The Religious Dimension and Social Work

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The Religious Dimension and Social Work
(Research Proposal)
A Research Essay

Submitted to the Graduate School of Social Work
Waterloo Lutheran University

by
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In partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Master of Social Work

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Introduction:

In 1965, at the Park Plaza Hotel in Toronto, at the Annual Meeting of the National Council on Family Relations, two good friends, David Mace, a devout Quaker, and Albert Ellis, an agnostic and a sensationalistic exponent of sexual freedom, conducted a dialogue on marriage counseling. Both are well-known marriage counsellors.

They started the dialogue with a statement of their religious views. It is the opinion of the writer of this research essay:

1. that David Mace and Albert Ellis were right in their implications; viz., that religious views are of such an essential quality that they do underlie not only views on marriage and marriage counseling but all of human functioning;

2. that among mature professional people, to bring them into the open is far more likely to lead to improvement in human relationships than is an indefinite evasion of them;

3. that though, undoubtedly, there is weight in the argument that joint activity between those of opposing views may also reduce hostility and promote warmth and identification, it has not

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1 This meeting was held from October 21-23, 1965.

2 David Mace is the co-author with Vera Mace of Marriage; East and West (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1960) and the Soviet Family (London: Hutchinson, 1964, and 1963). Albert Ellis has written How to Live with a Neurotic (New York: Crown Publishers, 1957), Sex and the Single Man (New York: L. Stuart, 1963), and several other works.
heretofore proved adequate in the inter-professional field.\textsuperscript{3}

From these opinions has grown the viewpoint that a deeper and more radical approach to openness in professional relationships is indicated, despite the inevitable initial psychic discomfort, and that professional people can discover in themselves the courage to develop such openness; for instance, by beginning in a realm of thought obviously requiring a marked degree of courage; namely, religion.

PART A. PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION AND FORMULATION.
CHAPTER I

CONCERN

Area of Concern

This research proposal will consider three aspects of the religious dimension and social work:

1. handling of the religious attitudes and/or needs of the client group;
2. the social worker's collaboration with the clergy and other religiously committed people;
3. religion in the personal life of the social worker; commitment and/or his handling of his own religious conflict.

Source of Concern:

In 1961, Mowrer wrote a book entitled "The Crisis in Religion and

1 Sue Spencer in "Religion and Social Work," Social Work, I (July, 1959) 19 says: "A Religious person is one who hold some kind of belief or beliefs about the affirmative nature of the Universe (many people would interpret this to include an awareness or conviction of a supreme being, arousing reverence, love, gratitude, the will to obey and serve, and the like) and man's duty to do something in addition to advancing his own ends; a belief or beliefs which furnish some degree of comfort and strength to the individual."

2 Mary Jane Bryers, A Study of the Characteristics of the Membership of the Canadian Association of Social Workers with Special Reference to Their Attitudes Toward the Relevance of Religious Beliefs in Social Work Practice," (Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Toronto, School of Social Work, 1965), p. 9. Crysdale felt the degree to which a person was committed to a religion included "Knowledge of the scripture and doctrine, observances of religious rituals at home as well as at church, having religious feelings and thinking that religion has important consequences," Stewart Crysdale, The Changing Church in Canada (Toronto; United Church Publishing House, 1965) p. 10
Psychiatry. An implicit theme of this study is the contemporary crisis in both religion and social work. This growing crisis has been of particular interest to the writer over a number of years. The interest has been fed by practice, experience, reading, observation and now, studies undertaken in both areas.

In considering religion, reference will be made throughout to "the ministry" as well, designating as it does, the professionally trained person working under religious auspices.

For the sake of economy, the term "ministry" is used because of the writer's greater familiarity with Protestant groups. It is intended that reference to the "ministry" refer also to the "priesthood" and "rabbinate."

We have, then, in the ministry, and in social work, two helping professions confronting and confronted by, a world whose problems in many ways grow hourly more acute. Not only is man perhaps on the verge of self-annihilation, but his suicide is also a slow one through the erosion, in materialistic, western, industrial society, at least, of adequately nurturing family life, and the exacerbation of all the social problems to which this loss so crucially contributes. Many of those who do find comfort and protection in the intimacy of the nuclear family cannot manifest outside it a life-style of love and trust, but instead tend to find society a

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wasteland in which "Man Alone" metes out little mercy, and in return, receives little.

Members of the two professions, the ministry, and social work, search the mind for the appropriate response to this world of need. They know they have remedies - that they have much to offer, but doubt hangs heavily nonetheless. They ask themselves if they can respond with the confidence, strength, and perception so essential.

Positive Relationship Between Social Work and the Ministry

The ministry and social work also confront one another. An historical account of social work never fails to point out that all the organized relief and succor of the distressed and needy were for many centuries carried out by the Church. The ideals, values, warmth and drive animating most of the pioneers in the profession in this country grew out of their own devotion to Christ, to Judeo-Christian ideals, or certainly emerged from the Judeo-Christian heritage. Nor is it an exaggeration to say that there are still, by observation, large numbers in the profession who retain a Jewish or Christian orientation and who

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butress the values of the profession with those of a sincerely-held religious faith.

It is very interesting that in recent years as Freud's contribution to knowledge and practice has continued to come under attack, the moral neutrality of psychoanalysis and the determinism of Freudian thought are strongly challenged from within psychiatry as well as by those without, religiously committed persons, or otherwise. An analyst like William Glasser, emphasizes the necessity to confront the patient with Reality, Right and Wrong, and Responsibility.¹ Mowrer, a psychologist, in "The Rediscovery of Responsibility," insists that "living organisms" (man included) become goal-directed, purposive, deliberate, on if you will, free and responsible."² Mowrer quotes Richard LaPiere, a sociologist, as agreeing that "as a people (American society) we are indeed 'sick' but... the very essence of our sickness is that we so freely resort to this concept (psychoanalysis) instead of holding ourselves and others accountable."³

Writers such as these, who are widely read and accepted by religiously committed people, contribute deeply to rapport between the

³ Ibid., p. 8.
professions.

