Instructor’s Manual: Chapter 16

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# Learning Objectives for Chapter 16: Environmentalism

After reading this chapter, you should be able to  
1. Define the terms person-in-environment perspective and ecological social welfare and practice.  
2. Describe how environmental sustainability is linked to social work practice.  
3. List various factors associated with misuse of the environment.  
4. Apply the dynamic advocacy model to issues related to the environment.  
5. Identify and describe the role of social workers in addressing environmental issues.

# Lecture Notes for Chapter 16: Environmentalism

The “person-in-environment” principle is integral to social work practice worldwide. The perspective highlights the importance of understanding an individual and individual behavior in relationship to the environmental context in which that person lives and acts. An alternative to the commonly used disease and moral models, the person-in-environment model is client-centered, dynamic and interactive. As with efforts toward social justice, environmental social work highlights the inequalities and inequities experienced by the poorest and most marginalized populations.

Environmentalism and Social Work

Interventions are needed to address natural, human-influenced, and global environmental changes such as pollution and climate change. The social work profession has played an early and important role in raising awareness of environmental justice.

* Social Work Leadership in Environmentalism
  + Mary Richmond – A leader in Charity Organization Societies in the late 1800s and early 1900s. These were the first organizations to develop a structured profession devoted to social work. Richmond developed casework practice and focused on the person-in-the-environment by connecting components of the environment to the daily life of people. She emphasized the shift from blaming people for deficits to recognizing the strengths and potential of individuals.
  + Jane Addams - Cofounded Hull House in Chicago with her friend Ellen Starr. They focused on the living and working conditions of immigrants, which were negatively impacted by the unregulated factories. Hull House challenged the housing, sanitation and public health of crowded tenements and by doing so raised the public’s consciousness. As a result of their efforts, Chicago hired its first garbage inspector, which helped to link the government with environmental issues.
  + National Association of Social Work - In 1999 the Delegate Assembly of the NASW stated that: “environmental exploitation violates the principle of social justice and is a direct violation of the NASW Code of Ethics”. As a result, social work came to explore, if not fully embrace, natural environmental issues as part of the profession’s mandate.
  + Council on Social Work Education - The CSWE is the national accrediting body of social work education programs. In 2010, the CSWE declared that sustainability, or using resources in such as way as to maintain them for the future, was the social justice issue of the new century. Community organizing, networking, advocacy and program evaluation are but a few skills that can be used to further environmental justice and promote the inclusion of the natural environment into work with clients.
* Ecological Social Welfare and Practice - all aspects of society are intricately related to each other. Ecological social welfare, sometimes called the New Ecology, is defined as a social change process that promotes people’s welfare and environmental justice through economic activities, such as examining the impact deforestation has over the control of river ways and subsequent flooding and landslides.
  + Sustainability - The sustainability movement acknowledges the finite nature of resources and prioritizes the needs of the poor. It necessitates a global perspective and a positive commitment to a process of social change.
  + Ecological Justice - From the perspective of ecological justice, the earth is a holistic life source, which means all life deserves justice. Ecological justice upholds a sense of fairness for all life. For social workers ecological justice is global; what occurs in one nation has a direct or indirect impact in many other geographic regions. For example, if a country neglects to implement policies on carbon emissions or ocean pollution, the impact is multinational.
  + Ecological Ethics - suggests that social workers must value nature for the sake of nature, not just for the sake of the uses to which human beings might put the elements of nature. If nature is highly valued then there might be times when people have to reconsider their needs and wants in light of natural resources. For example, ethical issues emerge when pesticide is used to increase the yield of food production, but health hazards might increase to those working close to the soil like immigrant workers.

