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Guide to the Charlotte Towle Papers 1915-1968



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Descriptive Summary

Identifier ICU.SPCL.TOWLE

Title Towle, Charlotte. Papers

Date 1915-1968

Size 14.75 linear feet (26 boxes)

Repository Special Collections Research Center

University of Chicago Library

1100 East 57th Street

Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.

Abstract Charlotte Towle (1896-1966), psychiatric social worker and theoretician in

the fields of social work education and casework, was professor in the School of Social Service Administration at the University of Chicago for over thirty years. The Towle Papers comprise 26 boxes of correspondence, teaching and administrative materials, manuscripts and research notes, offprints, awards,

biographical material, journals, and photos.

Information on Use

Access

Box 26 contains student evaluative material restricted for eighty years from date of record creation.

Citation

When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: Towle, Charlotte. Papers, [Box #, Folder #], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

Biographical Note

Charlotte Towle (1896-1966) was born and raised in Butte, Montana. She received a BA in education from Goucher College (1919), but after graduation accepted a job with the American Red Cross which strengthened her interest in social work. With the aid of a Commonwealth Fund fellowship, she attended the New York School of Social Work, completing her studies in psychiatric social work in 1926. For two years she was director of the Home Finding Department of The Children's Aid Society of Philadelphia, and from 1928 to 1932 she gained experience in casework supervision and further training in psychiatric social work at the Institute for Child Guidance in New York. Established by the Commonwealth Fund as a model clinic, the Institute was in the forefront of psychiatric social work theory and practice. Towle served as the Institute's fieldwork supervisor for students from the New York and Smith College schools of social work.

In 1932 Towle accepted an appointment to the faculty of the School of Social Service Administration (SSA) at the University of Chicago. Because of its origins in the settlement movement, SSA's curriculum was oriented toward social welfare policy and administration. Edith Abbott, Dean from 1924 to 1942, had initially resisted the trend in the profession toward an emphasis on a psychiatric model in casework. However, when the Commonwealth Fund offered student stipends to SSA contingent on the introduction of psychiatric casework courses into the curriculum and the development of psychiatric field placements, Abbott invited Towle to join the faculty in order to strengthen its psychiatric emphasis.

In the 1930's the casework curriculum in most schools of social work consisted of one introductory course, often referred to as "generic," and many specialized courses. Consequently, the application of psychological knowledge was regarded as the nearly exclusive domain of psychiatric social work. Towle, convinced that all caseworkers needed knowledge about human behavior as well as access to a broad spectrum of treatment approaches, utilized case material from all fields of practice in her casework courses. She emphasized the consideration of multiple social and psychological factors in diagnosis and a range of treatment approaches as generic for all caseworkers (9:15, 10:1-13, 10:15, 11:1-13, 12:1). In 1941 Towle edited a collection of Social Case Records from Psychiatric Clinics with Discussion Notes as a volume in the Social Service Series published by SSA (4:5). Through widespread classroom use of this book and through her work on the curriculum committees of the American Association of Schools of Social Work and the American Association of Psychiatric Social Workers, she helped define a generic casework curriculum for most schools (2:15-18, 3:6, and 9:12).

Not only did Towle's psychiatric orientation affect the SSA curriculum, but she herself was influenced by the broad social concerns and activities of colleagues such as Grace and Edith Abbott and Sophonisba Breckinridge. For example, Towle became interested in the philosophy of social work. In a 1945 book, Common Human Needs, she sketched for public assistance workers the link between understanding human behavior and administering social welfare programs: psychological needs and forces, she argued, were related to social forces and experience (12:11-15). The book was enthusiastically received (1:3-8) and was eventually translated into eight languages (Box 15).