Erikson is another writer who delights many in both camps. We have him declaring:

Each society and each age must find the institutionalized form of reverence which derives vitality from its world-image—from predestination to indeterminacy. The clinician can only observe that many are proud to be without religion whose children cannot afford their being without it. On the other hand, there are many who seem to derive a vital faith from social action or scientific pursuit. And again, there are many who profess faith, yet in practice breathe mistrust both of life and man.¹

Writers such as this provide both the generosity and the amplitude and breadth of wisdom which can help bring harmony between the two professions in the place of contention.

Negative Relationship Between Social Work and Religion

And yet there is in social work a dissonance where religion is concerned, a conflict, a tension.²

On the one hand...social work practice has developed as a science from psychological and psychiatric roots and basically from a Freudian view of man. On the other hand, social work as a practiced 'art' had its beginning under religious auspices and basically from the Christian view of man.³

The dichotomy continues. The emphasis in western society on the rationalistic, mechanistic and psychoanalytic as implicit in, and to a large extent, propagated by the social and behavioural sciences, continues to be a leading cause in the deterioration of rapport between social work and the religiously committed.¹

The Effect of the Ascendancy of the Social Sciences on the Religiously Committed

While deriving insight and stimulation from the social sciences and successfully integrating many of these insights with Christian and Jewish thought and the practice of the profession, the ministry, and the religiously committed generally, are under further pressure. The Church, in particular, accused from inside as well as outside its own ranks with every type of insensitivity to the needs and plight of contemporary man, of not being "relevant," reacts by tending, in its more radical aspect, to a self-depreciating over-eagerness for "aggiornamento," for updating. This results too frequently in a supine submission to the claims of the social and behavioral sciences, and to psychology, psychiatry, and social work, claims which resolute examination would show to be less valid than many of their supporters assert. In actual fact, as noted on page 7, many of the members of these professions lead rebel movements

within them. They might be confidently expected to prefer that religion, rather than tending to abandon its heritage, would develop its own singular contribution to the penetration of the mystery of man and the advancement of his salvation in its broadest sense.

But since society has been loud in insisting on the inadequacy of the clergy and religiously committed persons, many of the latter feel inadequate, and as a consequence often become less adequate than they might otherwise be. They can become demoralized, lost and confused. With their own certainty shaken in many respects, they find it hard to speak in areas where they have considerable certainty; with all authority being challenged in this rebellious and egalitarian era, they, like parents, in fear of being authoritarian, falter when they might be, legitimately, authoritative.

On the positive side, as indicated above, the incorporation into the training for the ministry of many of the insights, emphases, and techniques of psychiatry, psychology, and social work, together with the rapid sociological changes in society, have led in many members of the clergy to:

1. a growing professionalization of the counselling function of the clergy;
2. an increased appreciation of the value of the various manifestations of group function in the Church;
3. a heightened awareness of social problems, the interaction of social systems, and a determination to involve themselves and
the Church in purposive social change.

As the Dean of this school has written:

...Theological seminaries, ecumenical offices and churches in local American communities have been alert, flexible, and experimental both on the theoretical and practical levels. Both have been adapting the tested insights of modern education, social work and psychiatry to the life and program of the church with surprising swiftness and economy. ¹

¹Rahn, Social Needs, p. 5.
CHAPTER II

RELEVANCE TO SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

The Client's Needs

After discussing beliefs common to major religious faiths of all times and in all parts of the world, Sue Spencer says, in view of this universality, "one may well ask why social workers are hesitant to recognize and to meet the need in this area of human welfare."¹

In short, if a worker is ignorant, and/or uncomfortable in dealing with religious beliefs, attitudes, and emotions, the client's situation is not by any means fully assessed or addressed. In looking for worker openness, it might be hoped, for instance, that "any student of social anthropology work or group," including social workers without any religious commitment, "must surely be impressed by the fact that the religious groups in American communities involve more people in a sustained, voluntary, self-governing group life than any other type of social, political, or economic organization," and that here they are helped to "handle their feelings and fears in a remarkable way."²

If we are impressed by the viewpoint of men like Frankl³ who believes that it is frustration in the will-to-meaning which is at the root of many types of neurosis in our society, we will find very serious, all

²Rahn, Social Needs, p. 9.
failure in social work to explore and exploit all possible sources of meaning and love of life for the individual and society. Awareness means awareness of crisis, - of crisis, perhaps, in the will-to-meaning of individuals and of society at large; and crisis demands a persistent search for radical and often innovative remedy.

Inter-Professional Collaboration

It is obviously not only with the clergy that many social workers find it hard to collaborate. Critchley\(^1\) writes in a tone of evident distress of the rigid and intolerant attitude of his fellow professionals and declares himself "shocked" by the situation. Social workers show a striking lack of ability to collaborate cordially with psychiatrists, he says, or indeed, with each other, and by implication, certainly with the clergy.\(^2\) With a drastic shortage of personnel in all the helping professions, time-and-energy loss, and reduced effectiveness through dissension and lack of co-operation are, obviously, of the utmost seriousness.

The Social Worker's Personal Faith

This is, in the writer's view, the "heart of the matter"\(^3\): the problem of the resolution of religious conflict within the life of the

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\(^1\) Critchley, "Disturbed Professional," p. 24.


individual social worker, and his development of a mature faith.

Man is naturally religious, but as Anthony Storr says, "this is one of few periods in the world's history when this would be denied."¹ This climate of opinion makes it so difficult for the non-religiously-committed social worker who does not, except with great difficulty, stand outside his own era, to enter into the "miracle of dialogue"² with the religiously committed. Many social workers can be seen as tense and hostile to the Church and to religion in general. There is, after all, much to fear in our society; atomic holocaust, racial bloodbaths, conformist pressures, and anxiety itself, as a beginning. Many social workers, along with their clients, have suffered developmental deprivation leading to further anxiety and hostility. The Church and the religiously committed for many may fill a scapegoat role.

The social worker, then, who has failed to resolve early parent-child and sibling conflicts, which interconnect with religious conflict,³ has unresolved hostility to vent. What does this do to a profession? It is not surprising that the whole social service field is spoken of as being in an 'agonizing state of flux and uncertainty.'⁴


³ Boxleitner and Quesnell, "Inter-Personal Relationships," p. 9.

Without love and faith, there is no hope. "Hopelessness" is a term used more and more frequently in social work circles.

