

Social Work in Rural Communities

Fifth Edition

EDITED BY
Leon Ginsberg



COUNCIL ON SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION
Alexandria, Virginia

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Contents

<i>Preface to the Fifth Edition</i>	vii
Part I Basics of Social Work in Rural Communities	1
1 Introduction to Basic Concepts of Rural Social Work LEON GINSBERG	5
2 Historical Treasures of Rural Communities: <i>Special Characteristics of Rural Places</i> IRIS CARLTON-LANEY AND N. YOLANDA BURWELL	21
3 A Case Study of Empowerment Interventions for the Eradication of Absolute Poverty in Southeast Rural Coastal Communities of Mauritius KOMALSINGH RAMBAREE	39
4 Global Access and Rural Inclusion in Information and Communication Technology KAREN V. HARPER-DORTON	67
5 Technology in Rural Social Work Practice GLENN STONE	87
6 Dual Relationships in Rural Areas LOIS A. BOSCH AND LAURA S. BOISEN	111
7 Educating for Rural Competence: <i>Curriculum Concepts, Models, and Course Content</i> MICHAEL R. DALEY AND BARBARA PIERCE	125

8	Rural Social Work Recruitment and Retention Challenges: <i>Why is it Difficult to Fill Rural Social Work Positions?</i>	141
	PAUL FORCE-EMERY MACKIE	
9	Rural Settlements: <i>Rural Social Work at the Forks of Troublesome Creek</i>	161
	VANDA GALEN AND DEXTER ALEXANDER	
Part II Social Work with Special Rural Populations		183
10	Facilitating Civic Engagement Among Rural Youth: <i>A Role for Social Workers</i>	185
	SUZANNE PRITZKER AND AARON METZGER	
11	Serving Rural Children After a Natural Disaster	211
	LARRY W. KREUGER	
12	Strengths and Barriers to Successful Reentry in Rural Communities	229
	PAUL DUONGTRAN, ABIGAIL KRISTEN NELSON, AND HEATHER ANN DODSON	
13	Resiliency and Behavioral Health Challenges Among American Indians and Alaska Natives in Rural Communities	249
	PAT CONWAY, DOLORES SUBIA BIGFOOT, AND ELANA PREMACK SANDLER	
14	Amish Society: <i>Clinical Approaches and Community Services</i>	271
	GRETCHEN H. WALTMAN	
15	Living in a Rural Setting: <i>Implications of Increased Rural Diversity on Social Work Practice</i>	297
	SHAWN D. KING	
Part III Specialized Agencies and Practice in Rural Areas		311
16	Implications for Rural Social Workers of Increasing Rural Diversity: <i>Immigration to Rural Areas</i>	313
	LAURA S. BOISEN, NANCY A. RODENBORG, AND LOIS A. BOSCH	
17	Victims of Interpersonal Abuse in Rural Communities	327
	CHRISTINA M. CHIARELLI-HELMINIAK AND JILL M. BRADSHAW	
18	Rural Health Care: <i>Access, Disparities, and Opportunities</i>	347
	SUZIE CASHWELL AND SAUNDRA STARKS	
19	Assessing Clinical Social Work Practice in Rural Mental Health Settings	367
	GLENN STONE AND BILL FREDERICK	
20	Rural Oncology Social Work: <i>Culture, Context, and Care in the Rural Setting</i>	385
	SKY NIESEN SMITH, MICHAEL GLASSER, AND WYNNE S. KORR	
	<i>About the Authors</i>	399
	<i>Index</i>	407

Preface to the Fifth Edition

This fifth edition of *Social Work in Rural Communities* represents the latest book in some 40 years of attention that the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) provides to the education of social workers in smaller communities and rural areas. As is mentioned in the Introduction, the effort was initiated in 1969 at the Annual Program Meeting, which was held in Cleveland, OH. Dr. Richard Lodge, then dean of the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Social Work, had been involved earlier in the reaffirmation of accreditation of the West Virginia University Division of Social Work. When he was asked for recommendations for a new director, my name was one he proposed. I was invited to fill the position after 5 years as a faculty member at the University of Oklahoma social work school. Dick Lodge was also chair of the program committee for the Cleveland Annual Program Meeting. He and the committee asked me to organize a workshop for the meeting, and that began the extensive efforts that CSWE and, later, the National Association of Social Workers, began in understanding and providing assistance to social work in rural communities. Dick became executive director of CSWE and later a professor at Adelphi.

