PRACTICAL SOCIAL WORK

Series Editor: Jo Campling

BASW

Social work is at an important stage in its development. All professions must be responsive to changing social and economic conditions if they are to meet the needs of those they serve. This series focuses on sound practice and the specific contribution which social workers can make to the well-being of our society in the 1980s.

The British Association of Social Workers has always been conscious of its role in setting guidelines for practice and in seeking to raise professional standards. The conception of the Practical Social Work series arose from a survey of BASW members to discover where they, the practitioners in social work, felt there was the most need for new literature. The response was overwhelming and enthusiastic, and the result is a carefully planned, coherent series of books. The emphasis is firmly on practice, set in a theoretical framework. The books will inform, stimulate and promote discussion, thus adding to the further development of skills and high professional standards. All the authors are practitioners and teachers of social work representing a wide variety of experience.

JO CAMPLING

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MACMILLAN PRESS
LONDON

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Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 1984

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First published 1984 by
THE MACMILLAN PRESS LTD
London and Basingstoke
Companies and representatives throughout the world

ISBN 978-0-333-34067-7 ISBN 978-1-349-17356-3 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-1-349-17356-3

Typeset in Great Britain by
Vantage Photosetting Co. Ltd
Eastleigh and London

For Judith

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Acknowledgements

I (RB) want to thank the many people who have discussed and practised interviewing and counselling with me, especially Edgar Anstey, Peter Cook, Francesca Inskipp and Chris Lewis, each of whom introduced me to a different and absorbing aspect of these skills. I feel very warm and happy as I remember the difference they made. Three friends and colleagues read Chapters 3 and 5 in draft form: Jan Woodley, Ruth Sage and Clive Fletcher. The chapters were improved by their comments. I also use a modified version of a framework for learning skills suggested by Francesca Inskipp.

I (PN) would like to thank the students in the Department of Sociology at NELP and at Hillcroft College for their helpful responses to my teaching in this area.

Debbie Lambert and Peggy Layton typed the manuscript quickly and accurately. We would both also like to thank our families, Derry and Kate Nicolson, and Elma and Emma Bayne, for their support.

P.N.
R.B.

Introduction

At a recent seminar with a group of newly qualified social workers, the inevitable question was asked: 'What have you learnt from the theory taught on your course, and more specifically, from the foundation social science disciplines?'

The answers were unanimous – they found the social science interesting, and 'recognised' theory from their practical experience. However, they still had doubts about actively incorporating social science theory into their practice, because they were not confident in their ability to make vital connections between theory, evidence and specific situations with clients or their particular agencies. Even so, most of the seminar group had become convinced during training that social science provided an essential backdrop to practical social work, and without it they would fail to make full use of their own skills, their powers of analysis, and their relationships with clients and colleagues.

In this book we are concerned with the discipline of *psychology* which has always been fundamental to social work practice, and has occupied an important part of the underlying theory on CQSW courses (see Nicolson, 1981). Psychology itself, however, incorporates many approaches, and is applied in many other areas of work and life than those relevant to social work. Thus, in clarifying the areas which are relevant to social work, this book traces the history of the relationship between the two disciplines, and demonstrates the particular ways in which psychological knowledge informs social work practice. It looks most particularly at the area of skills, and how psychology permeates relationships between social workers and their clients and colleagues. It also explains and illustrates the importance of *psychological theory* for social workers trying to make sense of the complex issues of their role within the framework of social policy, and suggests how the future relationship between social work and psychology might develop. The aim of this book is twofold – it

provides a basic introduction to psychological knowledge for social work practitioners, *and* it argues that social workers need to take the discipline of psychology seriously if they are going to find ways of improving their practice.

The areas of mutual concern for social workers and psychologists are wide-ranging, and as a consequence this book has tackled them in an *applied* way, which means we have considered the problems facing social workers and confronted these by drawing from psychological theory. In order to do this we have concentrated on specific key areas of psychology, and thus some other areas are beyond the scope of this basic text. These are many aspects of personality theory, counselling, evaluation and therapy, and the psychology of attitude change and development. There are, however, already excellent introductory books in these areas, some of which will be included in the section on further reading at the end of the book.

Rowan Bayne is mainly responsible for Chapter 3 ('Interviewing') and Chapter 5 ('Forming Impressions of People'). Paula Nicolson is mainly responsible for the other chapters. In most cases we have quoted main sources of reference in the text, and these will be detailed in the References.

After much thought, we decided to use the pronouns 'she', 'he', and 'he or she', and occasionally other forms like 'she/he' fairly randomly throughout; this seemed the least sexist approach, and more important to us than obstructing the smooth flow of the script.

North East London Polytechnic
July 1983

PAULA NICOLSON
ROWAN BAYNE