A further sobering thought is the possibility that the passion for social action to relieve the voiceless poor, the disenfranchised, and the dispossessed, may stem more from hostility which must be displaced from parent figures onto the Establishment, than from compassion.
PART B. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE
CHAPTER III

RESEARCH STUDIES

During the years from 1955 to 1968, ten of the master's theses at the University of Toronto School of Social Work were pertinent to our topic.

Following roughly the three areas of concern:

(a) Religion in the Life of the Client:

Pyyllis Barnes, in studying the effect of religion on participation in a White Cross Centre programme, hypothesized that ex-mental patients referred to a White Cross Centre programme who were actively religious would be less likely to become participants than those who were not. The hypothesis was not supported. Findings were that participants in the social programme of the White Cross Centre were most likely to take part in religious activities which involved social intercourse, while non-participants were somewhat more likely to carry out solitary religious practices. Barnes states, therefore, that because a "null hypothesis" was obtained "no contribution was made to our knowledge of this subject," underlying her study was the expectation that religion has a beneficial effect on mental health. She supports this expectation by references to the opinions of a variety of professional persons, including psychiatrists, and psychologists. She suggests for further research a study to provide

1 Barnes, "Religion and Participation."
2 Ibid., p. 57.
objective facts regarding the relationship between religion and mental health.

(b) **Collaboration between Clergy and Social Worker:**

In 1955, two independent studies were undertaken, one of the relationships between Jewish leaders and social workers, and the other of the use made by Catholic priests of community resources.

Catherine McLean in her study, "The Catholic Priest's Use of Community Resources,"¹ found that of the problems on which they were consulted, pastors were most likely to refer problems of financial need to social agencies and least likely to refer family problems. Alcoholics Anonymous was the agency most praised by them.

All parish priests wanted the help of social workers, although some equated social work with the work of St. Vincent de Paul Societies; very few had knowledge of what was involved in professional training. Pastors showed wide variation in attitudes toward, and experience with, social agencies.

Chetkow's findings in his study on, "The Rabbi and the Social Worker" were as follows: All the Rabbis interviewed would have agreed with the 1952 Institute on Church and Social Welfare Services that "without the adjustment of the individual to the spiritual reality of the Divine Will,

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any other adjustments are incomplete."

Unfortunately, most religious leaders tend to identify social work with what they condemn as 'couch mysticism' or 'psychological vitamins.' The social worker stress on the science of human behaviour, stated respect for the inherent dignity of the human being, and dependence upon relativistic values, coupled with what rabbis see as his open scorn for religion and for religious leaders, certainly give rabbis some cause for their reluctance to use social agencies.

Chetkow did find evidence, however, of a widespread wish among the rabbis for better mutual understanding and co-operation.

Gardner in his study in 1958 on, "The Clergy and Social Work," surveying United Church ministers, found that,

the clergy accepted social work wholeheartedly; many of its aims and principles were identified by ministers as a conscious part of their own pastoral counselling. They did not believe there was any basic incompatibility between the two professions apart from acknowledging a division of labour or a special area of emphasis. Within this professional compatibility, pastors recognized certain limits of each profession, but could not accept that social work, psychiatry, or anything else alone could give purpose and meaning to life without the aid of religion.

Noteworthy was a paucity of referrals from social workers to clergy.

Ten years later, in 1968, Ruth Patterson conducted "An Exploratory Study of the Opinions of Local Religious Leaders Toward Yorkville."

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2Ibid., p. 93
3Ibid., p. 95.
This study does not deal with collaboration between the two professions in the same manner as the three previous studies. It does, however, reveal in a striking manner the attitudes of religious leaders to a pressing contemporary phenomenon which involves all levels of society, the political structure, and all the helping professions. This phenomenon is youth: troubled, or revolutionary, or constructively critical, or "opting out" or a combination of these.

Miss Patterson, from the perspective of social work, and her own concern, saw much to regret in the findings:

there was evidence that they (the leaders) held a judgmental attitude toward Yorkville and its youth. Furthermore, they 'philosophized' about the latter, rather than showing involvement. Their comments supported the Protestant Ethic of work, and called for a strong respect for 'authority.'

(c) The Social Worker's Personal Faith:

Ahern's 1968 study of the relationship between religion and attitudes to Hippies and Yorkville is pertinent to our topic, because of the hypothesis to be tested: that those respondents who were classified as most orthodox would have less favourable attitudes to Hippies and Yorkville than those who were classified as least orthodox. Ahern

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surveyed students attached to three religious associations at the University of Toronto. His hypothesis was upheld. We may note the readier identification of the social worker with the less orthodox, and as shown, more accepting religious person.

Pady, 1968, found in his study of Jewish adolescent religious conviction and behaviour\(^1\) that these young people (12-20, in age) were rejecting former definitions of religiosity and were in the process of reformulating their religious life in keeping with current beliefs about religiosity, and doing so with little psychological discomfort in relation to this religious re-orientation.\(^2\) This is of considerable interest in view of the fact that this is the generation from which future social workers will be drawn. The question is whether identifiable differences exist between the religious attitudes of this group and those of the age group now being trained for the profession.

Mary Jane Bryers in 1965, undertook "A Study of the Characteristics of the Membership of the Canadian Association of Social Workers with Special References to Their Attitudes Toward the Relevance of Religious Beliefs in Social Work Practice."

The findings indicated "that the secularization of society, resulting

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\(^2\) Ibid., p. 1.
from industrialization and urbanization, and the increasing professional nature of social work itself are both influential determinants of an increasing tendency for social workers to consider that religious convictions have little relevance for professional practice."

Younger workers and engaged those in social work education, including supervisors in agencies, particularly reflected this trend.

Finally, in 1966, Murray Axmith conducted "A Study of Church Attendance and Church Membership Among a Sample of the Membership of the Canadian Association of Social Workers."

Axmith admitted freely that church attendance and church membership were not the most accurate indicators of religious commitment, but he found them to be "the most obvious, practical, and meaningful basis available to this study..."