There had been earlier efforts and some literature about social work in rural communities, but most of it had become inactive by the 1960s, with that decade's emphasis on urban issues, metropolitan social problems, and social work practice in the cities.

Many comparable efforts also contributed to the profession's rural emphasis. The annual institutes on social work in rural areas began in 1977 in Knoxville under the auspices of the University of Tennessee and have continued each year. The most recent was in the summer of 2011 at Northwest State University of Louisiana in Natchitoches.

Personally, although I was raised in San Antonio, TX, my orientation was to the small communities of East Central Texas—places such as Columbus, Gonzales, Schulenburg, and Weimar, where I have family members. I spent my social work education and practice career (as West Virginia commissioner of human services and chancellor of higher education) in smaller communities: West Virginia, which is by some measures the most rural state in the United States; South Carolina, which is nearly one-half nonmetropolitan; and, most recently, on the faculty of Appalachian State University, whose enrollment is larger than the population of the town in which it is located (Boone, NC). When I served as Jewish community activities director in Tulsa, a moderately large city, I published my first article—about the special nature of organizing a program in a small Jewish community. I've long been attracted to small town environments, which also is true of the contributors to this volume.

One of the principal uses of this book has been as a text for social work education courses on rural practice, policy, and behavior. That is not surprising, because so many American colleges and universities are located in small towns. In many cases, the college or university is the main industry in these small communities. That means that course and field instruction is likely to take place in small towns and nonmetropolitan agencies. We hope that students and practitioners who read the book find it interesting and useful in advancing their professional social work careers.

Each edition of this book has been substantially different from its predecessor. Each edition has contained specialized content, and some educators and practitioners continue to use earlier editions.

For this edition the editor and CSWE conducted a membership-wide call for chapter submissions. The result was that many seasoned rural social work scholars and practitioners, as well as relative newcomers to the field, contributed to the volume. Many of the authors had held an interest in the scholarship and practice of rural social work for many years but had not written about those interests until now, whereas others have had a long history in writing about rural issues in the profession. Each author is identified in the part introductions and in the list of contributors at the end of the book.

The overall proposal for the book was reviewed and accepted by the CSWE Council on Publications. The editor and the authors are grateful to the Council members for their thoughtful help. The book is better because of their insights.

We are all also grateful to Elizabeth Simon, the CSWE manager of publications, who suggested this fifth edition and shepherded it from its beginnings. Our accrediting body was fortunate to have found and employed her. Thanks also go to CSWE's executive director, Julia Watkins, who is leaving that post too soon. CSWE has flourished under her leadership, and we are pleased to have been a part of her administration.

It has been our pleasure to develop and prepare this edition, and we hope our readers enjoy reading and using this edition as much as we did writing it.

Leon Ginsberg
Boone, North Carolina
July 2011

PART I

Basics of Social Work in Rural Communities

When the first edition of this book was published in the 1970s, it looked more like a pamphlet than a textbook, compared to the substantial volume that is this fifth edition. Although social work in rural communities was a continuing, albeit small, emphasis in the social work literature, there had been no major works published for several decades. With help from a foundation supported by funds from the United Parcel Service (which has also funded the Annie E. Casey Foundation, an important social welfare institution), the Council on Social Work Education embarked on its rural project. Many of those who helped define the field and develop its modern theoretical foundations have moved on to other emphases or retired, but many others have taken their places and become significant contributors to the literature. This edition's contributors include scholars and practitioners from many locations, and the content these contributors provide is diverse—some of it on subjects that were not conceptualized in the 1970s. Many are from smaller social work education programs in nonmetropolitan areas. Some chapters are written by social workers in larger communities who have developed or retained their interests in rural issues.

