

Chapter 2 Introduction to Professionalism

Multiple Choice

1. Professionalism in social work involves all of the following fundamental aspects EXCEPT:
- A. personal and professional integrity.
 - B. a privileged status and prestige in society.
 - C. diversity and difference.
 - D. critical thinking and scientific inquiry.

ANS: B

PG: 18

Feedback: Professionalism in social work includes the dimensions of (1) personal and professional integrity; (2) self-understanding and self-control; (3) advanced knowledge, expertise, and self-efficacy; (4) social support and well-being; (5) critical thinking and scientific inquiry; (6) lifelong learning; (7) diversity and difference; (8) human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice; (9) policy–practice; and (10) social work values and ethical decision making.

2. In the context of social workers, which of the following is a fundamental aspect of professionalism?
- A. The license owned by social workers
 - B. The salary of social workers
 - C. The expertise of social workers
 - D. The status enjoyed by social workers

ANS: C

PG: 18

Feedback: Although as social workers we certainly do benefit from our status and authority as licensed professionals, the fundamental aspects of professionalism involve our knowledge, attitudes, ideals, expertise, and actions rather than our social position, educational achievements, or prestige. Indeed, our privileged status as professionals may sometimes leave us hesitant to take action against discrimination, oppression, inequality, and other forms of injustice.

3. Identify a factor that tends to promote an establishmentarian orientation that favors the status quo and may interfere with a social worker's mission as a social-change-focused professional.
- A. Threat of job loss
 - B. Elimination of discrimination
 - C. Extensive scope of the services a social worker provides
 - D. Diversity in human communities

ANS: A

PG: 19

Feedback: Risk of diminished status or threat of job loss tends to promote an establishmentarian orientation that favors the social, political, and economic status quo and may interfere with a social worker's mission as a social-change-focused profession. The privileged status of social workers as professionals may leave them hesitant to take action against discrimination, oppression, inequality, and other forms of injustice.

4. In the context of social work service, integrity suggests:
- A. consequentiality.
 - B. secrecy.
 - C. flexibility.
 - D. trustworthiness.

ANS: D

PG: 19

Feedback: Personal and professional integrity are essential aspects of professionalism. Within the context of social work service, integrity suggests honesty, truthfulness, sincerity, humility, and trustworthiness.

5. In its Code of Ethics, the National Association of Social Workers (2008) holds that social workers should:
- A. benefit from the status and authority of being a licensed social worker.
 - B. not be given a privileged status in society.
 - C. promote an establishmentarian orientation in favor of the social status quo.
 - D. not be associated with dishonesty.

ANS: D

PG: 19

Feedback: In its Code of Ethics, the National Association of Social Workers (2008) states that “Social workers should not participate in, condone, or be associated with dishonesty, fraud, or deception.” However, in social work, integrity goes well beyond the simple avoidance or absence of misbehavior.

6. As a social worker, you demonstrate integrity when you:
- A. always use your immediate thoughts and emotional reactions as a basis for professional action.
 - B. hold an entirely different set of personal and religious views from that of a client.
 - C. change your mind when credible evidence challenges previously held beliefs.
 - D. reveal the information given by a client to other clients.

ANS: C

PG: 20

Feedback: As a social worker, you display integrity when you willingly acknowledge mistakes and errors in your own thoughts, words, and deeds; and change your mind when credible evidence challenges your previously held beliefs.

7. In addition to integrity, professionalism among social workers involves a sophisticated level of:
- A. self-understanding and self-control.
 - B. assumptions and presumptions.
 - C. personality and status.
 - D. individuality and personal progress.

ANS: A

PG: 21

Feedback: In addition to integrity, professionalism also involves a sophisticated level of self-understanding and self-control. Without self-understanding and self-control, integrity would be virtually impossible.