Environmental Issues

* Overpopulation - one billion people are added to world’s population every 12 years. Currently the world population totals over 7 billion people. The rate at which a nation’s population is growing has immense consequences related to resources allocation, overcrowding, social conflict, housing, and health conditions.
  + Doubling time - how long it takes for a population to double. The calculation of doubling time is based on the extent to which birthrate exceeds the death rate. The countries that tend to experience the fastest doubling times are those who are developing their economic base through industrialization and can least afford the cost associated with a growing population.
  + Not due to families having more children. Family size has not grown worldwide. What has changed is that more people are living to the age of fertility and the mortality rate of babies has decreased. These changes as related to improved nutrition, advances in health care, improved sanitation and improved responses to natural disasters.
  + Challenges of overpopulation
    - *Global Water and Sanitation:* Global access to clean water, adequate sanitation, and proper hygiene are essential for improved health conditions and socio-economic-development. It is estimated that 780 million people worldwide do not have a safe water supply and appropriate sanitation.
    - *Global Hunger:* Hunger, or food insecurity, refers to conditions where people do not have physical or economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food. Although global hunger has decreased 34 percent in the last decade, more than 840 million people worldwide still do not have enough to eat with nearly 3 million children dying from hunger-related causes.
    - *Energy:* Consumption of energy resources extracted from the earth, including fossil fuels, leads to lower-quality, less-accessible, and more-expensive energy. The likelihood of blackouts, heating crises, rising fuel prices, and dependency on foreign markets increases as it becomes harder to extract fossil fuels.
    - *Overcrowding:* Increasing urbanization continues throughout much of the world. When more people are living within a dwelling, space for movement is restricted, and hygiene, privacy and a quiet environment for sleeping become less available.
    - *Migration* – Approximately 3% of the people in the world have lived outside of their country of birth for a year or more. Migration across national borders is called the “third wave” of globalization, after the movement of goods (trade) and money (finances). The majority of people moving from their original country move as a result of poverty and subsequent poor living conditions.
* Pollution
  + *Air* – Created by industrial fumes, vehicle emissions, carbon grit, and other airborne material that contaminates the air and depletes the ozone, a region above the earth that absorbs the sun’s radiation. Some of the diseases caused by air population are inflammation of the lungs, infections, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, lung cancer, and heart disease.
  + *Water* – Causes include the release of sewage and wastewater, marine dumping, industrial waste, radioactive waste, oil pollution, underground sewage leakages and global warming. Some diseases related to water pollution are: birth defects, cancers, immune suppression, reproductive failure, infant mortality, cholera, and typhoid fever.
  + *Land* - Causes include solid waste, pesticide and fertilizers, chemicals, deforestation, and ashes from non-biodegradable products or chimneys and inclinators. The harmful effects include repository problems, skin diseases, and various types of cancers.
* Climate Change – Includes changes in temperature, precipitation, and wind pattern changes.
  + Greenhouse effect - Certain long-lived gases remain semi-permanently in the atmosphere. These gases blanket the earth and disrupt the transfer of heat, a process referred to as the greenhouse effect. Gases that contribute to the greenhouse effects are: water vapor, carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and chlorofluorocarbons. The burning of fossil fuels like coal and oil increase the carbon dioxide and adds to the greenhouse effect.
  + Potential outcomes - Warmer temperatures, more evaporation and precipitation, the melting of glaciers and other ice, increasing sea levels, and impacts on plant communities. Climate change poses serious threats to human communities as well, in the form of water quality and availability, potential increase in forest fires, economic hardships of its residents from crop failure and potential extreme weather conditions.
* Environmental Disasters – Lead to the loss of homes, personal property, and livelihoods.
  + Floods – can develop slowly giving people a chance to save some personal property and evacuate the area, or can develop in a matter of moments catching people by surprise and leaving few opportunities to gather belongings and depart to a safe region.
  + Drought
* meteorological - involves a departure of precipitation from normal.
* agricultural – occurs when the moisture in the soil does not sustain a particular crop region.
* hydrological – relates to the surface or subsurface water supplies that are below normal.
  + - socio economic – happens when physical and water shortages begin to affect people.
  + Hurricanes – Due to the tracking of hurricane conditions, residents in harm’s way often have time to evacuate their homes before lives are in danger. However, the damage to homes is often considerable resulting in mental health conditions like stress and depression. Social workers trained as first responders to disasters can better prepare people and communities before and after storm devastation.
  + Volcanoes - An erupting volcano can trigger tsunamis, flash floods, earthquakes, and rock falls. They result in mass evacuations.
  + Famine - The scarcity of food is the cause of hunger, malnutrition and starvation. Famine is associated with the over drafting of groundwater, flooding and other natural events that destroy crops, wars, internal strife, and inefficient distribution of food. Famine is especially common in Sub-Saharan Africa and portions of Asia, where it causes extensive deaths.

