Hurts can be utterly personal. They can feel unfair. They can resonate deeply. We give and we receive pain, not necessarily in commensurate proportion. We use power, or it is used against us, to elevate one another, to distance the common ground between us and the other. Our lives become "diabolic" in the literal meaning of the word: "divisive" (Nouwen, 1995, p. 36). This changes only once we recognize the divisions and choose to act to mend them. Forgiving is a process and forgiveness an end-state—a verb as well as a noun. Through the following examples from our practice of social work, we will explore forgiving and forgiveness.

Vulnerability and Forgiveness

Several years ago I [John] was employed by an agency that helped ex-offenders to "rehabilitate," as we then described it. I was a young worker, providing direct services, front line. This was early in my career, and until then most of my clients had committed nonviolent crimes. But not this particular man. I was glad that I had been told that this fellow, previously convicted of manslaughter, was going to see me as a voluntary client. The first time that I had encountered him—he was laughing and enjoying the fellowship of others—I got a bad "feel."

I was frankly surprised at my reaction. Here, clearly, was a case of prejudice—*my* prejudice. I had read nothing about him, and knew little about him—save for the conviction and any impressions I could garner from a first glance. I knew the agency's mandate, I knew my role, and I had understood the importance of such social work values as being nonjudgmental. But something about him touched a nerve, and I was angry with him. How anxiety producing! This was not how it was supposed to be: my role was as a helper. I had deliberately sought a job in corrections. Up to that point my commitment to rehabilitation was not in doubt. I remember the uneasiness that accompanied these feelings. It lasted only a couple of hours, gradually dissipating as I got on with a busy schedule. I didn't reflect on it a lot more than this—at least not on a conscious level.

The following week I saw him. To this day, I don't think that the interview was in any way inappropriate. We connected over a cigarette or two, talked a little about the halfway house and some of the objectives of being on parole. This was the first of many sessions I would have with him. Ultimately, he and I started a newsletter for parolees living within a particular halfway house that had been experiencing administrative reorganization.

I did not know at the time what it was that changed within me. Early into our first meeting, a little "light" went on in my heart. I felt no ill will towards the man. I could work with him. What's more, over very little time I genuinely liked him. I remember, vividly, the sense of

well being that occurred in that first meeting. Indeed, I was probably relieved that I could "cut it." A good thing, too, for within several weeks I was accompanying a parole officer to do pre-release assessments at a series of federal penitentiaries. I got to know many people convicted of manslaughter, first and second degree murder, and other violent crimes.

But what was it that had occurred during that first full session with this parolee? Sure, in nascent form, I had many of the requisite social work knowledge and skills. I could ask at least some right questions, I understood pacing, the role of silence, I knew my agency's policies, I had a "grab-bag" of tricks for helping to create and sustain a good working relationship. What's more, the man was genuinely committed to working out the contract of his parole, to getting on with his life. He was, in several respects, a "motivated" client. We gave and received courtesy, we were both respectful, we were willing to share. We laughed; we connected.

But there was more to it than this. Years later, my hunch is that on some level, for me at least, the first session I had with this man was "a decisive moment," as one theologian describes it (Heron, 1980, p. 48). I had not put away the initial feeling. I had not forgotten what this man had done; indeed all of our encounters were on some level referenced to the crime. But I had somehow gotten over the anger, and in the literal sense of the term "to suffer with," I was exercising compassion. The Swiss theologian Karl Barth claims that God sees "even the most despicable human evil as an expression of profound suffering" (In Thompson, 1992, p. 25). I think that on some level, in a provisional sense, I understood this without at the time ever having read it. As one part of the Bible explains, "so I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand" (Romans 7:21, RSV). The line between good and evil had somehow intersected: precisely because the man had been involved in a murder, we had the opportunity to relate to each other, deeply.

This courage to create and sustain a connection was mutual. But for me, I think, it was rooted in a dilemma that transcended us both. His presence had allowed me to resist self-deception, to overcome prejudice, to forgive him and myself for the possibility of evil, and to appreciate that his estrangement and mine were rooted in the fabric of human existence. "The courage to affirm oneself," writes theologian Paul Tillich, "must include the courage to affirm one's demonic depth" (1952, p. 122). This, surely, had been part of my struggle. I was manifestly uncomfortable with the demonic potential within *me*. But in working with this client, on a deeper level I was gently led back to the inherent brokenness of the human condition, to our fallen state. And here I saw the face of God.

Ours is a culture of progress. Technical proficiency, bureaucratic organization, and human intellect have raised our standard of living farther than previous generations might have ever imagined. These same things have penetrated virtually all aspects of consciousness, making us unwilling appreciators of the fallen state of nature that is humanity (Niebuhr, 1944). But, to stress an important point, to a Christian our very nature *is* "corrupted." The original Creation Story in the Book of Genesis is repeated constantly throughout our lives. We are estranged from our full potential in the absence of grace; our reason is equally limited without revelation. And in order to be truly authentic human beings, we must take others into our orbit, recognize that we have been touched by them, and resolve not to let evil triumph over good in that encounter. We seek, ultimately, a communion with (a "union with") the other. And in this intersection we experience the Divine.

"It is not the religious act" that makes the individual, wrote Protestant cleric Dietrich Bonhoeffer shortly before his death in a Nazi concentration camp, "but participation in the sufferings of God in the secular life" (1986, p. 361). This leads to another of the most important elements of our religious tradition: to live is to suffer. The sufferings of this present time, St. Paul insists, reflect a whole creation subject to futility, rendering faith a matter of clinging with eager longing to an unseen hope that all might be set free from its bondage to decay. We—all of creation—groan inwardly as we wait for our salvation (Romans 8:18-25, RSV). That God in our tradition "groans" with us, that He took on human form, suffered terribly, and continues to suffer daily through us, explains how it is, as Bonhoeffer concluded, that humanity "is summoned to share in God's sufferings" (1986, p. 361).

By connecting with this client, I conclude that I suffered with him, in the best sense of the term. In his classic *On Listening to another*, Douglas Steele notes that an essential quality of being a good listener is "vulnerability," that is, from the original Latin, "capable of being wounded," "able to be hurt" (In Hinson, 1998, p. 39). Rather than being some sort of impediment, as I might have thought early in my career, that sense of being-put-out-of-kilter by my first "manslaughter parolee" was, in fact, a powerful locus of deeper connection. But this connection could happen only if I was prepared to forgive him, accept myself, and be at peace with our human nature.

Forgiving and the Unguarded Heart

As one mystic put it, the religious message "strikes the ear of the world with the force of a hint" (Carl Michaelson, in Jones, 1997, p. 14). This was my [Cathryn] experience of forgiveness with persons who lived with a mental handicap. These "teachers" often led me to my truth through silence and simple gestures. My schooling in forgiveness took place during ten years in several L'Arche communities living with persons who had mental handicaps, and with assistants, most of whom, like myself, had emotional handicaps. L'Arche is an international organization of Christian communities of people that share life with persons often rejected in our technology- and information-driven world. Life in L'Arche was intense, complex, and often emotionally charged in its daily-ness. It was in the context of daily-ness that I learned to forgive and to ask for forgiveness.

Harry was one of the persons who taught me about forgiveness in his near silent ways. Harry was an older man who had lived at L'Arche for some time before I came to live with him. He was a man of routine and ritual. Harry moved slowly through life, and I was often on a fast track. Harry spoke only a few words, but for me he became an eloquent teacher. One experience stands out in my mind's eye that typified my learning to bring to consciousness the unspoken meaning of my actions. I had worked at the office all day and returned home in time to greet Harry who was the first home that day. I had many things to do before I slept. There was supper to prepare, assisting people in making their lunch for the next day, helping people with their laundry, making the grocery list, planning a shopping trip with two of the other members of the household, facilitating our weekly house meeting and prayer, and much, much more. So I gave Harry his requisite cup of tea as I busied myself with the tasks at hand. I whirred around that kitchen intent on getting the meal ready on time. As I turned quickly to reach for the fridge handle, Harry without a word put his large, strong hand on the door and blocked my way. I was startled, then frustrated, then angry that nothing I said would budge his hand. He just kept looking at me and waiting.

Finally, I guessed his intention—I had been ignoring him and he needed to let me know that. As soon as I acknowledged what I had done and asked forgiveness, Harry sat down again with a smile on his face. I put supper on simmer and joined him for a cup of tea.

Though this transgression seems small, Harry was not about to overlook it. He had a forgiving state of heart. Harry did not ignore the hurt or hide it away in some storehouse of trivial transgressions, as I tended to do. Harry ignored my initial brush-offs and waited until I recognized what I was doing. That's real courage! To acknowledge that you have been hurt is truly a courageous act and a necessary step in the process of forgiveness. The words of Larens Van Der Post find resonance in me when I remember this incident. In the *Seed and the Sower* (1996), he wrote about betrayals—of others and of our true self—as "presenting themselves to the unguarded heart selected to become their own private seed-bed of trivialities in the daily routine of life, as insignificant occurrences so self-evident that no question of a choice and so no chance of rejection arises out of their appearance on the

familiar scene of everyday events" (p. 44). Harry taught me about my unguarded, unconscious heart where forgiveness had remained a "strange, persistent beggar at a narrow door asking to be born; asking again and again, for admission at the gateway" of my life (Van Der Post, 1966, p. 97).