8. In technical terms, _____ is “the study of the relationships among organisms as well as the relationships between them and their physical environment” (Collin, 2004, p. 69).
- A. psychology
 - B. terminology
 - C. sociology
 - D. ecology

ANS: D

PG: 24

Feedback: In technical terms, ecology is “the study of the relationships among organisms as well as the relationships between them and their physical environment” (Collin, 2004, p. 69). In social work, however, we sometimes use the terms environment and ecology as synonyms.

9. _____ is one of the “big five” or OCEAN personality factors.
- A. Self-reliance
 - B. Selfishness

- C. Neuroticism
- D. Introversion

ANS: C

PG: 28

Feedback: Currently, one of the most popular trait approaches to personality assessment involves attention to the following “big five” or OCEAN personality factors: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism.

10. In the context of professionalism among social workers, what is the fundamental attribution error?
- A. The tendency of people to blame external factors, such as other people or circumstances, for their personal shortcomings is referred to as the fundamental attribution error.
 - B. The use of unethical measures by social workers while collecting research data is referred to as the fundamental attribution error.
 - C. The overvaluing of personal and the undervaluing of social and environmental factors in the analysis of human behavior is referred to as the fundamental attribution error.
 - D. The inability to see one’s personal lapses in judgement is referred to as the fundamental attribution error.

ANS: C

PG: 29

Feedback: The overvaluing of personal (internal) and the undervaluing of social and environmental (external) factors is known as the fundamental attribution error (Ross, 1977). Interestingly, when people attempt to explain their own lapses of judgment or their own misbehavior, they often mention external factors such as other people or circumstances.

11. For social workers, _____ involves the “confidence in their ability to execute specific skills in a particular set of circumstances and thereby achieve a successful outcome” (Holden, Meenaghan, Anastas, & Metrey, 2001, p. 116).
- A. self-interest
 - B. self-efficacy
 - C. self-control
 - D. self-awareness

ANS: B

PG: 30

Feedback: For social workers, self-efficacy involves the “confidence in their ability to execute specific skills in a particular set of circumstances and thereby achieve a successful outcome” (Holden, Meenaghan, Anastas, & Metrey, 2001, p. 116). Without knowledge-based self-efficacy, social workers would likely be relatively inactive, passive observers rather than energetic, collaborative agents of change.

12. The common factors that are important for the effective working relationships between social workers and their clients are:
- A. not related to the facilitative conditions.
 - B. also referred to as facilitative conditions.
 - C. specific to a particular model or approach employed by social workers while dealing with their clients.
 - D. separate from the effects of specific intervention approaches and techniques employed by social workers.

ANS: D

PG: 32

Feedback: The common factors that are important for the effective working relationships between social workers and their clients are separate from the effects of specific intervention approaches and techniques. In other words, they are common to most helping endeavors and are not specific or exclusive to any particular model or approach.

13. In the context of social workers, the degree to which helpers believe in the value and effectiveness of what they do and how they do it is termed:

- A. allegiance.
- B. self-control.
- C. facilitation.
- D. self-efficacy.

ANS: A

PG: 33

Feedback: The theoretical approaches or models, change strategies, intervention techniques, and practice protocols we adopt in the process of helping affect client outcomes. Helpers' allegiance to the approaches adopted or interventions undertaken also contribute. By allegiance, we mean the degree to which helpers believe in the value and effectiveness of what they do and how they do it. Furthermore, the client's belief in the chosen approach is probably just as important and perhaps even more so than the helper's.

14. In the context of social workers, which of the following practices is likely to improve the quality and the effectiveness of the process of helping clients?

- A. Using immediate thoughts and emotional reactions as a basis for professional action
- B. Acquiring systematic evaluative feedback from clients
- C. Using a standard approach to solve the problems of each client
- D. Asking closed-ended questions during interviews with clients

ANS: B

PG: 33

Feedback: Previously underappreciated, systematic evaluative feedback from clients is a powerful factor associated with better outcomes. Indeed, the quality and the effectiveness of the helping process tends to improve when clients provide regular, formalized evaluative feedback about the helper, the helping relationship, the service approach, and progress toward desired goals; and when the helper regularly inquires about and tabulates results, and then uses those findings to make adjustments in approach or style.