His findings were that approximately 55% of social workers attended church on a regular basis. This is appreciably higher than the attendance among the American general population of 48% (Canadian figures not being available), and American professionals 50%. Approximately 72% of social workers were church members. Axmith concludes that "references to

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1Bryers, "Relevance of Religious Beliefs," Abstract, p. 3.
2Ibid., p. 61.
social workers as an irreligious or even anti-religious group are unfounded.\textsuperscript{4}

\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., p. 88. Sue Spencer has defined these terms as follows: "An irreligious person is one who is indifferent to sacred things, professes no religious beliefs. An anti-religious person is one who actively opposes religious beliefs and practice; "Religion and Social Work," p. 19.
CHAPTER IV
OTHER LITERATURE

From the research literature, we turn to a sampling of journal articles.

Sue Spencer is one of the leaders in the social work field who has made a marked contribution to understanding between the religiously committed, and humanists and agnostics, both inside and outside the profession of social work.


She makes the following points which are pertinent to the problem under consideration. In 1956, in "Religion and Social Work," she refers to:

>a rather generally held belief on the part of the clergy, and other lay and professional social workers, that professional social workers are, by and large, a cold, heartless, irreligious, if not frankly antireligious group."

Parenthetically she makes clear that the Catholic social workers (and Catholic Schools of Social Work) are not under discussion because they have reached a much more defined and clear accommodation between

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the basic tenets of religion and social work.

One great problem, she says, in the poor communication between the professions is the multiplicity of religious beliefs and affiliations and the "heterogeneity of the profession." She said that as far as she can gauge, social workers attend church to the same degree as the general population in the United States (at that time, 37% on the Pacific Coast and 66% in the South east) (figures from Time Magazine).

Miss Spencer points out that a contentious issue between the professions is the absence in the pronouncements of social workers of the idea that each person has a responsibility to fulfill his potentialities and to discharge his obligations. Coupled with this and increasing the cleavage, are social work's lack of affirmation of a Higher Power in men's lives, and its reliance upon psychoanalysis, with the implication that Freud's religious views are also embraced.

She quotes from Towle who in "Common Human Needs," in stressing the need for religious influence in human life, stands as an exception in social work literature, except for writing particularly devoted to the subject.

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1 Ibid., p. 20
2 Ibid., p. 21.
Miss Spencer concludes by saying that social work students do have access to their faculty advisors and to religious organizations on campus as facilities through which they may deal with their ignorance, uneasiness, and immaturity where religion is concerned. She feels most faculty members at most schools are at least open-minded on the subject of religion. At her school, at the University of Tennessee, the faculty have experimented with various methods of enhancing the student's sensitivity to the religious component, using visiting speakers, students' analyses of typical religious problems encountered by social workers etc.

The next year, in 1957, in "Religious and Spiritual Values in Social Work Practice," Miss Spencer presents many of the same points but emphasizes more strongly the nourishment for his inner life which the social worker may derive from religion and how he may convey his joy and courage to his clients in all the multiplicity of their suffering and need. She emphasizes that the mature social worker must learn;

1. self-awareness regarding his faith;
2. knowledge of faiths other than his own;
3. knowledge of the religious resources in the community.

She speaks of the crucial loss to the client and to society of the worker who avoids the "vast uptapped resources" of religious faith.

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1Ibid., p. 26

and she looks to the profession to address itself to this complex question.

In 1960, in "What Place Has Religion in Social Work Education?," Miss Spencer surveys the evaluation of religion as a force in human life made by leading social scientists of the recent past and gives striking excerpts of both negative and positive approaches. She exults in the instances of genuine approachment between social scientists and the religiously oriented, seeing the subject as increasingly open.

Turning to the negative approach, she deplores the tendency of some schools of social work to introduce the student "only to those religious beliefs and practices which are generally looked upon in contemporary society as limiting and illogical." She freely admits, however, that the subject is not a simple one for faculty to handle, and outlines the difficulties involved; e.g. keeping matter presented non-dogmatic and selecting well-equipped and effective instructors. She concludes;

Despite these as yet only partially recognized difficulties, however, it is the proposal of this paper that social work practice includes work with persons, groups and institutions in whose life knowledge of spiritual and religious matters forms an essential component; that this knowledge cannot be acquired without professional education on a planned basis; and that it is appropriate for such educational content to be included as a part of the regular professional curriculum for social work.  

In her final paper, written with Georgiana McLarnan in 1963, she is more forthright than in the former paper regarding the necessity to

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2Ibid., p. 170.
give the social work student a thorough grounding in matters religious, and states:

His basic preparation should include:

1) Some grasp of the universality of religious ideology and ritual among peoples;

2). A working knowledge of the major systems of theology in the Judeo-Christian faiths;

3) A systematic and well organized body of knowledge concerning man's basic spiritual needs and the common patterns of spiritual growth and development;

4) An understanding of how membership in an organized body of believers - a church or synagogue can contribute to the individual's sense of self-worth;

5) Some understanding of the values, knowledge, and skill, of the clergy, as a profession;

6) The development of skill in use of this knowledge with individuals, families, and communities.¹

Dean Sheldon L. Rahn of the Graduate School of Social Work, Waterloo Lutheran University, in an unpublished position paper entitled, "The Social Needs of Persons and the Local Congregation," deals very helpfully with the local congregation as a resource in which the deepest needs of persons for renewal and community can be met. He speaks also of the congregation's highly productive working relationship with the social agencies. Emphasizing the bonds and common denominators between religion, education, social work, and psychiatry, he draws striking parallels between the functions of all four, and warmly enjoins teamwork among them.

Alan Keith-Lucas in "Some Notes on Theology and Social Work," also draws parallels. Insisting that social work and religion "illumine each other"1 (p. 87), he deals with the helping process in social work as being a reflection of the "redemptive" process; of the client's "decision" to use help as akin to Christian "commitment," the struggle for insight being related to repentance etc. While believing that knowledge of religion and commitment to God does illumine social work theory and practice for Christian social workers, he makes clear that he is not suggesting that all social workers must be religious. There is room for humanist social worker, if for nothing else than as a corrective to the perversions of theology that so easily arise.2

In "Casework Therapy and the Clergy," Robert DeVries gives a careful explanation for the benefit of his clerical readers of the permissiveness and non-judgmental approach which are part of the equipment of the casework therapist. He makes clear his view, however, that after therapy, and outside of therapy, "only a nonpermissive and proper judgmental attitude is Christian,"3 i.e., the therapist as well as clergyman upholds the obligation of the client to grow toward the exercise of responsible moral judgement.