Harry's ability to let go of his pain allowed me to experience forgiveness. This demonstrated for me what I believe is another necessary step in the forgiving process—to let go of "righteous" anger and hurt. Harry could have rightfully held on to resentment, bitterness and anger at being ignored and being meant to feel insignificant in the face of my busy, competent-self. One of the wonderful gifts that persons living with a developmental disability has given to me and to others is the amazing ability to let go of righteous anger and pain. They are truly vulnerable to the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, yet once an experience has been resolved they are often able to let go of the intense feelings that surround the experience.

Forgiving and Remembering: Release

To forgive is not to excuse an injustice. Some behaviors are inherently inexcusable: economic exploitation, emotional abuse, physical violence, the denial of human rights, fraud, theft, the list is probably endless. To condone these behaviors is, on one level, to tolerate evil. Nor is forgiveness the same as forgetting. "Perhaps for small indignities," according to one religious writer (Thompson, 1992, p. 18), "we can simply excuse and forget." But not for "major assaults that leave us gasping with psychic pain, reeling with the sting of rejection, bowing under the weight of oppressive constraint, or aching with personal loss and grief" (Thompson, 1992, p. 18). My [Cathryn] counseling work with a number of clients who had been sexually and/or physically abused as children has taught me that many of us approach emotional brokenness and its healing in the simplistic manner of just forgive and forget.

The topic of forgiveness, in almost every case, emerges at some point in my work together with clients. The experience of Mary is representative of other clients who suffer from traumatic childhood experiences. Mary was 38 years old when she first came to see me for chronic depression that had recently deepened. Mary was an active Christian and had thought many times that she had forgiven her grandfather and her uncle for the sexual abuse she suffered over many years as a child. She had prayed "Father forgive them, they know not what they do" (Luke 23: 34). What she did not realize was that God could forgive but she was not yet ready to forgive. Mary spoke of her identification with Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane and his revelation that "my heart is nearly broken with sorrow" (Matthew 26:38). She too had prayed often, "Father if this is possible, let this cup pass me by" (Matthew 26: 39). Mary felt that she had never been able to pass beyond this point to the crucifixion and resurrection.

Mary had been told many times by friends and family to forgive and forget—to get on with her life and stop dwelling on what happened a long time ago. The "forgive and forget" advice of friends and family left Mary experiencing extreme pain and feeling trapped. If she forgave and forgot then she feared that she would be minimizing the pain and the injury, thus mitigating the seriousness of the offenses against her. Yet refusal or inability to forgive was holding her captive and casting her in thrall to experiences and persons from her past. Mary found that this fear lessened when she had fully acknowledged the depth of the emotional pain and had it validated by others like myself. The challenge for Mary and for others who have been deeply hurt was to forgive yet still remember.

The person forgiving needs a sense of "self" that can bear the emotional and spiritual cost of releasing the other from the punitive consequences of their injurious behavior. Part of the forgiveness process for Mary was "naming, claiming but not blaming" the feelings that arose from the memories of the trauma, and acknowledging the impact this suffering had had in her life. Mary found that when she was able to accept the full impact and intensity of her feelings, a renewed sense of hope began to build in her. This experience of renewal was reflected in a scripture passage that helped her to focus on the future: "your rebuilders make haste, as those who tore you down and laid you waste go forth from you" (Isaiah 49: 17). The unexpressed feelings that had torn her down in the past, now acknowledged and expressed, drew her forward into a time of rebuilding her self. Mary found that forgiveness was an active choice to change her own behavior, thoughts and feelings regarding the persons who had hurt her. She discovered that forgiveness had more to do with releasing herself, and the releasing of her abusers became a by-product of this process. The release was from the "right" to feel as she did by choosing to focus on other thoughts and beliefs. Victor Frankl understood this choice when he wrote about the "last of the human freedoms—to choose one's own attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way" (Frankl, 1985, p. 86). Frankl reminds us that there are always choices to make and that each day we are offered opportunities to make decisions about whether we will be molded by the circumstances of our life as helpless victims or choose our own way in faith. The process of forgiveness for Mary and for others who have been deeply pained by other people's actions takes a long time. It is a courageous journey towards healing and wholeness—our true vocation.

Conclusion

Just shy of his fortieth birthday, and dying of consumption, the seventeenth century Christian poet and Anglican cleric George Herbert published a collection of poems that amplify the meaning and virtue of human suffering. "Herbert wrote five poems with the same title: 'Affliction.' In each, the word *grief* is common, and its meaning is broader than our modern sense of remorse over loss. *Grief* could mean any form of suffering, from daily chaos to acute pain, from troubled mind to ruinous circumstances" (Dawson, 1998, p.29). Coming to forgiveness is a grief process—a process of remembering, of experiencing and owning the emotions, of choosing to acknowledge the pain and of releasing one's self and the other.

As Protestant theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, several months before his death in a Nazi concentration camp, humanity "is summoned to share in God's sufferings at the hands of a godless world." Yet the burden of our freedom is the ability to act upon choices despite the fact that—as the Creation story symbolically captures it—humanity is estranged, broken. In our faith we call upon the Lord of all Creation to send the Holy Spirit, "a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, a spirit of counsel and of strength" (Isaiah 11: 2), to guide us to wholeness. In forgiveness, all people can share in the rule of Immanuel, of God with us. In forgiveness, the "wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the young lion shall browse together, with a little child to guide them" (Isaiah 11: 6). ⫴

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Religious Discrimination in Social Work: An International Survey of Christian Social Workers

Lawrence E. Ressler and David R. Hodge

This study explores perceptions of religious discrimination in social work, using quantitative and qualitative methodologies, among Christian social workers (N = 172). Quantitative results indicated that a majority of respondents (53%) had personally experienced religious discrimination, with concern being expressed that the social work profession was not complying with the six standards in the Code of Ethics that directly and indirectly address religion. Although qualitative analysis revealed that institutions of higher learning constituted the most prominent setting in which discrimination occurred, the results indicated systemic discrimination throughout the profession. As hypothesized, a general pattern emerged whereby the more conservative the theological orientation of the respondent, the greater the degree of religious discrimination reported. It is suggested that the profession may be on the verge of abandoning its ethically mandated stance of inclusion and diversity and adopting a posture of overt oppression directed toward Christians and other people of faith.

Tension exists in the current relationship between social work and religion. On the one hand, four standards in the NASW Code of Ethics (1997: 1.05c, 2.01b, 4.02, 6.01) mention religion as one of the specially named diversity categories. For example, standard 2.01b states that, "social workers should avoid unwarranted negative criticism of colleagues in communications with clients or with other professionals" and goes on to state that "unwarranted negative criticism may include demeaning comments that refer to colleagues' level of competence or to individuals' attributes such as . . . religion." Further, the profession is witnessing widespread and growing interest in spirituality and religion (Bullis, 1996; Canda, 1997; Jacobs, 1997; O' Rourke, 1997; Sheridan & Amato-von Hemert, 1999; Walsh, 1998). This would seem to suggest the possibility of a friendly posture towards religion and people of faith.

Concurrently, a number of studies (Bellitto, 1996; Gartner, 1986; Lehr & Spilka, 1989; Lindsey & Heeren, 1992; Sewall, 1995; Skill & Robinson, 1994) have revealed a discriminatory stance towards Christians in forums populated by what has been referred to as a new class of symbolic knowledge workers (Gay, 1991). In contrast to the traditional middle and working classes, which are engaged in the production and distribution of material goods and services, this new class is defined as those professionals engaged in the production and distribution of symbolic (words, pictures, images) as opposed to material (engineering) knowledge (Berger, 1986). Further, social work has been included in the constellation of occupations that comprise this new class of professionals, due to its status as a profession which is heavily invested in the production and distribution of symbolic knowledge (Berger, 1986).

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In spite of the NASW Code of Ethics' injunction that social workers should seek to understand oppression with respect to religion (1.05c), no study has explored the perceptions of people of faith regarding religious discrimination in the profession of social work. The purpose of this study is to begin to address this gap in the literature by exploring the perceptions of Christian social workers about religious discrimination in social work and compliance with the NASW ethical standards related to religion.

There are a number of reasons why the perceptions of Christians are an appropriate starting point to understand religious discrimination in social work. In addition to being the nation's largest spiritual tradition (Green, Guth, Smidt & Kellstedt, 1996), Christians were instrumental in founding the profession of social work. As Karger and Stoesz (1998) noted, the two were "inextricably linked" during the profession's formative years during the 19th century (Marsden, 1991). Further, in keeping with its history, this population is associated with a number of salutary characteristics, such as the realization of personal strengths, supporting anti-poverty organizations (Ellison, 1992; Gorsuch & Hao, 1993; Maton & Salem, 1995; Pargament, et al., 1987; Regnerus, Smith & Sikkink, 1998). Finally, Christians are disproportionately drawn from ethnic minorities, women, and the poor (Davis & Robinson, 1996), provocatively, a demographic portrait that is essentially an inverse picture of the new class' demographic profile.
Definitions

Definitions

Christians are defined in this paper as those individuals who adhere to the ecumenical statements produced by the Evangelicals and Catholics Together conferences (Colson, Diaz-Vilar, Dulles, et al., 1994; Colson, Neuhaus, Bray Gerald L., et al., 1998). These ecumenical statements affirm a broad, inclusive, historically orthodox understanding of the Christian faith. While there are Christian traditions outside the definition, this conceptualization represents the nation's numerical mainstream (Green, et al., 1996). Christians are one group of a larger population referred to in this paper as people of faith, defined as those

individuals who derive their values from an external, definable, transcendent source (Hunter, 1991; Reed, 1996; Wolfe, 1998).