Ironically, Towle's book received its widest publicity in 1951 through what came to be called "The Common Human Needs Affair". The incident began when the president of the American Medical Association noted Towle's statement, "Social security and public assistance programs are a basic essential for attainment of the socialized state envisaged in a democratic ideology, a way of life which so far has been realized only in slight measure." (p. 57) Taking the sentence out of context, he construed "socialized state" as political propaganda and accused the administrator of the Federal Security Agency, which had published the book, of promoting socialist attitudes. As a result, the administrator, Oscar Ewing, ordered the Government Printing Office to destroy all of its remaining copies. The social work profession as well as civil libertarians rallied around Towle (1:11-18), but Ewing did not rescind his order. Consequently, the National Association of Social Workers republished the work and it received wide circulation.

A third focus of Towle's intellectual interest was her effort to synthesize theories of education and of personality to develop a more comprehensive approach to professional education in social work as well as in other professions. Her courses in Growth and Development of Personality (7:11-14, 8:1-14, and 9:1-8) and Dynamics of Learning and Teaching (6:7-10 and 7:1-6) reflected this interest, as did many of her papers and articles. She summarized her theories in a 1954 book, The Learner in Education for the Professions (4:1-3).

Towle's leadership in generic casework theory and in casework education resulted in an invitation to spend 1954-55 as a senior Fulbright scholar at the London School of Economics, acting as educational consultant in its Applied Social Sciences sequence and helping English casework teachers to develop case materials. When her passport was temporarily withheld on suspicion of "communist" leanings (holding membership in two alleged front organizations and having signed a clemency petition for the Rosenbergs were adduced as evidence), she again became a cause célèbre in her profession and beyond (3:4-5). Her reputation cleared, she finally obtained a passport and spent a productive year in London (3:1, 13:14, and 14:6).

During the later years of her career, Charlotte Towle's national stature as a social work theorist and practitioner was acknowledged as she received several honorary doctorates as well as citations from professional organizations. Towle retired from the SSA faculty in 1964, but continued part time work for two years as a fieldwork supervisor for SSA students. She had just retired from this position at the time of her

death.

Scope Note

The Charlotte Towle Papers have been divided into twelve series according to content and type of record:

Series I: CORRESPONDENCE

Towle's correspondence is organized topically, maintaining as closely as practicable her own arrangement of the material. With the exception of a selection of personal letters from colleagues (1933-1965) which Towle labeled "Cherished Letters" (4:7), and a bundle of correspondence to and from Towle's sister Mary Rall (4:9-11), all of the correspondence is professional in nature. In some cases Towle left notes to indicate that the materials in a folder were what she regarded as a representative sample of more voluminous correspondence which she had chosen not to preserve. An example is the topic "Consultations, 1935-1966" (2:4-10), which includes Towle's responses to inquiries on a range of subjects: clients' rights, the placement of foster children, the effect of war on children, and the emotional element in learning, to name several examples.

Other aspects of Towle's professional activity which are particularly strongly represented in her correspondence include the publication of her books and responses to them (Common Human Needs, 1:3-10; The Learner in Education for the Professions, 4:1-3; and Social Case Records from Psychiatric Clinics, 5:5), material concerning the "Common Human Needs Affair" (1:11-16), and her role in curriculum development (2:10-13, 3:6, and 3:8).

Series II: COURSE FILES AND RELATED TEACHING MATERIALS

This series includes Towle's lecture notes and mimeographed materials (primarily case materials and bibliographies) for her courses at SSA as well as for workshops and supervision institutes conducted elsewhere. It also includes a number of topical files of materials which she used in teaching. Here, as elsewhere, the attempt has been to preserve as much as possible Towle's arrangement of the material.

Series III: RESEARCH NOTES AND MANUSCRIPTS

This series consists of notes, drafts, and completed manuscripts of various papers, both published and unpublished. Towle was in great demand as a speaker, not only at professional conferences, but at schools of social work, social welfare agencies, and parent-teacher organizations. A large number of unpublished manuscripts (13:7-13) remain in the order in which Towle placed and numbered them, although her organizing principle is not readily apparent, being neither chronological, topical, nor alphabetical.

In 1961 Towle considered the possibility of publishing a collection of her papers, including some of those previously unpublished. Although she did not proceed with the project, she did make an outline and some preliminary notes which are preserved here (13:15).

The manuscript of Common Human Needs (12:11-15) is also a part of this series.