True-False

T F 1. Social workers are obligated personally, morally, ethically, and legally to reflect high standards of professionalism in all aspects of service activities.

ANS: T

PG: 19

Feedback: Social workers are obligated—personally, morally, ethically, and legally—to reflect high standards of professionalism in all aspects of our service activities. Fortunately, most of us are committed to providing ethical and effective services to our clients and promoting a better quality of life for all people.

T F 2. Self-understanding and self-control are outcomes that can be completed prior to starting social work.

ANS: F

PG: 22

Feedback: Self-understanding and self-control are not products or outcomes that can be completed and then set aside. Rather, they reflect ongoing processes of maturity through which we grow personally and professionally.

T F 3. Social workers must not only possess sophisticated knowledge and expertise; we must also expect that we can make a difference as well.

ANS: T

PG: 30

Feedback: Social workers must not only possess sophisticated knowledge and expertise; we must also expect that we can make a difference as well. Just as clients benefit when they anticipate the goodwill, integrity, and competence of social workers, social workers profit from self-confidence as well.

- T F 4. Because of the emphasis on person-in-environment, social workers recognize that situations and circumstances strongly influence human experience and action.
ANS: T
PG: 29
Feedback: Because of the emphasis on person-in-environment, social workers recognize that situations and circumstances strongly influence human experience and action. Indeed, social workers understand that situational factors may override personal characteristics so that even strongly moral and conscientious people sometimes take immoral or illegal action (Zimbardo, 2007).
- T F 5. Social workers understand that even though situational factors may override personal characteristics, strongly moral and conscientious people do not take immoral or illegal action.
ANS: F
PG: 29
Feedback: Social workers understand that situational factors may override personal characteristics so that even strongly moral and conscientious people sometimes take immoral or illegal action (Zimbardo, 2007). Conversely, those who routinely engage in morally reprehensible behavior occasionally behave in incredibly generous and honorable ways.
- T F 6. Personality characteristics, such as introversion and extraversion, are not influenced by external circumstances.
ANS: F
PG: 29
Feedback: Situations strongly influence our thoughts, feelings, sensations, and behavior. Even personality characteristics, such as introversion and extraversion, are influenced by circumstances.
- T F 7. Social relationships and social networks influence social workers.
ANS: T
PG: 41
Feedback: Social relationships and social networks influence social workers. Indeed, the nature and extent of our own social support and personal well-being undoubtedly affect the quality of our professional work, as well as the satisfaction we experience in providing service.
- T F 8. As the study of human well-being has evolved, theoretical models and evaluation measures have become more discipline specific.
ANS: F
PG: 44
Feedback: As the study of human well-being has evolved, the relevant theoretical models and evaluation measures have become more sophisticated. They have also become less discipline specific.

Essay and/or Short Answer

1. What are your views on professionalism in the sphere of social work?

ANS: Students' answers will vary. A professional is one who "has or displays . . . skill, knowledge, experience, standards, or expertise . . . [and is] . . . competent, efficient" ("professional," 2014). In the case of social work, however, professionalism goes well beyond knowledge, competence, and expertise to incorporate qualities of honesty, honor, and humility; dedication, commitment, and altruism; and, importantly, adherence to a core set of values and a code of ethics. Our conception of professionalism in social work includes the dimensions of (1) personal and professional integrity; (2) self-understanding and self-control; (3) advanced knowledge, expertise, and self-efficacy; (4) social support and well-being; (5) critical thinking and scientific inquiry; (6) lifelong learning; (7)

diversity and difference; (8) human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice; (9) policy–practice; and (10) social work values and ethical decision making.

PG: 18

2. Assume that you are the supervisor of a social worker who is responsible for overseeing the welfare of abused and neglected children placed in foster care. You discover that the social worker fraudulently reported that he visits each child twice a week when the truth is that he visits most children about once every two or three months. What would you do in this situation? How would your decision be affected if (a) the children are all safe and healthy and (b) one of the children has died as a result of abuse by members of the foster family?