Religion is defined as an organized body of beliefs and practices established in community by individuals who share phenomenologically similar spiritual experiences (Canda, 1997; Carroll, 1997; Sheridan & Amato-von Hemert, 1999). Accordingly, religion can be seen as an external expression of an internal spirituality reality (Musick, Koenig, Larson & Matthews, 1998).

The New Class Framework

The new class framework has been adopted by a number of sociologists who work in, or draw from, the Marxian conflict tradition (Berger, 1978; Berger, 1986; Brint, 1984; Brint, 1985; Bruce-Briggs, 1979; Gay, 1991; Gouldner, 1979; Green, et al., 1996; Hunter, 1980; Kirkpatrick, 1998; McAdams, 1987; Schmalzbauer, 1993; Szelenyi & Martin, 1991). New class theory posits that the post-industrial economy has birthed a new elite class of professionals engaged in the production and distribution of symbolic knowledge, the words, images and pictures though which the broader culture derives its sense of meaning (Lipset, 1979). In keeping with underlying Marxian suppositions, the new class professionals develop distinctive ideologies that reflect its economic self-interests and social environment. In turn, these ideologies provide the rational for advancing the interests of the new class against competing constructions of reality (McAdams, 1987).

Pooled, multi-year cross-sectional research with nationally representative data sets has supported new class theory and suggested that cohesive ideologies have formed which reflect the social milieu and economic interests of the new class (Green, et al., 1996; Ladd, 1979; McAdams, 1987; Schmalzbauer, 1993). It should be noted that, as an explanation of aggregate phenomena, class theory is not determinist in individual cases. However, membership in new class professions is predictive of views on a wide range of political, moral and social issues. For example, new class status is predictive of support for abortion rights (Green, et al., 1996) and increased government intervention (McAdams, 1987). Further, new class ideologies have been demonstrated to be different from, and at odds with, those held by such groups as Evangelicals and the working class (Schmalzbauer, 1993).

While religion is not a class, it does foster the development of a distinct ideology, a cognitive and affective framework though which the world is understood (Schmalzbauer, 1993). As mentioned above, in the case of Christians and other people of faith, their ideologies are derived from an external transcendent source. Conversely, new class

ideologies are intrinsically relativistic, setting up potential conflict between epistemologically derived worldviews (Gouldner, 1979).

Gouldner (1979), perhaps the most respected new class theorist (Szelenyi & Martin, 1991), suggests new class professionalism is based upon a "culture of critical discourse," or CCD that inherently fosters a relativist morality. The CCD requires that the validity of all claims be justified on the basis of rational, human centered argumentation, without reference to transcendent authority (Gouldner, 1979). Appeals to a transcendent authority imply absolutes and serve to place parameters on discourse. Conversely, the new class CCD milieu in which thesis is followed by counter thesis, argument by counter-argument, in a never ending dialectical search for new perspectives, is an inherently relativist process. Thus, in keeping with Marxian tenets, new class status tends to foster a progressive, relativist conceptualization of morality, in which morals and ethics are derived from the contemporary new class milieu rather than a fixed transcendent source. Indeed, the secular, relativist metaphysical orientation of the new class has been widely commented on (Berger, 1978; Bruce-Briggs, 1979; Carter, 1993; Gay, 1991; Hunter, 1980; Neuhaus, 1984) and empirically documented (Green, et al., 1996; McAdams, 1987; Schmalzbauer, 1993).

This epistemological divide is similar to that proposed by Hunter (1991) in his influential work *Culture Wars*. However, instead of positing the cultural conflict in terms of a new class of elite knowledge workers attempting to advance its material and social interests against competing constructions of reality, Hunter argues that differing epistemologies lie at the core of present cultural struggles. On one side of the struggle are those who derive their value system from an external transcendent source, which he refers to as an orthodox worldview. On the other are those who derive their values from contemporary society, which Hunter refers to as a progressive worldview. At least one international study has supported this conceptualization (Jensen, 1998), although to some extent the theories overlap as most new class professionals hold to an evolving value system while those who derive their values from a transcendent source reside primarily in the two classes associated with the production of material goods and services (Gallup & Castelli, 1989; Green, et al., 1996; McAdams, 1987; Schmalzbauer, 1993).

The differing value systems of new class professionals and Christians, driven by differing ideologies, suggests that conflict is possible on a wide array of issues, from abortion, to the role of religion in public life, to the nature of government's involvement in society. As Hamilton and Sharma (1997) observed, a clash between ideologies or worldviews, along with a power differential, sets the stage for oppressive conditions. Indeed, in new class forms, discrimination against Christians and other people of faith has been widely documented.

Content analysis of television (Skill & Robinson, 1994), comic strips (Lindsey & Heeren, 1992) and textbooks (Bellitto, 1996; Lehr & Spilka, 1989; Sewall, 1995) has revealed biased portrayals of Christians. In the social sciences there is evidence of discrimination in clinical settings (Gartner, Harmatz, Hohmann, Larson & Gartner, 1990) and admissions to graduate programs (Gartner, 1986). Studies have also suggested that new class status affects the professional decisions of social workers (Neumann, Thompson & Woolley, 1992) to the detriment of Christian consumers (Furman, Perry & Goldale, 1996).

Thus, there would appear to sound theoretical and empirical support to expect religious discrimination in the profession of social work, in spite of the Code of Ethic's prohibitions against discrimination based upon religion. Given social work's status as a new class profession (Berger, 1986), empirical evidence that, in aggregate, the metaphysical beliefs of social workers conform to new class norms (Sheridan, Bullis, Adcock, Berlin & Miller, 1992; Sheridan, Wilmer & Atcheson, 1994), and the empirical studies cited directly above, it is hypothesized that Christians in social work settings will report a high incidence of religious discrimination. Further, we also expect that individuals with orthodox beliefs will tend to report a higher incidence of discrimination.

Method

To obtain a sample of Christians in social work, the membership of the North American Association of Christians in Social Work (NACSW) was surveyed. The NACSW participants were solicited by including a pre-addressed survey as an insert in the Association's bi-monthly newsletter. The survey was sent to approximately 1100 members in two consecutive newsletters in early 1998.

Apparatus

The survey instrument was organized into four sections. One section was demographic in nature. A second section, consisting of five questions, focused on perceptions of personally experienced religious discrimination and knowledge of religious discrimination in social work. A third section, consisting of seven questions, explored perceptions related to the NASW's ethical standards that pertained to religion, and its general social policies. The fourth section asked for examples of discrimination the respondent had experienced or observed.

Respondent Profile

A total of 172 surveys were returned, amounting to roughly 16% of the membership at that point. The respondents came from 37 different states and the District of Columbia (95%), three Canadian provinces

(4%), and two countries outside of North America (1%). The strong majority of the sample (66.3%, N = 114) were members of the National Association of Social Workers or Canadian Association of Social Workers. The average age was 43 (SD 13.88) with a range from 21 to 80. Seventy-four percent of the respondents (N = 127) were female. With respect to agency auspice, 27.9% (N = 48) of the respondents worked in public agencies, 26.2% (N = 45) in private sectarian agencies, 20.9%, (N = 36) in private non-sectarian agencies, and 9.9% (N = 17) in private practice. Agency information was missing for 15.1% (N = 26).

The respondents were highly religious, with 99.4% (N = 171) indicating religion was Extremely Important or Important in their personal life. When asked about the impact of their religion on their social work, 90.7% (N = 156) indicated it had an Extremely Important or Important effect on their social work. With respect to religious affiliation, a Protestant denomination was identified by 76.6% (N = 131), and Catholic/Orthodox was listed by 6.4% (N = 11). Religious identity was not identified or was unclear for 17% (N = 29). Thirty different Protestant denominations were specifically identified.

The respondents were asked to indicate if their theology was Very Liberal, Liberal, Conservative, or Very Conservative. The vast majority selected Conservative (70.9%, N = 122), with Very Conservative chosen by 18% (N = 31), and Liberal by 11% (N = 19). No respondents identified their theology as Very Liberal.

Quantitative Results

Perceptions of Religious Discrimination

The respondents were asked about their perceptions of religious discrimination in the social work profession in five areas: personal, institutions, policies, colleagues, and clients. Knowledge of institutions that discriminate against social workers because of religion received the highest affirmative response (55.3%, N = 94), followed by positive indication of personal discrimination from social work colleagues (52.6%, N = 90). Slightly less than 50% had knowledge of legislative policies or laws that discriminate against religious social workers (47.9%, N = 81) and knowledge of colleagues who experienced religious discrimination from social work colleagues (45.3%, N = 77). Knowledge of clients who experienced religious discrimination from social work colleagues was selected by 44.1% (N = 75) of the respondents.

The Chi Square procedure was used to assess significant differences among the respondents with respect to experienced or perceived religious discrimination. Significant differences were discovered in two areas (See Table 1). The first area involved differences in personal discrimination by theological orientation ($X^2 = 6.4$, DF = 2, Sig. = .04).

Only 26.3% of theologically Liberal respondents (N = 5) reported personal discrimination compared to 54.5% of Conservative respondents (N = 66) and 61.3% of Very Conservative respondents (N = 19).

The second difference was found in perceived discrimination of clients by public auspice ($X^2 = 9.1$, DF = 3, Sig. = .03). Whereas more than 50% of the respondents in both private practice and private nonsectarian agencies reported knowing of clients who had been discriminated against by social work colleagues, less than 50% of the respondents in both public and private sectarian agencies responded affirmatively. There were no significant differences in experienced or perceived discrimination based on gender, NASW/CASW membership, or the degree that religion impacted personal life or social work practice.