2Ibid., p. 90.
His concern is with those casework therapists who maintain a moral neutrality outside of therapy and who insist that this is implicit in truly loving people. He feels that the clergy should ascertain precisely what approach is taken by a caseworker or psychiatrist before referring a client. Even if confident that the therapist will not misuse therapy, he should, in DeVries' opinion, stay in close contact throughout therapy with both the therapist and the parishioner whom he has referred.

Herbert Stroup in "The Common Predicament of Religion and Social," states as that common predicament their involvement in the alienation of present-day society and the partial loss of the necessary confidence to meet the challenge of that alienation.

He sees in the competition with other helping professions a lessening of the potential contribution of both. Within itself, social work has lost its earlier fervour as "a kind of applied religion or secular humanitarianism,"¹ and it makes a questionable claim to being scientific instead.

Between social work and religion is the paradox of a serious cleavage, but also, by and large, a warm rapport; "yet the common predicament of each requires consideration of the more precise ways in which their specialized knowledge and experience can relate to each other."²

The next two articles are by three Roman Catholic social workers, their writings being separated in time by nine years.

²Ibid., p. 93.
Rev. Shaun Govenlock in 1958, in a conference address, discussed "Moral and Spiritual Values in Social Work." Father Govenlock makes a very strong plea for a deepening of "Understanding on either side (i.e. Church and Social Work) of what the other is really trying to accomplish." He feels that this,

"must await a spiritual maturation on the part of the social work practitioners, no less than it must await a scientific-social maturation on the part of those who formally speak for the spiritual and moral values in ...life." ¹

He feels that this "age of anxiety" is "before all else, an age of metaphysical anxiety," ² and that while "the ultimate and final answers" should be left to the philosopher and theologian, it is "the province of social work to help man to re-discover and secure that priceless sense of purpose, value, and meaning in what he is and does..." ³

He states unequivocally his beliefs that not one of the "first principles" of the profession - "the value of the human person," the non-condemnatory approach" etc., "can long be successfully sustained apart from a spiritual and religious philosophy of life." ⁴ Elsewhere - another strong statement - he says that to the extent the practitioner fails to bring "a positive and conscious religious ideology to his professional

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² Ibid., p. 27.
³ Ibid., p. 24.
⁴ Ibid., p. 25.
tasks...his scope for adequate empathy with his client...is proportionately diminished."1

In "Inter-Personal Relationships, Faith, and the Role of the Sectarian Agency," we have another emphasis on direct concern with the growth of faith in God in the life of the individual client. The authors are social workers, one a priest and the other a layman.

Pointing out that at this point in time, Humanism2 has a predominant influence within the helping professions, and it is seen as being not quite 'professional' to talk about God and religion,3 they go on to say that it is not only Humanists who do not deal, when it is appropriate, with the client's relationship to God. They say that Christian and Jewish practitioners often "fail to integrate effectively the ways in which man's relationship to man and with God are interrelated and co-dependent."4

Showing clearly this intimate connection between a trust in God and the ability to form warm, trusting, interpersonal relationships, the authors go on to give suggestions to the practitioner striving to help the client in this core area.

1Ibid., p. 28.

2Sue Spencer, in "What Place Has Religion in Social Work in Education?," p. 162, defines "humanism" as a term which refers "to a basic belief in the essential worth and dignity of all men and the acceptance of the moral code which this belief imposes."

3Boxleitner and Quesnell, "Inter-Personal Relationships," (Boxleitner & Quesnell).

4Ibid., p. 7.
They make common cause with contemporary existentialism with its emphasis on inter-personal relationships. They feel that the Christian or Jewish practitioner - and they are thinking particularly of those in sectarian agencies - have the opportunity and the responsibility to initiate dialogue with their Humanist colleagues. In this dialogue, the religiously-oriented practitioner should, they say, highlight the connection between the therapeutic relationship and the experience of God's love.

The tone of this article and the specific reaching out to Humanist colleagues seems to illustrate strongly the effect of Pope John, Vatican II and "aggiornamento" in the nine years which lie between its publication and that of Father Govenlock's address in 1958.

\[\text{Ibid., p. 12}\]
CHAPTER V

RELATION OF THIS ESSAY TO THE LITERATURE

The literature has concerned itself broadly with the following:

(i) church membership and church attendance of social workers;
(ii) whether or not social workers consider religion relevant to social work practice;
(iii) whether or not there is respect, acceptance and good collaboration between social workers and the clergy;
(iv) whether religious commitment in the social worker enhances his effectiveness as a practitioner;
(v) how social workers deal with the religious needs of the client or client group and what might be the optimal manner of doing this;
(vi) how far the clergy and other religiously committed people have been affected by the insights of the social sciences;
(vii) to what degree is the response of the clergy and other religiously committed persons appropriate to the needs of contemporary man;
(viii) to what extent are young people and therefore social work students able to master their religious conflict and evolve a mature faith integrated with their other beliefs.

These points, broadly speaking, describe the problem for research though the focus will, or necessity, be narrowed. See below: Research Design and Research Methodology.

Bryers found that there is a "trend in the social work field...for social workers to feel that religious convictions have little relevance to
social work practice." Axmith found, contrary to the implications of the Bryers study, that a higher percentage of social workers in Canada attend church than the percentage of adults attending church in the general population in the United States (no figures available in Canada). Further, 72% of social workers were church members, also a fact which is contrary to the implications of Bryers' study.

Gardner found that "there appear to be few direct referrals made from social work agencies to pastors." Sue Spencer makes clear her belief that social workers need considerable skill and knowledge if they are to work effectively in the area of religion. Pady found that Jewish adolescents were reformulating their religious life with little psychological discomfort.

The questions for study tie in directly with these and other portions of the literature. Because society is changing so rapidly, a new study to explore these questions is indicated. None of the research studies deal with social work students. Since social work students will very soon be

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1 Bryers, "Relevance of Religious Beliefs," p. 3.
2 Axmith, "Church Attendance," p. 86.
3 Ibid., p. 88.
helping to form the newest generation of social workers and as such, presage the future, it is of particular interest to know what the position of social work students is as regards the questions for study. Also, because it is in the schools of social work that changes found to be desirable in the profession may be initiated, it is again of particular interest to know more about the views and experiences of students.
PART C. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY
CHAPTER VI

RESEARCH DESIGN

The design chosen is the exploratory design. An exploratory design is one which aims to gain familiarity with a phenomenon and to achieve insights into it, often in order to formulate a more precise research problem or to develop hypotheses.