Part I of the text is designed to lay the foundation for what follows. Understanding precisely what is meant by social work in rural communities—or even what is meant by *rural*—is a longstanding issue in the literature. There are many different ways of defining rural life, each of which serves purposes for the agencies and institutions

that use them. It is a characteristic of much of the rural social work literature, at least since the 1960s, that authors use to define their understanding of the term. Throughout the text there are repetitions of rural definitions from a variety of sources. These are useful for expanding reader understanding of the diversity of the field. In some cases, information such as definitions is cross-referenced to earlier chapters, especially those in this first part of the book. In other cases the authors begin with their conceptions of the subject matter.

This introduction explains the practice of multiple definitions of rural social work, because each of the chapters confronts rural social work in a different way and deals with different dimensions of the subject. Taken as a whole, the chapters in Part I lay the groundwork for the rest of the book.

Chapter 1 is the editor's new introduction to some of the basic concepts of rural social work, as well as some examples. Of course, the field has changed, and that is made clear in Chapter 1. Other authors have also contributed extensively to the basic social work in rural communities literature—especially O. William Farley and his colleagues at the University of Utah; Emilia Martinez-Brawley of Arizona State University, the author of several books tracing the historical antecedents of rural social work; T. Laine Scales of Baylor University; Calvin Streeter of the University of Texas; and Nancy and Roger Lohmann of West Virginia University are among some of the more prominent and recent rural social work authors. Several authors in the United Kingdom, Australia, and various other parts of the world also write about social work in rural areas. So what had been a minor area of concern in social work education has become a significant part of the scholarship and literature of social work.

Chapter 2 highlights festivals, buildings, traditions, and other artifacts that can be called rural treasures. The authors, Iris Carlton-LaNey and N. Yolanda Burwell, discuss their concept of rural treasures, which is original and makes a new and valuable contribution to the rural social work literature.

Interest in rural social work extends worldwide. Internet searches will identify books, articles, and specialized journals dealing with the subject in Europe, Oceania, and the nations of Asia. The one non-U.S. contribution in this edition is Rambaree Komalasingh's Chapter 3, describing an effort to empower the people of Mauritius and eradicate the absolute poverty faced by many of its inhabitants. Of course, the approaches used and the solutions proposed in the United Nations project have applications in other parts of the world and in the United States, where similar problems exist.

Chapters 4 and 5, by Karen Harper-Dorton and Glenn Stone, respectively, discuss the significance of technology in social work from two different perspectives. In recent years, as is discussed in Chapter 1 and elsewhere, technological innovations by organizations such as the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), began making a difference in social work practice and education. NASW's online educational activities make licensing requirements more accessible for rural participants, and online approaches to social work education simplify and make major changes in the educational quality control processes.

Lois Bosch and Laura Boisen are the authors of Chapter 6, which discusses and analyzes the issue of dual relationships in rural areas. Of course, since the early days of the literature of social work in rural communities, social workers have emphasized the pervasive, and at times uncomfortable, phenomenon of running into one's clients in the grocery store or finding that clients or their family members are also affiliated with local government and businesses. The NASW Code of Ethics deals with dual relationships and discourages—perhaps even prohibits—them. Social workers in rural communities, however, recognize that some are unavoidable.

Educating social workers for service in rural areas is the subject of Chapter 7, contributed by Michael R. Daley and Barbara Pierce. Given the critical shortages of professional social workers in rural areas, social work education has a responsibility to address the preparation of social workers for rural practice both in terms of increased numbers of programs offering rural content and also the addition of enhanced rural content in curricula. Chapter 7 identifies key conceptual and content issues that can be used to support the development of the idea of rurality in the education of social workers.

Paul Force-Emery Mackie reflects on the rural social work labor force in Chapter 8, a persistent problem in social work in rural communities. His research and scholarship is largely about filling the needs for social workers in nonmetropolitan areas.