Table 1
Chi Square Analysis of Perceived Discrimination By Theological Orientation and Type of Agency

	No	Yes	Total Number
Theological Orientation	**Personally Experienced Discrimination**		
Liberal	14 (73.7%)	5 (26.3%)	19
Conservative	55 (45.5%)	66 (54.5%)	121
Very Conservative	12 (38.7%)	19 (61.3%)	31
Total Number (Percentage)	81 (47.4%)	90 (52.6%)	171
	$X^2 = 6.4$, DF = 2, Significance - .04		
Agency	**Know of Clients Who Experienced Discrimination**		
Public	33 (70.2%)	14 (42.2%)	47
Private Non-Sectarian	26 (57.8%)	19 (42.2%)	45
Private Sectarian	15 (41.7%)	21 (58.3%)	36
Private Practice	6 37.5%)	10 (62.5%)	16
Total Number (Percentage)	80 (55.6%)	64 (44.4%)	144
	$X^2 = 9.1$, DF = 3, Significance - .03		

Table 2
Means of Perceived NASW Compliance with the NASW Code of Ethics Standards Related to Religion and Policies Related to the General Welfare

Variable	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation
Adequacy of social work education about religious diversity and oppression (1.05c)	172	1.90	.76
Social worker prevention and elimination of the domination, exploitation, and discrimination of religious people (6.04d)	172	1.95	.83
Social worker understanding of the function of religion in society and its strengths (1.05a)	172	2.28	.81
Social worker sensitivity to the client's religion (1.05b)	172	2.48	.84
Unwarranted negative criticism, demeaning comments from social workers about religion (2.01b)	172	2.58	1.07
Social worker discrimination on the basis of religion (4.02)	172	2.75	.89
How well the social policies promoted by NASW and CASW promote the general welfare of society (6.01)	172	2.94	.91

5 = Positive perception about compliance with the standards
1 = Negative perceiption about compliance with the standards

Perceived Code of Ethics Compliance

Respondents were asked how well they perceived the social work profession to be complying with six NASW Code of Ethics standards that directly or indirectly relate to religion. A five point Likert scale from Extremely Well (value of 5) to Very Poorly (value of 1) was used to measure attitude about compliance (Table 2). In each case, the respondent's perception was below the midpoint of 3, indicating concern about compliance. The greatest concern was with Standard 1.05c (social work education about religious diversity and oppression, x = 1.90, SD = .76), followed by Standard 6.04d (mandate that social workers prevent and eliminate the domination, exploitation, and discrimination of religious people, x = 1.95, SD = .83), with somewhat less concern about Standard 1.05a (the inferred requirement that social workers understand of the function of religion in society and its strengths[1], x = 2.28, SD = .81), Standard 1.05b (the inferred requirement that social workers be sensitive to the client's religion, x = 2.48, SD = .84), and Standard 2.01b (prohibition against unwarranted negative criticism, demeaning comments from social workers about religion, x = 2.48, SD 1.07). The least degree of concern, although still under 3, was associated with Standard 4.02 (prohibition of social worker discrimination on the basis of religion, x = 2.75, SD = .89). The respondents were also asked how satisfied they were with how well the NASW and CASW policies promoted Standard 6.01, i.e. the general welfare of society. The average response was 2.94 (SD = .91), suggesting more dissatisfaction than satisfaction.

Bivariate correlations were run to see if there were any significant relationships between the compliance of the seven religion/policy standards and the five following variables: theological orientation, the degree to which religion impacts the respondent's social work, the degree to which religion impacts the respondent's personal life, age, and years in the field (See Table 3).

Theological orientation was found to be significantly and positively correlated with compliance in five of the six religion standards, including Standard 1.05a (understand of the function of religion in society and its strengths, r = .39, p = 00); Standard 1.05b (sensitivity to the client's religion, r = .28, p = .00); Standard 1.05c (adequacy of social work education about religious diversity and oppression, r = .23, p = .00); Standard 2.01b (unwarranted negative criticism, demeaning comments, r = .21, p = .00); and Standard 4.02 (social worker discrimination on the basis of religion, r = .19, p = .01). In addition, theological orientation was positively correlated with how well the NASW and CASW policies were perceived to promote the general welfare of society (Standard 6.01, r = .33, p = .00).

Table 3
Perceived Compliance with NASW Code of Ethics Standards Related to Religion and Policies Related to the General Welfare Correlations

Ethical Standards		Theological Orientation	Years in Field	Impact of Social Work on Religion	Impact of Religion on Life	Age
Social worker understanding of the function of religion in society and its strengths (1.05a)	Pearsons r Number Probability	.39 172 .00	NS	NS	NS	NS
Social worker sensitivity to the client's religion (1.05b)	Pearsons r Number Probability	.28 172 .00	NS	NS	NS	NS
Adequacy of social work education about religious diversity and oppression (1.05c)	Pearsons r Number Probability	.23 172 .00	NS	NS	NS	NS
Unwarranted negative criticism, demeaning comments from social workers about religion (2.01b)	Pearsons r Number Probability	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
Prohibition against social worker discrimination on the basis of religion (4.02)	Pearsons r Number Probability	.19 169 .01	.17 158 .04	-.15 169 .04	NS	NS
Social Worker Prevention and elimination of the domination, exploitation, and discrimination against religious people (6.04d)	Pearsons r Number Probability	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
How well social policies promoted by NASW and CASW promote the general welfare of society (6.01)	Pearsons r Number Probability	.33 170 .00	NS	NS	NS	NS

In other words, with the exception of Standard 6.04d (prevention and elimination of the domination, exploitation, and discrimination of religious people) which was in the direction one would anticipate but was not significantly correlated, the results found that the more conservative the theology, the greater the concern with compliance and the greater the dissatisfaction with NASW/CASW policies.

The degree to which religion impacts social work was significantly and negatively correlated with one standard—Standard 4.22, prohibition against social worker discrimination on the basis of religion ($r = -.15$, $p = .04$). That is to say, the greater the impact that religion has on one's social work, the less favorable the attitude about compliance. Years of experience in the field was significantly and positively correlated with the same variable ($r = .17$, $p = .04$), suggesting the newer one was to the field, the more concern one had about compliance.

Qualitative Responses

Qualitative Analysis Methodology

Respondents were asked in the survey to give examples of religious discrimination they had experienced or observed. Of the 172 respondents, 102 persons (59.3%) provided comments. Since some respondents provided more than one example or identified more than one target or perpetrator, the comments were broken down into comment units. One hundred seven-four (174) comment units were identified with 13 not providing information about religious discrimination. The final qualitative sample, therefore, included 161 units of analysis. Each unit was categorized on five different variables: type of allegation, location, perpetrator, target, and religious association. The operational definitions that were used to analyze the comments are shown in Table 4.

Type of Allegation

The comments clustered around four types of allegations: insensitivity, pejorative attitude, pejorative interaction, and discrimination (Table 5). The smallest number of comments complained that religion and spirituality was not dealt with adequately by social workers and educational institutions (N=7, 4.3%). One respondent noted, for example, that because colleagues were not prepared to deal with spiritual issues, clients were referred to her/him. Another commented that social workers in a child welfare agency ignored parents' restrictions about Halloween.

A slightly larger number of comments described pejorative attitudes about religion (N = 21, 13.1%). Comments in this category reflected perceptions of what would typically be called prejudice. One person, for example, stated that his/her supervisor "hated Christians."

Table 4
Qualitative Analysis Variables and Operational Definitions

Level and Category of Analysis	Definition
1. Type of Allegation:	
Discrimination:	*Action or threatened action designed to withhold opportunities or resources.
Insensitivity:	*Interacting in a way that does not pick up on an important aspect.
Pejorative Attitude:	*Negative ideas.
Pejorative Interaction:	*Interaction that transmits a condescending, negative message.
Miscellaneous:	*Comments that did not address religion and social work, were vague, unreadable, identified stereotypes (generalization without judging comparative worth), and alleged unprofessional conduct (professional action that was deemed inappropriate).
2. In Location:	
Agency:	*Public and private (sectarian and nonsectarian) human service agencies.
Business:	*For profit business.
Policy/Law:	*Written and unwritten guidelines, including the law.
Profession:	*General reference to the social work profession.
Religion:	*Churches, congregations, religion in general.
University:	*Colleges and universities.
3. By Perpetrator:	
Administrator/ Supervisor:	*General adminstration, specific administration, supervisors.
Client:	*Consumers.
Committee/ Organization:	*Formal and informal groups including committees, boards, organizations, and agencies.
Faculty:	*Persons who are responsible for teaching and field practicum. in colleges and universities.
Media:	*Print media, including journals, books, newspapers.
Policy/Law:	*Written and unwritten guidelines, including the law.
Religious Persons:	*Person whose central/connection is religious, including church members and leaders.
Student:	*Person attending an educational institution.
Unclear:	*Unspecified or vague reference.
Worker:	*Social worker or other helping professional.
4. Toward Target:	
Agency/Organization:	*Public and private (sectarian and nonsectarian) human service agencies.
Client:	*Consumers.
Gay/Lesbian:	*Gay/Lesbian persons.
Faculty:	*Persons who are responsible for teaching and field practicum. in colleges and universities.
Profession:	*General reference to the social work profession.
Religion:	*Churches, congregations, religion in general.
Student:	*Person attending an educational institution.
Worker:	*Social worker or other helping professional.