The exploratory design is "flexible enough to permit consideration of many different aspects of a phenomenon,"¹ in this instance, the religious dimension and social work.

More specifically, the aim of this research is to gain insights into the following:

1. the handling of the religious attitudes and/or needs of the client or client group;
2. the social worker's collaboration with the clergy and other religiously committed people;
3. religion in the personal life of the social worker; commitment and/or his handling of his own religious conflict; and to formulate a more precise research problem.

² As detailed on page 2 under AIC as a Concept.
CHAPTER VII
METHODOLOGY

Questions for Study:

(a) Do social work students feel religious convictions are relevant to social work practice?

(b) Do social work students respect, accept, and collaborate well with the clergy and other religiously committed people?

(c) Are social work students sufficiently well grounded in knowledge and understanding in the area of religion to deal appropriately with the religious needs and/or problems of their clients?

(d) Do social work students experience emotional conflict in the area of their own religion or lack of religion?

(e) Are social work students accepting of different values and views in the matter of religion?

(f) Are social work students secure in a maturing faith, whether that faith be religious, humanist, or scientific?

Research Population

It is proposed that the following constitute the research population: the total number of students of the year '70 at the Graduate School of Social Work at Waterloo Lutheran University. That is, rather than dealing with a sample of students, the whole group would be used so that there would be total involvement.

Data Collection Methods:

It is suggested that the following procedures be observed in
collecting data:

(a) two students from the Inter-Professional Seminar in May of 1969, would undertake to carry out the research design. Their work could presumably form the basis for their term assignment. By carrying out this project during the second term of their first year, the students of the year '70 would be able, if desired, to utilize their findings during the academic term of their second year, January-April, 1970, to develop other research projects. During the academic term of their second year, research is strongly emphasized. This means that the specific term would probably be a most appropriate time to utilize the findings of this research proposal under discussion.

(b) Data would be collected by means of a questionnaire. See Appendix A. The questionnaire would be simple and straightforward. Allport's question is borne in mind in constructing it: "If we want to know how people feel; what they experience and what they remember; what their emotions and motives are like, and the reasons for acting as they do, why not ask them?"

1See Academic Calendar, Waterloo Lutheran University, Graduate School of Social Work, p. 259. "2 hours per week. Discussing current issues affecting social work and its role of collaboration with other professions."

(c)  

(i) one week before the questionnaire is to be completed, copies of the questionnaire plus a letter (See Appendix B) would be distributed to each student.

(ii) If not already completed, the questionnaire would be completed during the first half hour or so of a session of a required subject, at which all or nearly all students would be present.

(iii) When completed, students would merely leave them in a random pile on a table at the front of the room, thus guarding anonymity if this is desired by the student involved.

Problems in Data Collection

The professor teaching the Inter-Professional Seminar would need to be convinced that this research project would be an appropriate undertaking for two of his students, and that the report of their findings might serve as their term paper so that they would not be involved in extra academic work.

However, it might still be possible to involve two students other than those enrolled in the Inter-Professional Seminar. These other students might like to build a further research project of their own for their Major Research Essay in their final academic term.

Or, students in Waterloo Lutheran Seminary might like to carry out the research and use the findings for a project in connection with their

\[ ^{1} \text{Academic Calendar, p. 253. This essay, "The Religious Dimension and Social Work" is submitted as a Major Research Essay.} \]
own studies.

The questionnaire itself, is, of course, a matter of some concern. It is very simple and mainly consists of structured questions. Because of the structure, it cannot be expected to give a detailed exposure of the views of the students. As Patterson says:

"While structured questions are easy to administer and to work with in analysis of data, this form of question sacrifices a lot of the intensity and colour of the feelings of respondents."\(^1\)

However, to overcome this limitation, students would be free to expand their views and express their feelings at the end of each page of the questionnaire.

Because a course in research is not part of the curriculum in the May-June term, 1969, it would not be appropriate for the students to be saddled with a research project of any great complexity during that term.

As to the co-operation of the respondents: it is anticipated that this would be high, particularly as their co-operation would be solicited by fellow students. Because they would receive a week's notification and warning regarding the subject matter of the research project, and the administration of the questionnaire, they would have time to consider their views and review their past experience, both in their own minds, and in discussion with one another. The inevitable element of controversy

\(^{1}\)Patterson, "Opinions of Local Religious Leaders," p. 25.
might be expected to have a productively stimulating effect on the students.

No questionnaire, especially one which pertains to an emotion-charged subject like religion, can be expected to produce data which will not be in some respects suspect as far as reliability and validity are concerned. Questions may not be completely clear to the respondents; moods will cause variations in responses. One can only hope to gain insights, and that the findings will approximate the actual situation. The questionnaire would be pre-tested on the members of the Inter-Professional Seminar and changes made to misleading questions.

Some questions would probably need to be sharpened somewhat.

Analysis of Data

It will be noted that the questionnaire attempts to answer the QUESTIONS FOR STUDY. See page 39.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question (a)</th>
<th>Questions Posed in Questionnaire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot; (b)</td>
<td>3, 4, 5, 6, 15, 16, 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; (c)</td>
<td>7, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; (d)</td>
<td>9, 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; (e)</td>
<td>11, 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; (f)</td>
<td>13, 14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1The phrase "QUESTIONS FOR STUDY" will be fully capitalized and underlined throughout in order to avoid confusion with the "questions" of the questionnaire.
First of all, the whole group, approximately 50 students, will be dealt with. We are interested, first, in finding the central tendency. The aim will be to find the median for the whole group on each of the questions to which insights are sought; that is, the QUESTIONS FOR STUDY.

The analysis might be handled as follows:

As an example:

Question (a) of QUESTIONS FOR STUDY (p)

Do social work students feel religious convictions are relevant to social work practice?