Series IV: ARTICLES AND BOOKS

This series is comprised of the original edition and the foreign language editions of Common Human Needs (Box 15), as well as the offprint of Towle's articles (16:2-9 and 17:1-3). The offprint have been arranged chronologically and were numbered by Mary Rall to correspond to their position in the Towle bibliography published on the occasion of the dedication of the Towle Memorial Library at the Spencer-Chapin Adoption Service, New York (20:1). Bibliographies of Towle's published articles and works compiled at various points over the course of her career are also included (14:12).

Series V: HONORS AND AWARDS

This series includes the honorary degrees and awards which Charlotte Towle received and

clippings and memorabilia related to them.

Series VI: POSTHUMOUS AND BIOGRAPHICAL MATERIALS

This series encompasses a variety of material related to Towle's life and death, and is arranged

into two subseries:

Subseries 1, Biographical Materials, contains autobiographical notes, requests for biographical

information made to Towle and the University of Chicago (19:4), biographical sketches written about her (18:4), and copies of the research material used in W. Posner's dissertation on Towle's

work (18:5-8, and 19:1-3).

Subseries 2, Memorials, encompasses materials related to Towle's death. It includes letters and

resolutions of condolence to Towle's sister Mary Rall, arranged alphabetically (19:5-7). It also contains ephemera from memorial services, a memorial symposium, and lecture series held in

Towle's honor (19:9-12).

Series VII: EMPLOYMENT

This series contains materials related to Towle's employment at the University of Chicago, and

with the U.S. Veteran's Bureau (20:3-7), and is arranged chronologically.

Series VIII: ADMINISTRATIVE MATERIALS

This series contains administrative materials from Towle's professional life, such as meeting

minutes and departmental curricula. The materials are arranged chronologically.

Series IX: PERSONAL

This series includes personal diaries and journals (22:7, 23:1-5), and is arranged chronologically.

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Series X: AUDIO-VISUAL

This series contains bound and unbound photo albums, as well as loose photographs, of Charlotte Towle (24:1-4), and a tape of a Studs Terkel radio program memorializing her (24:5).

Series XI: OVERSIZED

This series is comprised of a single annotated map, denoting an undated trip through Western Europe.

Series XII: RESTRICTED

This series contains Towle's evaluations of student fieldwork, and is arranged in chronological order, as received. This material is restricted for a period of 80 years (2044-2046).

Related Resources

The following related resources are located in the Special Collections Research Center: http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/spcl/select.html

Abbott, Edith and Grace. Papers.

University of Chicago. School of Social Service Administration. Office of the Dean. Leon Carroll Marshall, Edith Abbott, and Helen R. Wright. Records, 1909-1956

Subject Headings

- Towle, Charlotte
- Terkel, Studs, 1912-2008
- University of Chicago. School of Social Service Administration
- Public welfare
- Child welfare
- Social work education
- Social workers
- Women social workers
- Social service

INVENTORY

Series I: Correspondence

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American Red Cross, experience with, 1925

Box 1

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Casework by Florence Hollis, preface to, 1963

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Common Human Needs, responses and reviews, 1945

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Curriculum in advanced social casework education, 1946-48

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Curriculum in advanced social casework education, 1949-51

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Curriculum in advanced social casework education, 1952

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Curriculum in advanced social casework education, 1953-56

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Folder 1

England, year in, 1954-55

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Folder 2

"Extracurricular Activities," conferences, lecture, and articles, 1945-1963

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Folder 3

Faculty communications - Miscellaneous, 1937-1957 and undated

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"Fulbright Affair," 1953-Aug.1954

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"Fulbright Affair," Sept.1954-1955 and undated

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Generic case work, 1946-49

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Gould House conference, 1963 [see also Gould House papers in 8;11]

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Growth and Development, Human, curriculum, 1957-1964

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London School of Economics, social work program, 1957

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Mental retardation, 1957-59

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Mid-Century White House Conference, 1950

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New York School of Social Work, paper delivered at, press misinterpretation, 1961