Table 4 (Continued)
Qualitative Analysis Variables and Operational Definitions

Level and Category of Analysis	Definition
5. Religious Association:	
Christianity:	*Identification with some type of unspecified Christianity.
Judaism:	*Identification with some type of Judaism.
Orthodox:	*Identification with a religious tradition that is historically orthodox, both in belief and in lifestyle, including fundamentalist, conservative, and when associated with concerns about abortion and homosexuality.
Religion in General:	*Reference to religion in general.
Spirituality:	*Focus on spirituality in contrast to religion.
Unstated Affiliation:	*Reference to a religious tradition, but unspecified.

Another stated that active Christian families were considered suspect in the adoption agency. Yet another person wrote of a therapist who viewed religion and spirituality as "a crutch." Several persons expressed frustration with NASW and CSWE for what they felt to be demeaning attitudes about Christian views.

The vast majority of the comments indicated some form of negative interaction (N=132, 82.6%). There were two distinct types of negative interactions described—pejorative interaction (negative interaction but with no evidence that resources were withheld or potentially withheld) and discrimination (incidents in which opportunities or resources were withheld or had the potential to be withheld).

The largest number of comments involved pejorative interaction (N=76, 47.2%). One respondent, for example, described a supervisor who made a demeaning comment in public about a staff member who preaches Jesus. Another told of a pastor in therapy who was ridiculed in a staff meeting because of religion. One social worker described "scornful comments" from workers who were antagonistic to Christianity.

The largest number of the pejorative comments (N=36) took place in college and university settings. A common experience of students was being ridiculed for holding religious beliefs, especially if they were conservative. One student described a faculty member asking Christian students to raise their hand in class and then telling them to drop the course since they cannot be a social worker. A number of respondents described supervisors, hiring committees, admission committees, field instructors who picked up on religious cues, such as NACSW membership or attendance at Christian colleges, and then interrogated them in a hostile, belittling manner.

Allegations of discrimination constituted the second largest type of comment (N=57, 35.4%). Examples of perceived discrimination

Table 5
Qualitative Analysis Results

1. Type	Number	Percent
Pejorative Interaction	76	47.2%
Discrimination	57	35.4%
Pejorative Attitude	21	13.1%
Insensitivity	7	4.3%
Total	161	100.0%
Unrelated Comments	13	
2. In Location		
University	72	44.8%
Agency	50	37.3%
Profession	24	14.9%
Law	2	1.2%
Religion	2	1.2%
Business	1	.6%
Total	161	100.0%
3. By Perpetrator		
Faculty	43	26.7%
Worker	36	22.4%
Unclear	23	14.3%
Administration	18	11.2%
Committee/Organization	15	9.4%
Student	11	6.8%
Policy/Law	11	6.8%
Religious Persons	2	1.2%
clilent	1	.6%
Media	1	.6%
Total	161	100.0%
4. Toward Target		
Worker	49	30.4%
Student	45	28.0%
Religion	29	18.0%
Client	20	12.4%
Faculty	8	5.0%
Agency/Organization	8	5.0%
Profession	1	.6%
Gay/Lesbian	1	.6%
Total	161	100.0%
5. Religious Association		
Orthodox	60	37.3%
Christianity	55	34.2%
Unstated Affiliation	21	13.0%
Religion in General	19	11.8%
Spirituality	4	2.5%
Judaism	2	1.2%
Total	161	100.0%

included incidents that took place in business, in the law, in the profession, in agencies, and in the university setting. One mental health worker, for example, indicated s(he) was prohibited from talking about religion with a patient who was Christian. Several respondents, for example, described not being considered for a position in an agency because of s(he) had worked in a Christian counseling agency or had attended a Christian college. As with negative interaction, the university setting was repeatedly cited (N=25) as the location where discrimination took place. Among the comments were several students who believed they had received lower grades because of their personal beliefs or writing about religion or spirituality. Several believed they were denied scholarships or travel funds because of their religious beliefs and several indicated they were not admitted to programs or had to take additional courses because of their belief system. A number comments described faculty being not hired, being fired, and being denied funds because of their religious beliefs. Several comments described Christian agencies being denied students because of the religious identify.

Location, Perpetrator, and Target

The comments were also analyzed for location (where the alleged offense took place), perpetrator, (the source of the action), and the target (the recipient of the action). As can be seen in Table 5, the three most frequently cited locations were the university setting (44.8%, N=72), the agency (37.3%, N=60), and the profession in general (14.9%, N=24). The specific auspice of the university (which includes colleges) and agency was sufficiently unclear to suggest any pattern. It was clear that the incidents take place in public as well as private institutions, sectarian as well as non-sectarian institutions.

Four major perpetrators were mentioned in the comments. Faculty were most frequently cited as the source of the concern (N=43, 26.7%). This was followed by social workers (N=36, 22.4%), with the third largest category being administration (N=18, 11.2%). Committees or the organization as a whole were mentioned in 15 comments (9.4%). This category includes hiring committees, promotion committees, awards committees, boards, and agencies.

Four main targets were also identified in the comments. Social workers were most frequently identified as the target (N=49, 30.4%). Students were the recipients of the actions in slightly fewer comments (N=45, 28%). Many of the comments spoke of religion in general as the target (N=29, 18%). For example, one person suspected discrimination against proposals on religion and spirituality by a selection committee. Several told of demeaning religious jokes. Clients were identified as targets in 20 comments (12.4%). Other targets included faculty, agencies, the profession, and gay/lesbian persons.

Religious Affiliation

Not surprisingly, since the sample was drawn from a Christian social work population, the vast majority of comments identified Christians as the target (N=105, 71.5%). When the Christian category was analyzed more carefully, many comments referred to terms such as conservative or fundamentalist and issues such as abortion, euthanasia, and sexual behavior (including homosexuality). Indeed, 37.3% (N=60) of the comments could be placed in the orthodox type of Christianity. One respondent suggested, for example, that some faculty in a state university had difficulty dealing with mainstream orthodox Christianity as a field placement. They did not have the same difficulty, s(he) said, with other religions such as Native American. Another social worker stated that demeaning comments were made at professional conferences about fundamentalism. Two of the most frequent topics mentioned in the comments were sexuality and abortion. For example, one respondent commented that colleagues had a belittling attitude about Christian faith and believed s(he) could not be objective because of her/his views on abortion and homosexuality. Another was called homophobic without explanation and was ridiculed for not having an "indiscriminate sex life."

Reverse Discrimination

While Christians were generally presented as the target, four comments identified Christians as the perpetrators. One comment, for example, suggested that clients were discriminated by workers in the name of religious beliefs. Another indicated s(he) found discomfort among "mainstream religion" in working with HIV patients. One respondent experienced negative comments by Christian leaders toward social work and psychology. Yet another respondent recalled co-workers in a Christian agency having negative interactions with a Jewish director.

Discussion

This study set out to explore the largely understudied topic of religious discrimination using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Based on new class theory, the hypothesis of the study was that considerable religious discrimination exists in the social work profession and that persons who embrace an orthodox worldview would be particular targets. The strategy adopted for the study was to solicit the perceptions of religiously-committed social workers which in this case were all Christians.

Limitations

Before discussing the findings, several limitations need to be acknowledged. First, the non-random selection process of soliciting Christian social worker perceptions, along with the low response rate of only 16% of the NACSW membership, require that the study be viewed as exploratory and that the results be used cautiously. This study does not claim to provide a representative sample of all Christian social workers and cannot be generalized to all NACSW members since the responses were voluntary and the return rate was low. The sample does, however, provide a glimpse of the attitudes and experiences of a large group of Christian social workers. Further, the response rate is comparable of other national surveys of therapists (Gartner, et al., 1990).

Second, reports of prejudice and discrimination were not validated independently of the claims of the respondents. Stories of being fired, not being hired, being denied funds, being failed because of religious issues may or may not have occurred as presented by the respondent. The comments are assumed, nevertheless, to be an accurate indication of the world as it is perceived and experienced by the respondent.

Religious Discrimination in Social Work

The study provided strong support for the hypothesis that religion and religious persons would report a high incidence of discrimination in social work settings. Fifty three percent (53%) of the respondents reported personal discrimination and 45% reported knowledge of a colleague who had experienced discrimination. Critically, the perceived discrimination extends to clients as well, with 44% of the respondents reporting they knew of clients who had experienced discrimination because of their religion.

Not surprisingly with this result in mind, the study found the respondents to be fairly critical about how well the profession was complying with the six standards directly and indirectly related to religion. In each standard, the respondents' average score was toward the concerned end of the continuum (Table 2). Concern was also expressed regarding how well the profession's policies are promoting the general welfare of society.

The content analysis of the comments paints a rather dismal picture of what is taking place in the profession in the area of religion. The respondents perceive a fairly widespread anti-religious prejudice that most commonly leads to pejorative interaction. Fully a third of the comments identified what the respondent perceived to be active discrimination with resources either being withheld or potentially being withheld.

The problem appears to be systemic, with 55% of the respondents reporting discrimination in institutions and 46% perceiving policies and laws that discriminate. The problems are reported most commonly in the university and agency, but with frequent mention made of the profession in general. Those identified as responsible for the prejudice and discrimination included faculty and students, social work colleagues, administrators, committees, agencies, and policies. While the information was not consistently available, the problems appear to exist in both public and private agencies and universities.