ANS: Students' answers will vary. Social workers affect people in profound ways, often for the better, but sometimes for the worse. Given the large number of social workers and the nature and scope of the services we provide, the importance of professionalism cannot be overemphasized. When social workers are competent and trustworthy, our clients feel satisfied and society as a whole benefits. The overall reputation of social workers and our profession improves. However, when social workers lack professionalism, many people suffer. Clients or others affected by our policies, programs, and practices may be harmed. Indeed, lives can, and sometimes are, lost due to social workers' negligence or incompetence. When some social workers lack professionalism, employers may become reluctant to hire others. The stature of the profession may decline, and funding sources may become less inclined to support social services in general.

The stakes are so high that social workers are obligated—personally, morally, ethically, and legally—to reflect high standards of professionalism in all aspects of our service activities. Fortunately, most of us are committed to providing ethical and effective services to our clients and promoting a better quality of life for all people.

PG: 19

3. Is it ethical for a social worker to lie to his or her supervisor?

ANS: Students' answers will vary. Personal and professional integrity are essential aspects of professionalism. Within the context of social work service, integrity suggests honesty, truthfulness, sincerity, humility, and trustworthiness. In its Code of Ethics, the National Association of Social Workers (2008) states that “Social workers should not participate in, condone, or be associated with dishonesty, fraud, or deception” (Section 4.04). However, in social work, integrity goes well beyond the simple avoidance or absence of misbehavior. Rather, we pursue professional integrity with conviction, dedication, and enthusiasm.

PG: 19

4. As a social worker, how would you show integrity?

ANS: Students' answers will vary. As a social worker, you demonstrate integrity when you share information that is supported by valid and reliable evidence, and, conversely, when you refrain from repeating gossip, rumors, and other forms of invalid and unreliable information. You reflect integrity when you publicly acknowledge others' contributions and credit sources of information used to support your statements and positions. You demonstrate integrity when you openly state that you are sharing a personal opinion rather than a professional recommendation or admit ignorance when you do not know the answer to a particular question. You exemplify integrity when you manage your own personal or religious beliefs in order to better serve clients who hold different views. You show integrity when you resist temptations to cheat, lie, or misrepresent facts; and when you recognize that your immediate thoughts and emotional reactions may not always serve as a valid basis for professional action. You reflect integrity when you keep your promises and fulfill your commitments. You display integrity when you willingly acknowledge mistakes and errors in your own thoughts, words, and deeds; and change your mind when credible evidence challenges your previously held beliefs.

You manifest integrity when you report a colleague who exploited a client, cheated on an exam, or plagiarized a report; or, when you admit that you have done so. You reflect integrity when you reveal that your organization intentionally defrauds its funding sources by billing for services it does not provide; and perhaps lose your job when you do so. Despite laws intended to protect honest whistleblowers from retaliation, the consequences of trying to right wrongs and combat injustice can be painful indeed (Devine & Maassarani, 2011; Kohn, 2011; Press, 2012). Unfortunately, direct or indirect punishment sometimes results from “doing the right thing.” Integrity can be costly indeed.

PG: 19–20

5. Imagine a scenario where you are in charge of a shelter for women who are victims of domestic violence. You encounter a case where a woman is physically and emotionally tortured by her spouse. But instead of staying away from the abuse and trying to improve her life, she wants to stay at home in fear of disgrace. Outline the knowledge and skills required to handle this particular case.

ANS: Students' answers will vary. For social workers, self-efficacy involves the "confidence in their ability to execute specific skills in a particular set of circumstances and thereby achieve a successful outcome" (Holden, Meenaghan, Anastas, & Metrey, 2001, p. 116). Without knowledge-based self-efficacy, social workers would likely be relatively inactive, passive observers rather than energetic, collaborative agents of change.