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Personal - "Cherished Letters," 1933-65

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Personal - Correspondence with "Elsie & Nicky," 1955-1959

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Personal – Letters to Mary Rall, 1955-1956

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Positions, applications for, 1931-1933

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Request for Publications or Editorial Comments, 1946-1962

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Social Case Records from Psychiatric Clinics, responses and reviews, 1941-42

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Tributes to Charlotte Towle, 1936-64

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Tributes to others by Charlotte Towle, 1952-64

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Work loads, memoranda concerning, Charlotte Towle's, 1946-59

Series II: Course Files and Related Teaching Materials

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Administration of Social Welfare (SSA 355), course proposal

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Advanced Education in Social Work, statements by Council on Social Work Education, 1964

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Assignments and examination questions, various courses, 1933-1964 and undated

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Casework Faculty, notes and minutes, 1963-64

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Dynamics of Learning and Teaching (SSA 431, 580), case material, 1957 and undated

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Dynamics of Learning and Teaching (SSA 431, 580), lecture notes, 1959-1961 and undated

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Dynamics of Learning and Teaching (SSA 431, 580), objectives and course plan, 1953-1957

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Dynamics of Learning and Teaching (SSA 431, 580), teaching materials, undated

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Dynamics of Learning and Teaching (SSA 431, 580), teaching materials, undated

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Growth and Development of Personality (SSA 300-01, 320, 323-24), assignments, 1960-1964 and undated

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Growth and Development of Personality (SSA 300-01, 320, 323-24), assumptions, theoretical, undated

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Growth and Development of Personality (SSA 300-01, 320, 323-24), case appraisals, undated

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Growth and Development of Personality (SSA 300-01, 320, 323-24), "Cases on Individuals," undated

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Growth and Development of Personality (SSA 300-01, 320, 323-24), discussion groups, 1950-1960 and undated

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Growth and Development of Personality (SSA 300-01, 320, 323-24), lectures, Introduction; Definition of terms, 1958

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Growth and Development of Personality (SSA 300-01, 320, 323-24), lectures, Stresses, 1958-1961

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Growth and Development of Personality (SSA 300-01, 320, 323-24), lectures, Defenses, 1958

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Growth and Development of Personality (SSA 300-01, 320, 323-24), lectures, A Prevue [sic] of the Family, 1959-1966

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Growth and Development of Personality (SSA 300-01, 320, 323-24), lectures, Family and Culture; Religion, 1961

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Growth and Development of Personality (SSA 300-01, 320, 323-24), lectures, The Place of Culture in Personality Growth and Development, 1962 and undated

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Growth and Development of Personality (SSA 300-01, 320, 323-24), lectures, Infancy, undated

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Growth and Development of Personality (SSA 300-01, 320, 323-24), lectures, ibid, undated

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Growth and Development of Personality (SSA 300-01, 320, 323-24), lectures, Early Childhood, 1958 and undated

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Growth and Development of Personality (SSA 300-01, 320, 323-24), lectures, Late Childhood, 1959 and undated

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Folder 2

Growth and Development of Personality (SSA 300-01, 320, 323-24), lectures, ibid, 1961 and undated

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Growth and Development of Personality (SSA 300-01, 320, 323-24), lectures, miscellaneous unused notes, 1958-1959 and undated

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Growth and Development of Personality (SSA 300-01, 320, 323-24), materials mimeographed, undated

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Growth and Development of Personality (SSA 300-01, 320, 323-24), outline and basic assumptions, 1957

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Growth and Development of Personality (SSA 300-01, 320, 323-24), reading notes and clippings, 1957-1965, undated

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Growth and Development of Personality (SSA 300-01, 320, 323-24), religion, social work and, 1959-1962 and undated

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Guidance and Personnel Program, casework aspects, 1939

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Learning Patterns, lectures and workshops at Western Reserve University, 1961

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Lecture notes, miscellaneous, 1932, 1942, 1955, and undated

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Psychiatric social work curriculum, 1934-1935

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Quotations, miscellaneous, used in teaching, 1957-1962

