

# Assignment on case work essay sample

[Sociology](#)



## Introduction

There was real teaching in the world long before there was a science or art of teaching; there was social case work long before social workers began, not so many years ago, to formulate a few of its principles and methods. Almost as soon as human beings discovered that their relations to one another had ceased to be primitive and simple, they must have found among their fellows a few who had a special gift for smoothing out the tangles in such relations; they must have sought, however informally, the aid of these “straighteners,” as Samuel Butler calls them. Some teachers have had this skill, occasionally ministers of religion have had it, and secular judges, and physicians; though at no time has it been the exclusive possession of these four professions or of any one of them. A writer whose stories and tales are too little known says of one of her characters.

## Historical development of social case work

As the nation turned away from reform, the other branch of young social work became more prominent. Social case work, representing that part of social work which focused more on the individual, had a vital role throughout the progressive period. Social caseworks’s influence actually began to increase shortly before the 1920’s. World War I provided unique opportunities for social caseworkers to prove the utility of their skills on non-poverty populations. Social work’s prestige was raised through work in war-related activities such as the Red Cross’s Home Service. Caseworkers with the home service , led by Mary Richmond, applied their skills to problems faced by service men and their families. Physicians, psychiatrists and

psychologists working with emotionally disturbed soldiers saw the social worker as a natural ally. They began using caseworkers as specialists in social adjustment. Such vital activities, were outside the profession's traditional constituency of the poor and indigent and opened up new opportunities for social work. The poor, from the very beginning of the civilised society, have been the concern of humanists, philanthropists and socio-religious activities. Its description is found in the Vedic literature and of course much later in the western countries.

Casework as practised today, a purely western model, too owes its history to work by individuals and organisations with the poor. The Association for Improving the Conditions of the poor founded in 1843 in USA, emphasised self-respect, self dependence and relief suitable to their needs in its work with the poor. The approach behind this service by AICP had a clear departure from their earlier services to the poor in colonial America under Elizabethan poor law of 1601, etc., which was based on the concept of charity. Seeds of social casework seems to have shown with the individualized services of Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847) followed by the Charity Organization Society (COS) of 1869 (London) and 1877 (USA) respectively. Their work involved investigation to determine clients' needs, central registration, recording, relief giving and use of volunteer, i. e., friendly visitor. Friendly visitors of COS (USA) discovered that all the pors were-not alike and that they should be treated differently.

Papers presented at the National Conference of Charities and corrections enunciated and emphasized the principle of individualization. COS was asked to reach the individual and restore his function without bothering for

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detection of imposters on relief. Thus the concept of scientific charity came into practice and it was recognized that “ the poor, and those in trouble worse than poverty. Have not, in common, any type of physical, intellectual or moral development which would warrant an attempt to group them as a class”. Friendly visitors at a later stage received training in investigation, diagnosis and treatment for which the New York School of Philanthropy was established towards the end of the 19th century (Bruno, 1957) and it was during this time that term ‘ casework’ appeared in a paper read at a national conference. The COS movement gave birth to Family Welfare Association in 1905. In England, around the end of the 19th century, outside visitor (called almoner) at the instance of Sir Charles Loch came to help Hospitals to serve their patients effectively.

The almoner, like paid agents and friendly visitor of USA, can be said to be the predecessor of caseworker. The almoner’s original assignment was seen as the prevention of abuse of hospital treatment. By 1911, social casework had emerged in USA as an accepted formal technique though the first book on social casework was published in 1917 by an American, Marry Richmond. Various definitions of casework in the 1920s under the influence of Freudian theory no more emphasized external factors. It held the individual responsible for his plight and it was he who was helped to cope with the social problems confronting him. During the same time, social reforms and social problems received little attention compared to its earlier period when the emphasis was on correcting the social environment of the client. In 1920s, under the Freudian influence, casework was to “ untangle and reconstruct the twisted personality” and change human attitude so that the

client could adjust to his environment and its influence. In contrast to the trends in 1920s, caseworkers shifted their focus in 1930s from individual to modification and manipulation of the client's environment to enable him to adapt to his situations satisfactorily.