PG: 30

6. Do you agree with the view that empathy may appear in several forms?

ANS: Students' answers will vary. Empathy may indeed appear in several forms. For example, when we interact with someone who feels distress and we both feel her or his distress and show our concern, we engage in proximal empathy. When we become concerned about people outside our immediate vicinity—perhaps those in another part of our community or in a distant corner of the world—we reflect altruistic empathy. When we say or do something that contributes to others' discomfort and then, upon noticing their reaction, express our awareness and show our concern—perhaps by acknowledging the impact of our own actions through an expression of remorse—we engage in self-corrective empathy (Quann & Wien, 2006, July).

PG: 36

7. Why is the person-in-environment perspective important to you as a social worker?

ANS: Students' answers will vary. Social workers are dedicated to the resolution of social problems and the enhancement of social functioning and social well-being. We could not possibly provide effective service if we operated in isolation. Rather, we are grounded in a person-in-environment perspective and remain deeply involved with others. The nature of the work requires regular collaboration and cooperation, ongoing supervision or consultation, and a great deal of social support. In the absence of energy-enhancing support and reality-testing feedback, social workers would quickly deplete our personal resources and increase the likelihood of improperly meeting some of our own psychosocial needs and personal wants through our relationships with clients. Indeed, if social workers are isolated and lack strong, positive personal and professional social networks, we become quite vulnerable to numerous temptations. We need substantial social support and a solid sense of well-being.

PG: 40

8. It is essential that as a social worker you develop a strong social support network to help you manage the impact of the demands of this highly stressful profession. Assess the areas where you may be most impacted by your own social circumstances.

ANS: Students' answers will vary. Social support involves several dimensions. As a social worker, you may help clients identify sources of social support that are satisfying or energizing—because they represent strengths within their social world. You might help clients take steps to increase the size or enhance the quality of their social networks and relationships. Sometimes a client's family members and friends might join you and your client in meetings intended to further such goals. At other times, you and a client may determine that certain people or groups are not now and are unlikely to become future sources of support. In such contexts, your client may decide to reconfigure or restructure selected social networks. Efforts such as these may help clients enhance their social functioning and improve the overall quality of their lives. Of course, social relationships and social networks also influence social workers. Indeed, the nature and extent of our own social support and personal well-being undoubtedly affect the quality of our professional work, as well as the satisfaction we experience in providing service. The interpersonal and emotional demands of professional social work practice can be exhausting. Social workers who feel personally and professionally supported in their networks and personal relationships are better prepared to cope effectively with the inevitable stress and the numerous temptations that accompany professional practice.

PG: 41

9. Discuss the Human Development Index.

ANS: Students' answers will vary. In looking at the social well-being of nations, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) incorporates several related indicators in their Human Development Index (HDI). The HDI is a composite index of three dimensions and four indicators associated with human development. The dimensions include (1) health—as indicated or measured by life expectancy at birth; (2) education—as indicated by expected years of schooling and the average years of schooling; and (3) living standards—as measured by the gross national income per capita (United Nations Development Programme, 2011).

PG: 42

10. What are the factors that contribute to social well-being?

ANS: Students' answers will vary. Several factors contribute to social well-being. A leader in the positive psychology movement, Seligman (2002) suggests that personal happiness involves three different dimensions: (1) a more or less pleasant life that includes considerably more positive than negative emotional experiences; (2) an engaged life in which one becomes challenged by and invested in activities such as work, recreation, and love; and (3) a meaningful life in which one uses her or his assets, talents, and strengths with others in purposeful endeavors that contribute to something greater than oneself. For Seligman (2002), Lyubomirsky and colleagues (2005), Maslow (1943, 1968), and Kenrick et al. (2010) happiness involves much more than pleasurable experience alone. All recognize the limits of hedonism in their views of sustained well-being. Active engagement with others, meaningful pursuits, and acts of kindness, generosity, and gratitude contribute to lasting happiness as well.

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