Diversity and Environmentalism

* Age - flooding, famines, hurricanes, and drought cause a disproportionate amount of hardship and death for older people, who have a more difficult time moving out of harms away, have a reluctance to evacuate, and may experience geographic and social isolation.
* Class - poor people suffer the greatest losses from natural disasters, in both developing societies and industrialized nations. Poor people, who tend to be relegated to living in the riskiest areas, also have the most limited access to both preparedness resources and recovery resources.
* Gender - Women and other socially marginalized populations are least likely to have the social power, economic resources, and physical capabilities to anticipate, survive, and recover from the effects of massive or extreme environmental events.
* Sexual Orientation – “Queer ecology” integrates LGBT theories with those of ecology and relates patterns of domination and control over human diversity to patterns that impact the earth’s resources.
* Intersections of Diversity - In some cultures environmental and diversity factors intersect as reflected in traditional symbols, behaviors, values, institutions and religious practices.

Advocacy and Environmentalism

* Social and Economic Justice - All members of society need and deserve a healthy world in which to live, work and engage with others. The Environmental Protection Agency is the federal entity responsible for protecting human health and the environment. Environmental justice is the assurance that benefits of a healthy environment will be distributed to all members of society in an equitable fashion.
* Supportive Environment - Social work maintains a strong emphasis on the person-in-environment perspective, which considers individuals as active participants in a larger society.
* Human Needs and Rights - Concerns involving environmental issues interface with social worker’s typical concerns about promoting people’s mental, physical, financial, and social well-being. In all cases human rights are involved. The inequity is two-fold: People who are poor or discriminated against on some other basis are the ones who have to deal with most of the results of pollution, and that pollution is typically the result of affluence in which they cannot participate. When the environment is ignored, human rights are also.
* Political Access - Social workers have a history of advocating for environmental justice. For example, they have collaborated with established environmental organizations, such as the Sierra Club and Greenpeace, to promote investigation of, exposure of, and resolution to environmental concerns.
  + Fracking - the process of drilling and inserting fluid into the earth to fracture shale rock in order to release natural gas. The decision to engage in fracking highlights many issues relevant to social work, such as the use of chemicals in a way that impacts well water and aquifers, the release of harmful compounds into the atmosphere, and possible health hazards. There is significant political debate on this topic.

Your Career and Environmentalism

* Social workers can help to inhibit environmental degradation that affects not only people worldwide but also the earth.
* Social workers have a mandate to serve the needs of people, especially those who are marginalized.
* Social workers can work on practice and policy initiatives that protect people from natural and human-influenced environmental changes.
* Social workers need to work cooperatively with people in other disciplines to respond to the symptoms and causes of that threaten the planet and all of life.
* Social work skills include advocacy, education, connecting to resources, serving as first responders to provide counseling, community planning, and rebuilding.

# Key Concepts for Chapter 16: Environmentalism

climate change

doubling time

ecological ethics

ecological justice

ecological social welfare environmental justice

Environmental Protection Agency

environmentalists

fracking

sustainability

# Case Study for Chapter 16: Environmentalism

Pat and Jeanne are social workers employed with a refugee center in an urban center. When assisting refugees from Burma (Myanmar) they discovered how significant gardening is to the culture. Given their location in a large metropolitan area, Pat and Jeanne asked the refugees what they thought about joining a student environmental group on a nearby university campus. The student organization has large garden plots available to university-based organizations.

After walking to the university and seeing the available land, several of the Burmese families were delighted to think about the possibility of gardening on campus. The university students were equally pleased with the idea of community engagement and all that would come from the cultural, gardening, and cooking exchanges. However, when the students, along with Pat and Jeanne, approached the university administration about the Burmese families gardening with students on university property, the university’s legal counsel posed many questions and challenges.

Pat and Jeanne think that social media can be used to advocate for the Burmese families while simultaneously educating the university administration and legal counsel on the plight of refugees. Now they are beginning to consider what forms of social media can be used in advocacy, including:

1) educational videos that depict the lives of the Burmese families in the context of gardening;

2) story logs that examine the cultural exchange Burmese families and university students;

3) web-based mailings on the gardening project; and

4) blogs on the weekly happenings of Burmese families and students working the garden plot.

1) How can the social media listed above, and other forms of the media, be used to advocate for the Burmese families with senior university administrators?

2) From economic, legal, political, and ethical perspectives, what challenges should Pat and Jeanne consider when using the social media in advocacy strategies?

3) What might the impact be on the Burmese families upon learning of the university leadership’s seeming reluctance to welcome them? What might their reticence communicate to the students at the university?

# Discussion Questions for Chapter 16: Environmentalism

Discussion Question #1

Have you done anything to reduce your carbon footprint? How much do you think about environmental issues in your day-to-day life as you use resources and produce waste? Do you consider the impact of your actions on the environment and the others who live in it?