While the evidence of religious prejudice and discrimination was widespread, it was not universally reported. Based on the thought of Gouldner (1979) and Hunter (1991), one should find evidence that persons who embrace a more orthodox theology are especially targeted. This hypothesis was supported both quantitatively and qualitatively. First, there was a significant difference in personally reported discrimination by theological orientation, with 61% of the Very Conservative respondents reporting discrimination compared to 54% of the Conservative respondents and only 26% of the Liberal respondents.

Further support for this hypothesis was found in the correlations between theological orientation and the concern for the NASW standards related to religion (Table 3). Theological orientation and perceived compliance were positively correlated in all of the six standards, with the difference at the significant level in five standards. That is to say, the more liberal the orientation, the more positive the attitude and the more conservative the orientation, the more concern about compliance.

New class theory holds that the powerful elite in post-industrial society are those who are producing and distributing symbolic knowledge. Consistent with this theory, the study found the university setting to be a major player in religious prejudice and discrimination. Of all the standards, the greatest concern about compliance was focused on standard 1.05c, the adequacy of social work education about religious diversity and oppression. In the qualitative comments, the university was the single largest identified location and faculty were identified as the single largest perpetrator. Students were the second highest identified target.

Conclusion

The results of the study, although exploratory and tentative, raise disturbing questions. Is the profession of social work, in spite of its historic commitment to respect diversity, engaging in religious oppression? Has the progressive worldview become such a powerful paradigm in social work that its proponents can see no other possible

legitimate perspectives? Has the social work value of social justice been twisted by a progressive ideology so that intolerance and religious bigotry are justified against the profession's key founding population? Has the gate-keeping function of the profession become a means for institutionalized discrimination against those who embrace alternate worldviews?

The troubling questions go beyond the instances of prejudice and discrimination experienced by Christian social workers. As was pointed out the introduction, Christianity is the largest spiritual tradition in the nation. Many of the clients that social workers will be called on to help will undoubtedly embrace a Christian worldview with many committed to an orthodox theology. Will social workers committed to a progressive epistemology and associated values be able to respect the self-determination of such persons? Will the prejudice and discrimination demonstrated in the study become a new form of professional McCarthyism that accepts only those committed to its own cause and ideology?

To be sure, the issue of religion and discrimination is not one sided. The presence of religious intolerance and excess was also found in this study. This perspective was, however a distinct minority. Indeed, this study suggests that the majority groups in social work are informed by a progressive ideology that results in the belittling, intimidating, discriminating efforts to suppress if not eliminate minority religious groups in the profession.

Further research needs to be done to understand the experiences of other people of faith, such as Muslims, Hindus, and so on. Additional theoretical work needs to be done to understand how to apply the current standards in the Code of Ethics in an impartial manner. Empirical exploration should be conducted to further clarify the biases which inform the present negative evaluation of the profession's ethical standards. Most importantly, much more work, both theoretical and empirical, needs to be undertaken to understand how to help people effectively and how to bring about the general welfare of society in a way that honors diversity of thought.

Endnote

[1]The exact wording of standard 1.05 is as follows: "a) Social workers should understand culture and its function in human behavior and society, recognizing the strengths that exist in all cultures. (b) Social workers should have a knowledge base of their clients' cultures and be able to demonstrate competence in the provision of services that are sensitive to clients' cultures and to differences among people and cultural groups. (c) Social workers should obtain education about and seek to understand the nature of social diversity and oppression with respect to race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political belief, religion, and mental or physical disability." While the statements in "a" and "b" do not specifically mention religion, it is a logical extension since religion is commonly viewed as a major institution in culture.

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POINT OF VIEW

Maximizing the Contribution of Faith-Based Organizations to Solve Today's Most Urgent Social Problems

Ronald J. Sider

A remarkable historic window of opportunity exists for Christians, especially those in social work, to provide leadership in addressing problems of poverty through the development of faith-based organizations. In order to seize this opportunity, strategic and timely work is needed in five areas: 1) Capacity building to increase and strengthen holistic faith-based organizations addressing social problems; 2) Education of the media, the universities, business, and government to have a clear understanding of the unique character and contribution of FBOs; 3) Analysis and evaluation of holistic FBOs regarding their efficacy and key components; 4) Increased funding via individual churches, foundations, and government; and 5)Public policy reconceptualizaton. This call to action sketches some of the activities needed in each of these areas.

The rapid embrace of faith-based organizations by secular policy, media and governmental elites in the last five years seems to me to be one of the most astonishing reversals that I have witnessed in my life. Stephen Carter's *Culture of Disbelief* (1993) powerfully portrays the way for decades serious religious faith was dismissed or marginalized in the academic world, the media and policy circles. Religious faith was deemed irrelevant—or harmful—for mental, physical and societal well-being.

A mere five or six years later, the landscape is dramatically different. Rev. Eugene Rivers appears on the cover of *Newsweek* (1998) and the Ford Foundation magazine (1999) with stories suggesting that perhaps churches can solve desperate urban problems that everything else has failed to reverse. Today, the role of religion and faith-based organizations (FBOs) in alleviating pressing social problems is one of the hottest topics at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. The Charitable Choice provisions (Section 104) of the 1996 Welfare Bill opened up a major new legal channel for deeply faith-based organizations to assess government funds in ways that both protect religious freedom and avoid an inevitable secularizing of religious social service providers. Leading Presidential candidates—both Democratic and Republican—have embraced Charitable Choice and promised that religious organizations will play a much expanded role in their administration's struggle against poverty and social decay. In his *Newer Deal* (Columbia, 1999), University of Pennsylvania Social Work Professor Ram Cnaan issues a powerful plea for a new partnership between social work professionals and religious institutions. *The Washington Post* columnist E.J. Dionne says that religious institutions now have the standing to shape the debate on poverty in the U.S.

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In the next decade, Christians have an historic opportunity to shape society in the U.S. and lead in the struggle against poverty and social problems to a degree unprecedented in decades, perhaps at no time in this century. Committed Christians, especially those in social work, ought to lead the way. We can be sure, of course, that this window of opportunity will not last long. We have five years—perhaps ten at the most—of astonishing opportunity.

What must we do to maximize the possibilities of the present movement?

This article represents an attempt to offer a comprehensive sketch of all the different things that are needed if faith-based organizations (FBOs) are to offer their optimal contribution to solving America's contemporary social problems, especially urban poverty and decay.[1]

We need work in at least five areas: 1) capacity building to increase and strengthen FBOs; 2) education; 3) evaluation; 4) funding; 5) public policy. (Note: These five areas are closely interrelated so some activities listed below appear in more than one category.)

1. **Capacity Building: Increasing and Strengthening Holistic FBOs.** We need literally tens of thousands of strong local holistic ministries. To strengthen those that are there and nurture more, we need the following:
   - ***1.1 Promoting a Holistic Vision.*** We need to greatly expand the number of people who understand what holistic ministry is and how and why it works. This has at least two components: promotion of holistic theology and dissemination of successful holistic models.

     This can be done by theological schools, denominations, and para-church organizations via books, films, courses (regular and continuing education), special seminars, conferences, and sharing of best practices. (Evangelicals for Social Action's Network 9:35 is devoted to this task.)[2]
   - ***1.2 Training Holistic Leaders.*** We need tens of thousands of leaders like John Perkins, Floyd Flake, Wayne Gordon and Mary Nelson who are deeply committed to holistic ministry and understand how to lead congregations and organizations in

holistic ministry. At least three different types of leaders are crucial: pastors, key laity, and leaders of faith-based non-profits.

1.2.1 Training holistic pastors. Many seminaries, Bible schools, etc., need to develop comprehensive programs specially designed to train holistic pastors who have all the skills they need to lead successful holistic models. New curricula will need to be designed.

In addition to regular M.Div. and D.Min. programs, continuing education and certificate programs would also be important. So would non-traditional training programs (E.g., The Center for Urban Theological Studies in Philadelphia; Emmanuel Gospel Center in Boston).

1.2.2 Training and mobilizing laity. Every holistic pastor needs a number of key laity who share and understand the holistic vision.

Special seminars, retreats, conferences, special courses (including courses on the Internet) could all contribute (John Stahl-Wert's City as Parish model in Pittsburgh offers great promise).

1.2.3 Training leaders of faith-based non-profits. We need undergraduate and graduate programs that produce administrators and managers who are as committed and trained to lead the spiritual as the business aspect of holistic non-profits (Eastern College's MBA and MS in Economic Development is a model).

1.2.4 Special training programs. For example, the Perkins Foundation is developing a training center in Jackson, Mississippi, for training local neighborhood leaders for holistic ministry.

1.3 ***Sharing Best Practices in Holistic Ministry.*** There are an increasing number of diverse, excellent holistic models in operation. An Internet Database on Holistic Ministry provides the best way to make this information widely and easily accessible. Books and stories in magazines can also help. (Network 9:35 is working with ForMinistry [with 100,000 congregations] to provide an Internet database of best practices. World Vision's Churches at Work also collects best practices.)

1.3.1 Wide collection of models is crucial. An Internet database that links holistic ministries and enables each ministry to post a ministry profile is crucial.

1.3.2 Identification of best practices. Some process whereby the numerous holistic models are sorted through and the outstanding models of every significant type are identified is essential so that persons can quickly learn about the most successful models.

1.4 ***Congregation-to-Congregation/Ministry-to-Ministry Training Teams.*** People doing successful holistic ministry are among the best people to walk alongside people in newer programs. Programs to nurture this type of team are needed.