1. Strongly Negative  
2. Negative  
3. Guarded  
4. Affirmative  
5. Strongly Affirmative

The number of students responding to each number in questions 1 and 2 - that is, the questions in the questionnaire which are designed to answer the above question from the QUESTIONS FOR STUDY - will be entered in the space opposite the 5 numbers. Fifty students each answering 2 questions produce 100 answers. The median may thus easily be found. Percentages may also easily be computed.

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Questions 15 - 17 which, along with questions 3 - 6, provide answers to QUESTIONS FOR STUDY (b) might be dealt with as follows:

An example: 15. Did you initiate a discussion of the problems of a particular client or client group with a clergyman?

- Never 37
- Once or Twice 10
- More than Twice 3

The number of students making each of these 3 replies would be counted and entered in the 3 spaces; e.g. Never-37; Once or Twice-10; and More than Twice-3.

After dealing with the whole group in this manner, the same process would be used for each sex and each of the age groups.

As well as the above, correlations would also be sought between (1) opinion and fact, and (2) fact and fact. That is (1) correlations would be sought between the opinions shown in questions 1 - 14 of the questionnaire, and the fact revealed in questions 15 - 17 of the questionnaire, these latter having to do with collaboration with the clergy during field placement. Correlations would also be sought between the opinions revealed in questions 1 - 14 of the questionnaire and membership in and attendance at, church or synagogue.

Then, (2), correlations would also be sought between attendance at, and membership in, church and synagogue, and questions 15 - 17 of the questionnaire (those concerning collaboration with the clergy during
field placement).

Finally, the narrative material submitted by the students would be summarized, first under each of the QUESTIONS FOR STUDY, (see page 39); then under other appropriate headings until all the material was included in the findings.
PART D. CONCLUSIONS
CHAPTER VIII
ANTICIPATED FINDINGS

It is, of course, impossible to make firm statements regarding anticipated findings. One might, however, hazard the following guesses:

1. that about 10% of the respondents would attend church of synagogue regularly;
2. that about 50% would attend church or synagogue occasionally (less than twice a month);
3. that about 30% would not attend at all;
4. that about 45% of social work students are church or synagogue members;
5. that a higher percentage of female students attend and belong to a church or synagogue than male students and that a higher percentage of older students than younger students attend and belong to a church or synagogue;
6. that less than 50% of the respondents would feel that religious convictions are relevant to social work practice;
7. that about 50% would give indications of accepting and collaborating well with the clergy, and by implication, other religiously committed persons;
8. that about 50% feel well grounded in knowledge and understanding in the area of religion as far as dealing appropriately with the religious needs and/or problems of clients;
9. that about 50% would give evidence of experiencing emotional conflict in the area of their own religion or lack of it;

10. that a large percentage would claim to be accepting of different views in the matter of religion;

11. that somewhat over 50% would indicate that they are secure in a maturing faith, whether that faith be religious, humanist, or scientific;

12. that there would be a positive correlation between those who:
   (a) feel religious convictions are relevant to social work practice;
   (b) respect and accept the clergy;
   (c) feel well grounded in knowledge and understanding in the area of religion and able to deal appropriately with the religious needs and/or problems of their clients;
   (d) do not experience emotional conflict in the area of their own religion or lack of religion;
   (e) are accepting of different views in the matter of religion;
   (f) feel secure in a maturing faith;

and those who:

(i) actually initiated collaboration with the clergy during field practice, and
(ii) are members of, and attend, church and synagogue.

However, in view of the percentages who are probably members and attenders and those who also feel positively disposed to religion generally, it is quite likely that a very small percentage of these will actually initiate
collaboration with the clergy in the field or use the resources of the church in the client's interests.
CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSIONS

If the findings are similar to the foregoing, we might conclude the following regarding the area of concern as stated on page 4;

1. that too low a percentage of social work students are prepared to deal appropriately with the religious needs and/or problems of the client or client group;

2. that far too low a percentage of social work students are able to collaborate well with the clergy, and, by implication, with other religiously committed persons;

3. that far too low a percentage of social work students have resolved their religious conflict and evolved a nature faith;

4. that those who have made progress toward evolving a mature faith have not integrated it into their professional practice.

This last might be concluded from the very low percentage of those who attend or are members of church or are members of church or synagogue, who initiated collaboration with the clergy or used the resources of church or synagogue on a client's behalf during field placement.
CHAPTER X
IMPLICATIONS OF CONCLUSIONS

It would appear that the foregoing conclusions would point to the necessity for addressing this whole problem more specifically during the years of graduate training for social work than obtains at present at the Graduate School of Social Work, Waterloo Lutheran University, or by implication, at other schools which are not strongly sectarian.

This is not to say that individual faculty members, in particular the Dean of the School, do not through personal influence and teaching material bring beliefs and goals that are common, and the common factors in function between the two professions of the ministry and social work, to the attention of the student body in a manner which both enlightens and reconciles. It is to say that such a complicated subject as the religious dimension and social work, so germane as it is to the whole value base of the profession, would presumably be shown by the exploratory study with which we have been dealing, to require a more structured treatment than has heretofore proved feasible.

The findings of the research would be written up in careful detail, mimeographed, and distributed to the student body and faculty of the school. This might confidently be expected to stimulate further discussion and a search for solutions to the problem. As indicated by Sue Spencer,\(^1\) experimentation would be necessary to arrive at the most productive mode

of learning and growing toward a mature appreciation of the subject, within the curriculum of the School.

To social workers of every religious viewpoint, the ability to collaborate within the profession and between professions, is, in particular, recognized to be of crucial importance to service to the client or client group.¹ The clergy are members of a profession, collaboration with which, as would be demonstrated by this research project, might be expected to present problems to a large percentage of social workers. It should therefore follow that a consideration of collaboration with the clergy might present itself as a useful learning focus for a School of Social Work which is housed in close physical proximity to a Theological Seminary. This situation obtains at the Graduate School of Social Work, Waterloo Lutheran University.

A major hypothesis emerging from the research proposal herein presented, then, is as follows: Social work students' potential for collaboration with the clergy will be enhanced by structured empathic involvement with seminary students in a learning situation.

The "structured empathic involvement" might take the form of a series of, perhaps, six meetings through the January to April term of the year '70 between the second year at the Graduate School of Social Work and the whole student body at the Waterloo Lutheran Seminary. Maximum student interest would be encouraged by having student committees from

¹Critchley, "Disturbed Professional," p. 10.
both groups work with faculty members of both institutions.