In Chapter 9 Vanda Galen and Dexter Alexander provide some insights into the rural settlement movement that should lead to revisions of all the textbooks (including this editor's) that trace that movement to urban centers such as Hull House in Chicago and Toynbee Hall in England. In fact, Galen and Alexander point out that there were rural settlements, principally in the Kentucky mountains, that adapted the kinds of programs found at Hull House to rural areas. The principal examples were the Hindman Settlement School in Hindman, KY, and Pine Mountain

Settlement School in Harlan County, KY. The authors also note the work of the Council of the Southern Mountains, which dealt with rural education and development in Southern Appalachia, which was in operation from 1925 through 1989.

With these chapters, Part I deals with many of the longstanding, as well as current, issues defining social work in rural communities.

1 Introduction to Basic Concepts of Rural Social Work

LEON GINSBERG

In many ways, social work's roots are tied closely to urban life in England, as well as to metropolitan America and its cities. Organized efforts such as the Charity Organization Societies and the settlement movement, which began in Buffalo, NY; Chicago, IL; London, UK; and New York, NY, were all urban and metropolitan. Only passing attention was given in social work's earlier days to rural or nonmetropolitan areas. In fact, little special attention was given to American rural life in general, because most of the population was rural, and rural life was not the source of social and economic problems that affected the cities. The concerns facing large cities and metropolitan areas were great, and, therefore, less attention was given to rural America.

Beginning with the 20th century, however, America's elected officials and policy makers began to take note of issues facing rural people, some of which resulted from the migration of large numbers to the cities from smaller towns and abroad. The extensive population of cities by immigrants from other nations was another public concern and a source of some conflict. Irish, Italian, and Russian immigrants (many of whom were Jewish and from parts of the Russian sphere of influence that are now independent nations) changed the cities and required integration into a nation that was previously populated primarily by people from England and Germany.

In 1909 Theodore Roosevelt, one of the nation's most innovative presidents, dealt with the rural American population. He reported to Congress on his appointed Country Life Commission. He said,

I warn my countrymen that the great recent progress made in city life is not a full measure of our civilization; for our civilization rests at bottom on the wholesomeness, the attractiveness, and the completeness, as well as prosperity of life in the country. (Roosevelt, 1909)

The Commission recommendations enacted into law by Congress, along with the Department of Agriculture, began the implementation of a variety of rural services, such as Agricultural Extension and Land Grant colleges, designed to improve agriculture and rural home life at a time when developments in cities were a national preoccupation.

Roosevelt began the White House Conferences on Children at about the same time—conferences that led to the creation of child protective services, especially in rural areas, and, eventually, Social Security. He also helped to establish the Children's Bureau, which became a reality in 1912. In some ways Theodore Roosevelt was the founder of much of early social work and, in particular, national concern about life in rural areas.

The metropolitanization of the world, which is as true for the United States as it is for other nations, results in part when people find that they cannot survive economically in rural areas. One author (Beattie, 2009) notes that, beginning in 2007 or 2008, a majority of the world's population became urbanized. Beattie (2009) says that 180,000 people moved from the rural areas to cities. The transition was not steady, and the growth has been recent. Many cities, Beattie (2009) reports, took centuries to grow from relatively small towns to enormous metropolises, and most of the growth was in the 20th century.

Farming, the most common rural occupation, no longer provides adequate earnings for many rural people, who find they can earn more in cities. Industrial accidents in agriculture cause more serious injuries and fatalities than in more urban occupations. According to a survey conducted by Purdue University (Stewart, 2010), farm personnel have a fatality rate of 31.6 deaths per 100,000 workers, whereas the death rate in all nonfarm industries is 3.5 per 100,000 workers. Mining, another common rural occupation, uses fewer people and more machines. The work is also considered hazardous, but mining fatalities are less than 1 per 200,000 hours worked (U.S. Department of Labor, 2010). Media coverage of mining fatalities is much more dramatic than coverage of farm accidents that commonly claim only one or two people.