This change was because of acceptance of the idea by Americans that social and economic variables influenced man's behaviour meaningfully. After the World War II, with the problems of morale, leadership, propaganda, separation, communication, etc., social worker's found social sciences more useful. Interest in social environment, along with ego psychology, received more attention and the definition of Richmond (1922) that casework consists of " those processes which develop personality through adjustments consciously effected, individual by individual, between man and their social environment" was considered to be the best by Hamilton (1951). Perlman (1957) also emphasized on the problems of functioning. Though many may not agree, I personally think that the latest thinking in casework is more or less fully contained in the definition by Boehm (1958) which emphasizes both external and internal factors, and uses the concepts of social functioning, social role, malfunctioning, and of resources. Many new trends are coming forth and possibly no definition will ever be able to cover all the changes and trends emerging from time to time.

One of the aims of the society was to find out ways and means of helping the poor and needy and thus to organise individualised services geared to this purpose. The society used volunteers, who were called freindly visitors, to visit the homes of the poor for purposes of assessing their need, for redering material assistance and for giving them guidance and advice. The freindly

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visitors were subsequently supplemented by 'paid agents'. These paid helpers gradually developed systematic procedure in performing their tasks. They collected data about the needy individuals and families, and helped them after assessing their need. They also maintained records in which they kept all the information including personal data, as well as the type of help rendered. It was out of practice of these early workers that case work developed gradually to a professional method in subsequent years. Their collective experience of knowing the poor families and their problems and the concurrent studies of poverty by social scientists broadened the understanding of human behavior.

There was the growing recognition that there were forces within the individual and forces external to him which influenced his behaviour and the nature of his existence in society. In course of time the terms 'paid agents' and 'the poor' were supplanted by case workers and clients respectively in the terminology of the help giving organization and the office of the organization came to be known as the agency. Mary Richmond's book, 'Social Diagnosis', which was published in 1917 may be considered as the first book in case work. It set forth a methodology of helping clients through systematic ways of assessing their problems and handling them. Besides, the book introduced the principle of individualisation and also acknowledged the client's right of self determination. The first training programme for case workers was in the form of summer courses. Then the need for more substantial training was found necessary and schools of social work, attached to agencies, came into existence.

When these schools attained a certain standing in the community, they were recognized as professional schools under the administrative authority of universities. American case work did influence the use of case work in India as the first professional social workers who did case work in the Indian setting were trained in the American schools of social work. Case work was one of the courses taught when the Sir Dorabji Tata Graduate School of Social work, currently known as the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, was started in Bombay in 1936, and it became a method of practice in helping people with their problems of social functioning. Contributions of Various Disciplines Freudian psychology which emerged in the 1920s had a strong impact on case work. The new psycho-analytical knowledge pertaining to human behaviour was eagerly absorbed by case workers which was found useful in understanding clients and their problems. During this period of development case workers focussed their attention on psychic forces within the individual.

During the economic depression of the 1930s case work had to consider the economic factors which were causing distress to clients. There was also the realisation that economic distress could lead to emotional distress and breakdown. During the 1940s, case workers were exposed to the formulation on ego psychology based on observations of human beings as regards their differential coping and adapting abilities in times of stress. The new studies on human behaviour brought to light the potentialities of the human personality for healthy adaptation to life's stress. During the next two decades some case workers therefore began to examine sociological concepts like social role, social system, social caste, etc., with reference to their

adaptability to case work situations. The result was the shifting of the focus from the self of the individual to his continuous interactions with his significant others in social settings. Social case work is primarily related with the psycho-social problems. It consists of the study of mental, emotional and social factors. According to Prof.

Gordan Hamilton, “ A social case is a living event within which there are always economic, physical, mental, emotional and social factors in varying proportion”. Every social problem is the outcome of many external and internal factors. Therefore, when we deal with the individual problems, we have also to deal with his experiences and reactions towards the problems. Besides, proper recognition of individual is essential with regard to the solution of a problem. Therefore, in the field of social work, the main task of social worker is to develop the self-direction and self-dependence of an individual. In social case work, and individual, group, situation or phenomena is recognized as a unit of study and various aspects of the unit are studied properly. In it, the social object preserves the unitary character.

## Conclusion

The evolution of case work as a systematic field of practice and study is briefly touched upon in the historical retrospect. This historical development is still being recapitulated in different countries and in agencies within the same country. As Mary Richmond spoke of case work as composed of “ processes which develop personally through adjustments consciously affected, individual by individual, between men and their social environment”. And she defined case work as “ the art of doing different



things for and with different people by co-operating with them to achieve at one and the same timetheir own and society's betterment".