The six meetings might consist of very short lectures given by faculty members from both the School of Social Work and the Seminary. These could be followed by one and one half hour small-group (not more than five members in a group) sessions (the identical composition each time) led by staff of both schools - those who were most skilled in group work. Of the greatest possible importance would be the emphasis in these small groups on open encounter and warm bond. For maximum effectiveness, this spirit would obviously have to be consolidated among the faculty members leading the group.

It would scarcely be feasible to load the already-crowded curriculum with more than 6 meetings. Sue Spencer points out that ideally, the social work student should be given a thorough grounding in all aspects of religion in human life. However, again, thinking of the feasible, it would seem best to concentrate on dialogue concerning:

1. personal experience in religion and as people;
2. relationship between the two professions - social work and the ministry;
3. how each group sees its similar goals and functions in meeting the needs of people
   (a) as individuals;
   (b) in groups;

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1Spencer, "Religion and Spiritual Values," p. 253.
(c) as members of a society which both professions are pledged to change.

It would seem to be absolutely essential to strive for simplicity; for careful definition of terms; for avoidance of intellectualization, of denial, and other defense mechanisms which would damage the possibility of achieving the "open encounter and warm bond" referred to above.

The hypothesis that social work students' potential for collaboration with the clergy, and thereby, with other professions, will be enhanced by involvement in a learning situation such as this, could be tested by means of a before - after study of opinion\(^1\) among the students. This could be conducted in January and April, 1970, before and after 6 meetings. The second year students at the University of Toronto School of Social Work might act as the control group, making possible a careful experimental study.

We might confidently expect that the hypothesis would be confirmed. Along with the "action research" aspect of this experimental study, we might suppose that at the same time;

1. the student's ability to deal appropriately with the religious needs and/or problems of the client or client group would be enhanced;

2. the student would be assisted in

   (a) the resolution of his religious conflict

\(^1\)Selltiz, Jahoda, et al., p. 117 and 117.
(b) the growth of a mature faith, whether he would term that faith religious, humanist, or scientific.

Thus, knowledge gained initially though the exploratory study of social work students' real and felt inadequacies in the area of religion would through these means be applied and the problem, to some extent, addressed, for "unapplied knowledge/shorn of its meaning."¹

In this way, "the spiritual maturation of the social work profession"² might be advanced. Certainly, it seems doubtful that, without such maturation, this hard-pressed profession in a hard-pressed world can do other than maximize its failures rather than its potential.


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

Inter-Professional Seminar
The Religious Dimension and Social Work

Questionnaire

Note:
This questionnaire is simple and straightforward. There are no "tricks."
Valid data depends on YOUR self-awareness and honesty. We are hopeful that you will enjoy participating in this project, despite any ambivalence you may feel.

Preservation of Anonymity: Except for age and sex, we are avoiding variables which might contribute to your being inadvertently identified.
But do identify yourself if you would like to share your identity with us.

Please be sure to check wherever appropriate.

Are you a member of a church or synagogue? Yes _____
No _____

Do you attend a church or synagogue regularly (at least twice a month) _____
occasionally?________ never?___________

Age: 20-24 _____ Sex: Male _____
25-29 _____ Female _____
30+ _____

- 58 -
Please answer the following questions in accordance with a 5 point-scale:

1. Do you think that a social worker's religious convictions bear any relation to his effectiveness in social work practice?
   1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

2. Do you think that the religious convictions held by pioneers in social work were of positive value in the development of the profession?
   1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
3. Do you feel that there are clergymen who do a good job of counselling? 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

4. Do you think that church groups and congregational life generally provides anything positive in people's lives? 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

5. Do you think that the church is relevant to the needs of man and society? 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

6. Do you feel that there are some clergymen, still employed within the institutional church, who try to confront the sources of injustice in society? 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

7. Do you feel that you have sufficient knowledge and understanding in the area of religion to deal appropriately with the religious needs and/or problems of your clients? 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

8. Do you feel that clients' religious beliefs are relevant to their psychosocial functioning? 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

9. Have you doubts and confusions in the area of your own views on religion which upset you and undermine your functioning? 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
10. Do you feel, that because religion is a personal matter, this questionnaire is too intrusive? 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

11. Do people who disagree with your views on religion irritate or repel you? 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

12. Would you say that you are more accepting of others' religious views than you used to be? 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

13. Have you evolved a set of beliefs and a philosophy of life which gives meaning, purpose, and some serenity and joy to life?
   1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

14. Would you say that you derive strength from religion?
   1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
During field practice:

15. Did you initiate a discussion of the problems of a particular client or client group with a clergyman?

Never __
Once or Twice __
More than Twice __

16. Did you refer a client or family to a clergyman?

Never ______ More than Twice ______ Once or Twice ______

17. Did you encourage a client or family to become more involved in the life of their church?

Never __________ Once or Twice _________ More than Twice _______

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APPENDIX B

Letter to be sent to all members of the class of '70 at the Graduate School of Social Work, Waterloo Lutheran University:

May ___, 1969.

Dear Fellow Student:

Enclosed you will find a questionnaire which we would like you to examine closely as soon as possible.

You will see that it has to do with your religious views, your experience of collaborating with the clergy, and how relevant you see religion in the practice of social work.

Religion - one's own religion, or no religion, - is generally considered to be an extremely personal matter (maybe more personal than sex) and one which many people find quite difficult to discuss. We feel, however, that as professional people who must be self-aware and warmly accepting of differences, it is incumbent upon us to develop the ability to search our vulnerable selves in this respect, as in other loaded areas, to share what we find, and to develop greater sensitivity to the views and needs of all others: clients, colleagues, clergy, whoever they may be.

This is our viewpoint. What is yours? To let us know, please fill in the questionnaire as soon, and as conscientiously as possible.

We're not asking you to lose your anonymity unless you wish and to further ensure it you might want to type in your own comments at
home. If you aren't worried about this, you may prefer to add them in class on May _______, in your own handwriting.

Many thanks for your co-operation in this research project.

Signed

For the Inter-Professional Seminar.
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ARTICLES


UNPUBLISHED MATERIALS