1.5 ***Urban/Suburban Partnerships.*** Tens of thousands of holistic ministries working among the urban and rural poor could profit from strong, non-paternalistic partnerships with suburban congregations which could offer funding, volunteers, prayers, and a humble educable attitude.

1.6 ***More, Better Holistic Tools.*** A host of things are needed: videos, manuals, workbooks, etc., for all the different settings where developing holistic ministries need tools to expand and strengthen their programs. These tools range from biblical/theological tools to tools on management, community center boards, etc., etc. Many of the necessary tools are already out there somewhere in religious or secular circles, but some organizations like Network 9:35 need to evaluate them and make the good ones available via the Internet and regular hard copy.

1.7 ***City-wide Networks.*** Some cities (e.g., Pittsburgh with the Pittsburgh Leadership Foundation and the dozens of other leadership foundations linked in the Council of Leadership Foundations) already have quite extensive city-wide networks promoting holistic ministry. In principal, every city needs one or more city-wide networks that link together every holistic ministry in order to maximize cooperation, mutual learning, etc. These city-wide networks can offer things such as:

1.7.1 Sponsor regional events.

1.7.2 Run cooperative training programs in holistic ministry (e.g., City as Parish)

1.7.3 Develop city-wide or section-of-a-city Intermediary Agencies. Many smaller congregations and ministries lack the skills and time to write and present proposals to secular and corporate foundations and governments (e.g., for Charitable Choice and other funds). Their small size and number also makes it impossible for foundations and governments to know and evaluate them all. An intermediate brokering agency [independent 501(c)3] could develop larger proposals for funding agencies and then write simpler sub-contracts with smaller FBOs and congregations to carry out specific tasks. This brokering agency could bridge the language barrier between the world of funders and grass-roots

service providers and also offer training programs. (In Philadelphia, the Center for Urban Resources already does some of this brokering.)

1.8 ***Strengthen Management and Fund-Raising of FBOs*** (The Center for Urban Resources in Philadelphia offers this type of help).

1.9 ***National Networks*** (for example, Redeeming the Cities, Council of Leadership Foundations, Network 9:35, CCDA, etc.) play a key role in promoting a holistic vision, building the capacity of local ministries, and providing a voice for local ministries.

1.10 ***Evaluation.*** We need to greatly strengthen the ability of local FBOs to keep more careful records in a way that permits sophisticated evaluation of their results. Local FBOs should do much more evaluation themselves and they should work much more closely with academic centers doing evaluation.

1.11 ***Voice.*** What local FBOs learn in their grass-roots activity needs to be shared with the larger community that shapes their lives: the church community, media, foundations, and government. Every local FBO needs to learn how better to tell their story, but they also need to link up with national networks that can do it more effectively at a broader level.

2. Education. In addition to expanding the number of people in the churches committed to holistic ministry, the media, the universities, business, and government all need to have a clear understanding of the unique character and contribution of FBOs.

2.1 ***Media.*** A couple Centers on Holistic Ministry and FBOs are needed that focus on working with both religious and secular media to help them understand and fairly present the information on FBOs.

2.2 ***Business.*** Corporate leaders need to understand how they can better cooperate with FBOs by:

2.2.1 Cooperating with faith-based training/job placement programs (e.g., Jobs Partnership in North Carolina);

2.2.2 Volunteering skills and money (e.g., FaithWorks developed by Bob Buford);

2.2.3 Corporate funding. Many corporations wrongly suppose that the alleged "wall of separation" between church and state prevents business from giving to faith-based programs.

2.3 ***Academy.*** There is still a powerful secular bias in many university circles. Sophisticated evaluation of FBOs; dissertations/books/articles on FBOs; courses on the role of religion in public life, FBOs, etc.; Centers on FBOs and Urban Problems (e.g., John J. Dilulio, Jr.'s new Center for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society at University of Pennsylvania) can all play a key role in helping the academic world be more open to the role of FBO's.

2.4 ***Government.*** Government and the courts must become more open to FBOs. To make that happen, we need both educational activity and lobbying (see Section V).

2.4.1 Courts–legal scholars and organizations will need to develop the academic writing that will shape the thinking of federal and state courts (on Charitable Choice, for example).

2.4.2 Educating local, state and federal officials. The excellent work of Stanley Carlson-Thies at the Center for Public Justice needs to be expanded and done everywhere. This task includes helping legislators understand what legislation is needed, helping bureaucrats understand and actually implement it, and writing popular tools for churches and other FBOs to understand the law.

3. Analysis and Evaluation. We need greatly expanded study and evaluation of holistic FBOs. How successful are they really? What are the key components that make them work better (if they do)?

3.1 ***Analysis.*** Both religious and secular universities and colleges and theological schools need centers that study all the different aspects of holistic FBOs to discover all the different components that are successful. Harvard, Yale and other places already have study programs on FBOs.

We need a few Centers on Holistic Ministry at seminaries to study carefully all the key components that are essential for church-based holistic ministry to work well: excellent leadership, administrative skills; good financial management and fund raising; the varieties of ways and approaches to successfully combining evangelism and social ministry; external, contextual variables that affect the success of FBOs; etc. These seminary-based centers should be linked to centers at major research universities. One critical area for ongoing study should be careful analysis of the secularizing pressures that will inevitably accompany secular and government support and funding of FBOs.

3.2 ***Evaluation–Academic.*** Much of the current positive thinking about the success of FBOs is based on anecdotal information (plus a few studies like the one by Harvard economist Richard Freeman who discovered that church attendance was the best predictor of which young inner-city black males would make it; and partial studies of Teen Challenge). We need a great deal of sophisticated, longitudinal evaluation by outstanding aca-

demics in the best universities using impeccable methodologies. Sophisticated evaluations will be crucial in convincing (or not convincing!) the secular academic world in the next five to ten years. We need to know:

3.2.1 Do holistic FBOs really work better than comparable secular programs at drug rehab, job training, etc.?

3.2.2 What are the comparative success rates of different types of FBOs [e.g., minimally faith based; throughly faith based, etc. (see the Sider/Unruh typology in the 1999 *Brookings Review*)[3]]? And how do the success rates of these different types of FBOs compare to comparable secular programs, Muslim programs, etc? Places like Public/Private Ventures (Philadelphia) working with people like John Dilulio, David Larson, and Harold Dean Trulear could contribute to this evaluation.

3.2.3 What correlation is there between different theologies, methodologies and outcomes in church-based social service programs?

3.3 Evaluation–at the Ministry Level. We need better (but less sophisticated) tools that local ministries can use for self-evaluation.

4. Funding. There must be greatly expanded funding via individual churches, foundations, and government.

4.1 Individuals and Churches.

4.1.1 We need a massive educational campaign to help Christians understand the biblical call to stewardship and empowerment of the poor (e.g., Generous Christians Campaign led by Evangelicals for Social Action).

4.1.2 Local churches and denominations need to expand their missions giving for holistic ministry.

4.1.3 Christian business folk need to be encouraged to give more of their money and time (e.g., FaithWorks).

4.2 Foundations. Sophisticated work with secular foundations needs to be done to help them understand FBOs and how they can partner with them. A comprehensive strategy for high-level conferences, presentations to foundation boards, etc., should be worked out.

4.3 Government. We need to marshal FBOs and their constituencies to increase appropriate government support for FBOs (e.g., expanding Charitable Choice; offering tax credits for gifts to non-profits working with the poor; etc.).

5. Public Policy.

5.1 Balance private and public involvement. We need to re-conceptualize public policy in a way that expands and strengthens the role of FBOs without negating the ongoing role of government.

5.2 Increase understanding of FBOs by decision-makers. We must educate key public policy folk–legislators, bureaucrats, think tank staff and other policy wonks—so they understand and support the role of FBOs.

5.3 Articulate appropriate governmental support. We should develop an integrated public policy package that spells out what specific government policies (e.g., on taxes, welfare, income support, health care, etc.) are essential if we are to expand the role of FBOs.

5.4 Engage in effective advocacy. We must lobby elected officials to promote effective policies. Grass-roots networks of FBOs, skilled lobbyists and a national network (e.g., Call to Renewal) are all essential.

5.5 Reinforce accountability. We must monitor bureaucracies as they implement policies (e.g., Charitable Choice) related to FBOs.

I am very much aware that this short overview is only an initial sketch. I look forward to an ongoing dialogue in which many others greatly expand our understanding of what all we need if we are to seize our present opportunity. Let's dare to think big. If we pray, think, and work hard, we might just end the scandal of widespread poverty in the richest nation in human history. |||

ENDNOTES

[1]I assume that thoroughly faith-based models [see for example Chapters 4 and 8 of my *cup of water, bread of life* (1995)] are more effective than other aproaches since they combine spiritual/moral renewal with socio-economic-material transformation and thus minister to both the spiritual and material aspects of persons. For the conceptual framework for this understanding, see my *Good news and good works: A theology for the whole gospel (1999),* and for an application of this framework to poverty in the U.S., my *Just generosity: A new vision for overcoming poverty in America* (1999).

[2]For information and Network 9:35's Starter Kit, write to Rev. Phil Olson, Network 9:35, 10 E. Lancaster Avenue, Wynnewood, PA 19092; Telephone: 610.645.9390; Email: esa@esa-online.org.