Discussion Question #2

This chapter makes the argument that social work and environmentalism go hand in hand. Can you think of three specific ways in which poor people are disproportionately harmed by environmental issues like pollution, climate change, and natural disasters?

Discussion Question #3

To what degree does environmentalism inform a social worker’s daily work? When does it become clear that environmental issues have an impact on the needs of social work clients?

Discussion Question #4

How much of a role do you think the government should take in regulating the environment? How much should be left up to individual citizens and businesses? If the government took a hands-off approach, relying upon people and corporations to make sound choices, since they live in the very environment they may be harming, what do you think would happen?

# Chapter Exercises for Chapter 16: Environmentalism

1. Review Nader.org, the website of Ralph Nader, a longtime advocate for environmental concerns. From your review, list at least five ways Nader has integrated issues such as poverty with environmental concerns.

2. Watch *An Inconvenient Truth,* the 2006 Academy Award– winning documentary narrated by former Vice President Al Gore. List six “takeaway points” from the film.

3. President Obama created the new position of assistant to the president for climate and energy. First, search for information on who holds this position. Then write what you think would be an appropriate job description for the position. What skills and knowledge should this person have, and what duties and responsibilities should come with the title?

4. Some people conclude that the environmental movement in the United States began with Rachel Carson’s book *Silent Spring.* Read the book and discuss how Carson’s warnings regarding exposure to the hazards of pesticides such as DDT have become evident in your lifetime.

5. Select a familiar community. It can be your hometown or college or university community. Track or map where your community’s trash goes, sewage drains, water and electricity come from, and public transportation travels. What does this exercise tell you about your interaction with the community and resources?

6. Review social work’s developing role in environmental issues by reading the position statements of the International Federation of Social Workers, the National Association of Social Workers, and the Council on Social Work Education. What themes emerge from these statements? What do you think needs to be added to bring them up to date for today’s environmental concerns?

# 7. The Brundtland Commission, formally the World Commission on Environment and Development, was established by the United Nations in 1983. The commission links peace, security, development, and the environment to oppression and degradation of the earth. Read an overview of the Brundtland Commission at www .un-documents.net/our-common-future.pdf. Select an opinion you endorse and another opinion you question, and explain your choices. In addition, answer this question: What possible direction could the report offer the profession of social work?

# Class Activities for Chapter 16: Environmentalism

**Class activity #1**

How aware is your institution when it comes to ecological and environmental issues? What about the students within the college/university?

Break the class into groups of 3-4. Give the students 10-15 minutes to walk around campus in their small groups to look for opportunities to be more environmentally conscious and aware, as well as to look for what the school is doing well when it comes to this issue. Make sure someone from each group is recording their findings to report to the class upon returning. Tell the groups to try to go to different places so the findings are not overly redundant.

After the groups return, use the board to aggregate the class’s findings. If there are areas for improvement that seem particularly egregious and/or were noted by multiple groups, see if the class is willing to take on an effort to bring this to the attention of some people in power at the school in order to put the wheels in motion to make that change.

**Class activity #2**

Sustainability is both a key concept in environmentalism and, as your text points out, social work. Our profession looks to find sustainable ways to alleviate problems. Rather than simply looking for a quick fix or a solution that will only alleviate the symptoms of the bigger problem, social work’s macro focus keeps members of the field interested in the kind of systemic change that can really make a difference for more people down the line, rather than just the people suffering from a given problem now. For instance, social work is in favor of public assistance to help poor families, but also wants to work on the problems in the system that produce vast inequality and large numbers of poor people so as to improve the overall society for the long haul.

With this in mind, break the class into groups and have them think about some of the strategies and programs that have been discussed in the book in previous chapters for dealing with large-scale social ills like poverty, discrimination, substance abuse, and so on. Which of these strategies represent a focus on sustainability—looking at the solution that will make a bigger difference over the long haul—and which ones are more temporary fixes (still necessary, but not liable to really work on fixing the conditions that allow the problem to exist in the first place)?   
  
Are there ways to take the solutions or programs that students identified as more short-term and less sustainable and modify them so that they make a bigger difference on an underlying/macro level to alleviate the problem for more than just individual clients?

Have students share any ideas they had to increase sustainability of social welfare offerings and services with the full class.

**Class activity #3**

Climate change is a topic that is presented by the mass media as being a source of great controversy socially, and yet, scientifically there is very little debate at all. Well over 95% of climate studies within the last few decades have identified a consistent pattern of climate change that represents real long-term problems for the planet and all things living on it if the trend continues unabated. However, because there isn’t full agreement, at times the media presents the issue as “having two sides,” implying the sides have equal evidence or data.