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Social Casework (SSA 307, 309, 320, 321, 330, 331) case teaching notes, Menton case (SCW 1), 1963

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Folder 2

Social Casework (SSA 307, 309, 320, 321, 330, 331) case teaching notes, Brandon case (SCW 2), 1957-1961

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Social Casework (SSA 307, 309, 320, 321, 330, 331) case teaching notes, Bates and Moulton cases, undated

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Social Casework (SSA 307, 309, 320, 321, 330, 331) case teaching notes, Wagner case, undated

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Folder 9

Social Casework (SSA 307, 309, 320, 321, 330, 331) case teaching notes, various cases (SCW 3 and 4), undated

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Social Casework (SSA 307, 309, 320, 321, 330, 331) case teaching notes, lecture notes, 1932-35

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Social Casework (SSA 307, 309, 320, 321, 330, 331) case teaching notes, lecture notes, 1945-58

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Social Casework (SSA 307, 309, 320, 321, 330, 331) case teaching notes, lecture notes, 1961-64

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Folder 14

Students in social work education, selection of, 1941-1952

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Supervision (SSA 312) Casework, lecture notes, 1945

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Supervision (SSA 479) No. 24, "Basic Behavior Concepts in Professional Learning," by Charlotte Towle, undated

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Supervision (SSA 581) No. 18, "First Interview of the Untrained Worker," undated

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Supervision (SSA 581) No 31, "The Nature of Social Work," by Werner W. Boehm, undated

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Supervision (SSA 581) Casework, notes and materials, 1961-63

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Supervision, Casework, case problem sets with notes, #1-15, undated

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Supervision, Casework, ibid, #16-29, undated

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Supervision, Casework, Learning and, (theoretical statements), undated

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Supervision Summer Institutes, 1966, materials

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Series III: Research Notes and Manuscripts

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Character Disorders, Classification of, notes for SSA course taken 1961

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Chartist Movement, course paper for SSA 365, English Philanthropy, 1939

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"Criteria of Educability," copy of typescript with annotations, undated

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Ethics and Values in a Changing Social Welfare Scene, paper, 1965

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Examinations in Social Work Education, paper, 1947

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Freiberg Institute, case discussion, 1964

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Health and Disease, notes for SSA course taken 1962

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Learning, Relationship of Work and Play in, notes and paper

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Folder 6

Learning Process in Field Work, Study on, 1949-51

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Lectures and papers, miscellaneous unpublished, 1940-1947 and undated

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Lectures and papers, miscellaneous unpublished, 1935-1949 and undated

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Lectures and papers, miscellaneous unpublished, 1947 and undated

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Lectures and papers, miscellaneous unpublished, circa 1930-1946

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Lectures and papers, miscellaneous unpublished, 1966 and undated

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Lectures and papers, miscellaneous unpublished, 1933-1956 and undated

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Lectures and papers, miscellaneous unpublished, 1929-1967 and undated

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Psychopathology for Social Workers, notes for SSA course taken 1956

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"Reading Notes," holographic notebooks, 1939-1955

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Research, miscellaneous papers, notes, and proposals, 1948-1962 and undated

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Social Casework in the Post-Masters' Program, paper, 1953

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Social Work Education, Keeping pace with our Knowledge of Children, Is, discussion, 1962

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Social Worker, I'd like to be a, television program, 1957

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Supervision, unpublished papers on, 1964 and undated

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Teacher, Helping the Casework Practitioner Become a, paper, 1959-1965

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Series IV: Articles and Books

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Guilford, Edgar W., "Quid Vobis Vidatur; Charlotte Towle as an Untrained Social Worker, 1924-26," manuscript, 1966

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Memorial services, November 6, November 10, December 6, 1966

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"The Mountaineer," Commencement Number, June, 1915, Butte High School, Butte, Montana

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Towle Memorial Library, Spence-Chapin Adoption Service, New York, dedication of, 1967

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Photograph of Charlotte Towle's Retirement from SSA, circa. 1962

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Terkel, Studs, radio program in memory of Towle, December, 1966, tape

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