[3]Ronald J. Sider and Heidi Rolland Unruh, "No Aid to Religion: Charitable Choice

and the First Amendment," Brookings Review, Spring, 1999, pp. 46-49. For a much longer statement of much of this argument, See Sider and Unruh, "An (Ana)Baptist Theological Perspective on Church-State Partnership: Evaluating 'Charitable Chioce'," in Derek David and Barry Hankins (Eds.), *Welfare reform and faith-based organizations* (1999), pp. 89-138.

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REVIEWS

Spiritual diversity in social work practice

Canda, E. R., & Furman, L. D. (1999). New York: Free Press.

Ed Canda and Leola Furman are considered by many to be among the most influential social work writers addressing the topic of spirituality, a topic undergoing a resurgence of interest in the profession. Consequently, the 1999 publication of their text, *Spiritual diversity in social work practice*, is of significance to all social workers, since it represents a "state of the art" expression of a newly reemerging theme, spirituality, as seen through the eyes of two of its leading proponents (p. xvi).

As one might expect, given its authorship, this book has many strengths. The content is clearly organized, the writing concise, and the material thoughtfully laid out in three sections. The comparatively short first section lays the groundwork for the rest of the book by discussing the central values (e.g., ethical principles) and concepts (e.g., definitions of spirituality) which inform spiritually sensitivity social work practice.

The second section explores issues (e.g., gender, homosexuality) related to spiritual diversity. This section also presents six religious perspectives (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Shamanism), and two secular perspectives (Existentialism and Transpersonal) on social service and associated practice insights.

Building upon the developed themes, the third and longest section offers practical guidelines, strategies, and activities to actualize spiritually sensitive social work practice. A wide range of issues related to practice are discussed, including spiritually sensitive human service organizations, spirituality throughout the life span, assessment techniques, and spiritually oriented interventions.

Another significant strength is the incorporation into the text of the preliminary results of the authors' national survey of NASW members' views on spirituality. This represents the only national survey of the NASW membership on spiritually to date. A good discussion guide for assessing spirituality is also provided as an appendix.

While most of the above material is presented in standard academic third person style, Canda and Furman effectively transition into the first person to relate helpful personal experiences. The authors also include a number of excellent questions at the end of each chapter designed to facilitate personal reflection, growth and assimilation of the preceding material. The authors aim to provide a holistic learning experience regarding spirituality and social work. In my opinion, they have succeeded admirably in achieving this goal.

Less successful, however, were attempts to demonstrate sensitivity towards various spiritual traditions. In other words, the text does not exhibit sensitivity in keeping with widely accepted ethical standards towards a number of religious faiths. This may be due to what a number of writers (Carroll & Marler, 1995; Hunter, 1991; Jensen, 1998) have referred to as an epistemologically based conflict between religious liberals or progressives, and religious conservatives or orthodox believers. Liberals/progressives view reality through a certain epistemological lens that intrinsically favors their values at the expense of conservatives/orthodox believers who they tend perceive as their cultural adversaries. Although Canda identifies as a Catholic, his personal understanding of spiritual truth would tend to place him in the liberal or progressive camp, as an adherent of what some might call New Age spirituality.

The labels the authors apply to various populations provides a good indication of the value driven bias that results in favorable treatment for some groups while others are treated insensitively. For example, Canda and Furman note that the term "cult" has "become pejorative and vague" and consequently they do not use the term (p. 54). Their decision is in keeping with the widely held ethical principle of not employing terminology that groups being described would find offensive (cf., *Writing for the NASW press: Information for authors*, 1995). Accordingly, they use the term "alternative religions." Further, to equip workers to interact with these religions, they attempt to present these religions' narratives in a manner that is consistent with how the religions themselves would describe their understanding of reality. Thus, the reader is able to understand a faith's reality on its own terms in a manner that fosters respect and tolerance for diversity.

However, this same standard is not applied to spiritual traditions (e.g., Catholicism, Evangelicalism, Islam, Mormonism, Sikhism, etc.) which classically have affirmed that, in some sense, they embody the correct spiritual path. Individuals in these traditions who affirm their faith's mainstream norms are associated with such terms as "militant fundamentalism" (p. xx), "rigid," "authoritarian" (p. 174), and repeatedly as "exclusivists" (e.g., p. xx, 171, 189). It is doubtful that many believers in these traditions would self-describe in such terms. It is also highly unlikely that such terms will engender respect and understanding for their spiritual reality among social workers.

Another example of liberal/progressive bias can be seen in the extended discussion of the relationship between Christianity and homosexuality. Pejorative terms such as "patriarchal" and "heterosexist" are used to describe mainstream Christian tradition (p. 112). Readers are informed that, "in extreme cases, antihomosexual Christian militants make a public mission out of harassing gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people" (p. 111). If Christian practitioners believe

that homosexuality is morally wrong, then they are advised to consider seriously whether they can work with gay and lesbian clients, and are enjoined to engage in a process of self-examination and professional development.

Conversely, the other side of the ethical coin is addressed only in passing. No negative terms are used to describe liberal/progressive traditions that may oppress Christians or orthodox believes in other faiths. It is not stated that some anti-Christian gay and lesbian militants have also engaged in a public campaign of harassing Christians and other people of faith (Hunter, 1991). Nor are gay and lesbian practitioners who believe that Christian views on homosexuality are morally wrong advised to consider the advisability of working with Christian clients, especially those wrestling with sexual orientation issues, or enjoined to enter into a period of self-examination and professional development.

Similarly, the authors' wish to assure readers that their book is not "about stereotyping or putting down any particular religious faith" (p. xvii). Yet, Evangelical service organizations seem to be implicitly held up as exemplars of "moralistic judgmentalism and intolerance of diversity" (p. 65). As mentioned above, "Christian tradition" is referred to as "patriarchal" and "heterosexist" (p. 112). Similarly, other references to theologically conservative Christians also tended to have negative connotations. Conversely, other traditions that share a higher degree of congruency with liberal/progressive worldview, such as the Shamanism, were constructed in a more positive light.

Further, numerous important issues were not discussed, perhaps because the liberal/progressive lens avoids selecting value conflicts that frames its worldview in an unflattering light. For instance, feminists along with many other, if not most, social workers generally affirm egalitarian gender roles. Yet, there is no mention made of the negative therapeutic results that can occur when practitioners with egalitarian beliefs work with female consumers, such as Hindu women, who are likely to construct gender relations differently (Reddy & Hanna, 1998). The danger of liberal feminists imposing their values upon people of faith is not specifically addressed since this is a value conflict that does not resonate with the liberal/progressive framework in the same manner that value conflicts concerning homosexuality do.

Similar value related problems appear in chapter nine which deals with "spirituality sensitive practice skills and techniques" (p. 282). Four techniques or "basic exercises" are presented (paying attention, intentional breathing, equipoise, and consistency) along with four supplemental exercises (focused relaxing, caring for the body, doing ritual or ceremony, and practicing forgiveness). All these exercises are commonly employed among many New Age adherents. Further, in keeping with the eastern influence upon the New Age movement, many

of the exercises would be applicable with some consumers who adhere to various eastern spiritual traditions.

However, the exercises are much less likely to be useful with consumers from other spiritual traditions, such as Muslims. With Muslims, a number of studies indicate that spiritually based cognitive therapy is perhaps the best approach (Azhar, Varma & Dharap, 1994; Azhar & Varma, 1995a; Azhar & Varma, 1995b). Unfortunately, there was no mention made of this in the book, in spite of the fact that Muslims have probably now passed Judaism as the second largest religious tradition in the United States after Christianity (Melton, 1999). Similar studies with Christians were also unmentioned (Propst, 1996).

In essence, the primary shortcoming of *Spiritual diversity in social work practice* is that it lacks sufficient diversity. In other words, the book is too reflective of the biases associated with those who affirm a liberal/progressive worldview. The value conflicts, interventions, and religious groups are chosen and discussed in manner that tends to reflect the interests of religious liberals, adherents of the New Age movement, and alternative religions. There is a page of information on Wiccans (the witchcraft movement), but Mormons, a substantially larger group, are not even mentioned in the index. There is a section to orient readers to Shamanism, but not Evangelicalism, the largest discrete spiritual tradition in the United States (Green, Guth, Smidt & Kellstedt, 1996). In spite of their differences, Evangelicals, Catholics, mainline Protestants, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and other groups are all subsumed into a single category, "Christianity," that is the same length as the section on Shamanism. The religious demographics of the consumer population would seem to have played little role in the apportioning of text.

It is important to note that I do not believe that the incipient bias is deliberate. Canda and Furman state repeatedly throughout the book that social workers must respect diverse constructions of spiritual reality. I have met them personally and believe they are sincere in desiring to promote a social work environment in which all spiritual constructions of reality are treated with respect and dignity. Rather, as postmodernism informs us, unless specific and extensive efforts are made to incorporate diversity, authors will instinctively create works that reflect their personal cosmology, with its weaknesses and strengths.

Further, this text will prove to be a valuable asset for practitioners who encounter or wish to work with spiritual perspectives that are favored in the text. Many other practitioners may also enjoy much of the excellent content. However, the lack of diversity and spiritual sensitivity also means, at least in this reviewer's opinion, that the text holds limited value as a resource for working with consumers from other spiritual traditions. Social work texts should treat all populations with dignity and respect, especially books that aim to foster spiritual sensitivity in practice settings.

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HAWORTH PRESS HAS DONE IT AGAIN: ANOTHER TOPIC-SPECIFIC journal. Some might immediately question why we need another journal, especially one with such focused content. Marie Fortune, the editor, addresses this very question in her forward. She asks, "With fine journals like the *Journal on Feminist Studies in Religion*, *Journal of*