Of course, as students of rural life have long noted, these phenomena change. In the summer of 2011 *Time* reported that farmers were prospering because of increases

in food prices and the growing use of biofuels (Gandel, 2011). Gandel's article reported that farm income was up by 27%, whereas the total U.S. economy was growing at a rate of only 1.9%. And although urban real estate prices are depressed, farm land doubled in value during the first decade of the 21st century.

Another historical era in the United States was the specific, internal "Great Migration" in which millions of rural, Southern African Americans, who faced discrimination at minimum and lynching for many, relocated to the urban North. According to Jill Lepore (2010), 6 million African Americans left the South for the North during the 20th century. Clearly, the changing demographics of rural America are important to understanding and practicing social work in nonmetropolitan America.

This book is the fifth in a series of compendia on modern approaches to social work in rural communities. The series began with the first edition in 1974, which was supported by a grant from a foundation financed by the United Parcel Service to the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). The grant provided funds for two seminars on social work in rural areas in addition to the financing of the first book. Subsequent editions were supported by sales of the book to social workers, libraries, and social work students by CSWE.

The idea that social work needed an emphasis on rural problems and practice was reiterated in 1968 at the Annual Program Meeting of CSWE, when a workshop on the topic was presented. It attracted dozens of educators from all over the United States. Some of those participants, augmented by others with rural interests, founded rural caucuses for CSWE and also within the National Association of Social Workers (NASW). In 1977 rural social work advocates organized the first National Institute on Social Work in Rural Areas (also known as the National Rural Social Work Caucus), first at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville and subsequently every year since then at sites throughout the United States. For a time social work educators at various universities founded and published a journal, *Social Work in Rural Areas*, which eventually ceased publication. The Caucus also has a new electronic journal, *Contemporary Rural Social Work*, which is published by the University of South Alabama (www.ruralsocialwork.org). Beginning in the 1970s NASW's *Encyclopedia of Social Work* included articles on social work in rural areas.

Emilia Martinez-Brawley of Arizona State University published a book in 1981 on the larger history of social work in rural areas called *Seven Decades of Rural Social Work: From Country Life Commission to Rural Caucus*, which highlights the lengthy efforts by many social workers to add a rural emphasis to the profession

(Martinez-Brawley, 1981). Scales and Streeter (2003) and Lohmann and Lohmann (2008) wrote recent texts on rural social work practice. Farley and Griffiths (1982), with a foreword by Francis J. Turner, also wrote on rural social work.

What is Rural?

In spite of all the discussions and scholarship on the issues of social work in rural areas, it is now clear that there is no universally accepted definition of what *rural* means. Two researchers at the Economic Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which is a major force in developing data on rural issues, attempted to catalogue the various ways in which *rural* is defined. John Cromartie and Shawn Bucholtz (2008) discuss nine different ways in which *rural* is defined by U.S. government agencies.

Depending on what definition is used, the rural population of the United States may be as small as 16% (according to an Associated Press story released on July 28, 2011) or as large as 63%. Different definitions, Cromartie and Bucholtz (2008) suggest, are chosen for the purpose of the research or the program being used. Some definitions define the rural population as those living in areas with 2,500 people or fewer, which is the classic definition. Others use a metropolitan and nonmetropolitan distinction, viewing the rural population as those who live outside metropolitan areas. Others focus on the commuting time and distance from various locations.

For social work researchers and students, it is probably sufficient to suggest that the U.S. rural or nonmetropolitan (a term that is perhaps more recognized by rural demographers and researchers) population is between one-fifth and one-fourth of the total U.S. population. And that, in a population that exceeds 300 million, is a lot of people—60–75 million.

Several of the other chapters in this text deal with definitions of rural areas and rural social work. As Cromartie and Bucholtz (2008) suggest, differing definitions are part of the process of understanding rural life for differing purposes.

Obtaining Supervision and Overcoming Isolation

One of the primary issues that make social work in rural communities a matter of special interest for the profession is that workers tend to be employed alone or in very small groups. The resulting lack of supervision and the professional isolation are sources of concern for social work practitioners in nonmetropolitan areas.

Of course, the professional and personal isolation that has long been a concern of people in smaller communities is mitigated by modern communication. The Internet,