaged, and underfunded. The second effect is that, together with the Prescription Drug program and the tax cuts for the rich, the wars have greatly expanded the federal deficit. This has been seen by many as a reason to continue cutting social, educational, and medical programs.

After his reelection in 2004, George W. Bush tried vigorously to privatize Social Security. He said that his election had given him "political capital" and this is how he was going to spend it. But the effort was opposed just as vigorously. He did not, it turned out, have sufficient political capital.

In the last months of the Bush administration, a mortgage loan bubble burst precipitating a financial crisis. One major Wall Street bank collapses and others were saved only by federal intervention. Bush created the Toxic

Assets Relief Program to prevent widespread bank failure. It worked, but also cost a lot of money.

The Age of Impasse

Into this economic storm walked President Barack Obama. He worked closely with Wall Street to stabilize banks, a move that made him unpopular with many people outside the financial sector when the banks, after recovering and repaying their loans, went back to rewarding themselves with astronomical bonuses. He spent a huge amount of *his* political capital pushing through a comprehensive reform of the health care system. He succeeded, but for how long remains to be seen. Many benefits will not be realized for several years. In the meantime, some states are trying to opt out of the program and the Republican Party has made its repeal a major part of the current campaign. Obama passed an economic stimulus, which was too small, too slow, and too freighted with non-productive tax cuts put into the bill in the vain hope that some Republicans might support it. The result was a recovery of sorts, but one moving at an agonizingly slow pace.

Republicans have succeeded in making the central domestic policy debate about national deficits, despite the fact that they showed little concern for this problem when they were the ones contributing to the deficit. President Obama has decided to accept the terms of the debate and to act like Herbert Hoover rather than Franklin Roosevelt, pleading with corporations to create jobs rather than creating them himself. Most economists agree that the solution to the problem of unemployment is on the "demand" side (consumption), not on the "supply" side (tax cuts). And most agree that, while deficits are indeed a major problem, they can best be dealt with once we have a robust economy again. But policies that would spur consumption—extending unemployment compensation and the Earned Income Tax Credit; support to states who are laying off teachers, police officers, fire fighters, and government employees; and any kind of public works programs to rebuild infrastructure are opposed by majorities in Congress (Krugman, 2011).

Private investors are understandably reluctant to hire new employees or buy new equipment when no one is buying their goods and services. Offering them more money will not change their behavior; they already have plenty. Thus, we are in a vicious circle with no way out but government intervention. We are likely therefore to have both unemployment and deficits in our future. In such an atmosphere, federal, state, and local social welfare programs will continue to contract or disappear.

Social welfare has come a long way from its beginnings in early religious responses to the problems of poverty, famine, sickness, disability, community breakdowns, and other vicissitudes of life. Social work as a profession has slowly emerged from the helping efforts of religious orders, good Samaritans, and the like. Although some themes and structures have

been repeated through the centuries, new ideas and variations on older approaches continue to emerge. By understanding the history of social welfare and social work, we can endeavor to put current situations into context and to think carefully about the results—intended and unintended—of our programs and actions.

Key Terms

Abraham Flexner
Almshouses; poor farms
Black Plague; asylums
Charity Organization Society
Dorothea Dix
Family Assistance Plan
Jane Addams
Jane Hoey
National Welfare Rights Organization
New Deal
Poor Laws
Progressive Movement
Rank and File Movement
Religion and Social Work
Settlement Houses
Social Security
Speenhamland

Review Questions for Critical Thinking

1. Explanations of people's problems can emphasize the characteristics of individuals or the social conditions surrounding them. Trace the swing of this pendulum through social work history.
2. Is social work a profession? Should it be?
3. To what extent has legislation aimed at dealing with poverty actually been aimed at controlling labor?
4. Though the roots of concern for social welfare can be found in the major religious traditions, the role of religious institutions has diminished over time. What should their role be in modern social work?

Online Resources

Social Work History Station http://www.boisestate.edu/socwork/hduff/xx.htm

Farm Security Administration, Library of Congress, Depression photographs http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/fsa

Pioneer Social Worker Data Base http://www.naswfoundation.org/pioneers/default.asp

Evolution of Social Work Timeline http://www.socialpolicy.ca/cush/m4/evolution.htm

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