Given that most Americans believe in climate change, and far more scientists believe it is occurring than not, why do so many politicians continue to deny that climate change exists? Some have even gone as far as to call it the “greatest hoax” ever perpetrated on mankind. You may choose to show some videos of politicians discussing the issue on both sides.

Often, one’s political aspirations and goals can cloud one’s judgment, or perhaps simply encourage someone to say something that is clearly untrue. Break the class into small groups and have them identify potential motivations of both sides. Why do climate change deniers continue to deny it? What can they gain by doing do, in a political sense and in a concrete sense? On the flip side, if climate change were not real, what would scientists who claim it *is* real have to gain through such machinations?

After they discuss in small groups, bring the discussion to the full class.

# Video and Multimedia for Chapter 16: Environmentalism

#### Video Clips

* [Pregnant Moms’ Environment and Autism Risk](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/18/us-autism-idUSKBN0JW0B020141218)   
  Could there be a link between air pollution and autism?
* [Plastics and the Poor](http://www.ted.com/talks/van_jones_the_economic_injustice_of_plastic?language=en)   
  A TED Talk by Van Jones links plastic and poverty.
* [Fracking in Oklahoma](http://www.cbsnews.com/news/increase-in-oklahoma-earthquakes-raises-concerns-over-fracking-and-wastewater-injections/)   
  There have been many talks about the concerns of fracking—can it even increase the risk of earthquakes?

#### Audio Clips

* [Danger at the Poles](http://www.npr.org/player/v2/mediaPlayer.html?action=1&t=1&islist=false&id=371438087&m=371597850&live=1)   
  Temperatures are warming in the Arctic much more quickly than the rest of the world—that’s a problem.
* [Hurricane Sandy’s Health Risks Continued in Its Wake](http://www.npr.org/player/v2/mediaPlayer.html?action=1&t=1&islist=false&id=164038890&m=164080550)   
  The danger doesn’t end when the storm does.

# Web Resources for Chapter 16: Environmentalism

* [Who Could Be More Into Environmental Justice Than…](http://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/)   
  The EPA’s page on environmental justice.
* [Social Work and Disaster Relief](http://www.socialworkers.org/ldf/legal_issue/200509.asp?back=yes)   
  Guidelines for social workers looking to help in natural disaster/crisis situations—including whether your license in your home state can cover you temporarily in another.
* [Let’s End the Debate on Climate Change Once and for All](http://www.forbes.com/sites/tomzeller/2015/01/18/the-end-of-the-partisan-divide-over-climate-change/)   
  Even the American Petroleum Institute, the most well-known oil industry lobbying organization in the country, acknowledges that climate change is real and threatens America and the world in tangible ways.

# SAGE Journal Articles for Chapter 16: Environmentalism

[**SAGE Journal User Guide**](http://www.uk.sagepub.com/sageEdge/orvis3e/files/SJ-userguide.pdf)

Article 1.

[Gray, M., & Coates, J. (2013). Changing values and valuing change: Toward an ecospiritual perspective in social work.*International Social Work, 56*(3), 356-368.](http://isw.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/56/3/356?ijkey=MTj8RWRjStgik&keytype=ref&siteid=spisw) doi:10.1177/0020872812474009

This article explores the ecopspiritual perspective and its compatibility with social work values and principles.

#### Questions:

1. Describe the basic tenets of the ecospiritual perspective and how it aims to address the anthropocentric bias in traditional views of the natural world.
2. How does ecospirituality distinguish itself from the New Age spiritual movement?
3. What do ecospirituality and social work principles have in common?

Article 2.

[Shaw, T. V. (2013). Is social work a green profession? an examination of environmental beliefs.*Journal of Social Work, 13*(1), 3-29](http://jsw.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/13/1/3?ijkey=lZQWc0GZ5jmvg&keytype=ref&siteid=spjsw). doi:10.1177/1468017311407555

Reporting on a national survey of social workers, this article explores social workers’ knowledge of and attitudes about environmental issues.  Findings suggest that more work is needed to integrate ecological/environmental concerns into social work education and practice.

#### Questions:

1. What is the New Environmental Paradigm (NEP)?  How does it differ from the Dominant Social Paradigm (DSP) with respect to ecological and social concerns?
2. What does this study reveal about social workers’ level of environmental concern as compared to the general population?
3. Based on these findings, what recommendations would you make for strengthening social workers’ understanding of environmental issues and commitment to environmental justice?